

# Bible Study Series

by Ed Goggans

## MAN'S AWESOME FUTURE

**P**SALMS 8:4 asks, “What is man, that [God is] mindful of him?” That is a reasonable question. What are we? Why is God concerned with mankind? Is there some purpose to our lives, some reason to our existence?

The first part of this Bible Study Series examined the question of who, or what, *God* is. It was shown that God is a Family. Our word “God” is the English equivalent to the Hebrew *Elohim*, which speaks COLLECTIVELY of more than one being. *Elohim* focuses on the collection rather than the individual.

We explained that God is not a trinity — some form of a *closed* unit of three beings in one. Neither is God some pantheon of gods and goddesses, kept separate from mortal man by their immortality. God is not some sort of club that runs the workings of the universe while meddling in our lives.

Such views about God are distortions of an astounding TRUTH that exists in the authoritative word of God — the Holy Bible. That incredible truth is that *God is a Family* into which all human beings may be born!

In this second part of this Bible Study Series, we will primarily look into the God-given purpose of mankind, along with that amazing potential mentioned above of becoming actual members of the eternal God Family.

So, what is this Family of God into which human beings may be born, and why is it that most do not understand our true nature and purpose?

### Hope of the Resurrection

The Bible reveals that from the time of Adam, mankind has been cut off from God because of sin (e.g., Is. 59:2; Rom. 3:23; 5:12). Yet it equally shows

that God not only has a plan to fix that problem, but also to get rid of all sin — including the very author of sin, Satan.

The world in which we live today — a world *cut off* from God — began (was FOUNDED) when Adam sinned. Yet the Bible reveals that at that very moment, God’s great plan for fixing this problem became set in stone. Revelation 13:8 explains that from that very moment on, the Lamb — Jesus the Christ — was as good as dead. The death of Christ was made certain.

Sin is defined by God Himself as the transgression, or breaking, of His Law (I Jn. 3:4). Romans 6:23 shows that the wages of sin is DEATH! That is what we have *all* earned because we have all sinned. The Lamb of God — Jesus the Christ — was *without sin* (Heb. 4:15), yet He died for us! He paid the death penalty we have all earned with the giving of His own life in our place, thereby reconciling us to God (Rom. 5:10).

This is the starting point when God the Father calls an individual *out of this world* through Christ. No one can come to Christ except those whom the Father draws (Jn. 6:44), and no one comes to the Father except through Christ (Jn. 14:6).

The Bible refers to Satan as the god of this world — the prince, or ruler, of those cut off from God (II Cor. 4:4; Jn. 12:31). With the sacrifice of Christ, God set in motion His great plan, or *process*, of salvation for all mankind. Yet each of us enters that process only when and as God calls us. Until we are called, we are still of this world, walking according to its ways and according to that prince, Satan, who fosters disobedience that earns the wrath of God (Eph. 2:2-3).

God has allowed Satan — the arch

deceiver — to cleverly cloud the mind of all who are cut off from God. It takes the special calling of God to remove that great deception from the mind. As we’ll see a bit later, God has planned that calling for ALL mankind, each in our own order.

Although we have all earned death because of our sins, we have the ability when called by God to be reconciled to Him through that great sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is for the remission of our *past* sins (Rom. 3:25). When we repent of those past sins, we are then baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:38 states that this is expressly for the *remission of sins*.

You see, the only thing God owes us upon our repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is the *remission of our sins* BY the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Yet God then gives us a *free gift*, which is His Holy Spirit!

The Spirit of God in us CHANGES our carnal minds to *spiritual* minds. It is what clears away the cloud of deception that Satan has formed in the carnal minds of those of this world. The Holy Spirit seals us, and it is the “earnest” — the *pledge*, the GUARANTEE — of our eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). It is that by which God the Father “hath begotten us again unto a [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Pet. 1:3).

What is it about Christ’s resurrection that gives us such hope? Paul explained in Romans 8:11 that *if* the Spirit of God dwells in us, then God the Father who raised Christ from the dead will also GIVE LIFE (KJV, *quicken*) to our *mortal bodies* by that very same Spirit in us!

Now just what did Paul mean when he wrote that the Father would give life unto our mortal bodies? The amazing

answer is found in I Corinthians chapter 15, which is also commonly referred to as the resurrection chapter.

In verses 42 through 44, the Apostle Paul explained that our mortal bodies are sown (made, created) in *corruption*, in *dishonor*, and in *weakness*, as a *natural body* — a flesh and blood body. Yet in the resurrection, that body will be raised in INCORRUPTION, in GLORY, and in POWER, as a SPIRITUAL BODY (same verses)! “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (vs. 44).

Paul went on to explain that as with the first man, Adam, all human beings are natural, of the earth, having “borne the image of the earthy” (vs. 45-49). The *first* Adam is so called because he was the progenitor of all *flesh and blood* human beings. Jesus the Christ is called the *second* Adam because He is the progenitor of all who will be *raised with a spiritual body* as He was!

Christ — the second Adam — is from heaven. Verse 49 clearly states that in the resurrection we who naturally bear the image of the earthy, being flesh and blood human beings, *will also bear the image of the heavenly!* Yet Paul states with equal clarity that flesh and blood CANNOT inherit the Kingdom of God, but instead our natural, flesh and blood bodies must be CHANGED (vs. 50-51).

The earthy body we presently have — which is *corruptible* and *mortal* — must be CHANGED into a spiritual body made of *incorruption* and *immortality* (vs. 53)! Then, and only then, will we be able to see Jesus Christ as He is, for then we will be just like Him (I Jn. 3:2)! In the resurrection, He will “*change our vile body*, that it may be fashioned LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY” (Phil. 3:21).

We have this great living hope — the hope of glory, the hope of eternal life — because Christ Jesus was first raised (I Pet. 1:3). This, then, is the true nature of the resurrection.

### **Satan Has DECEIVED The Whole World**

Having now seen an overview of the true nature of the resurrection, let’s take a moment and see how Satan has managed to twist this Biblical teaching in the minds of those of this world.

That great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, is actively deceiving the whole world (Rev. 12:9). He has deceitfully twisted the TRUTH about the resurrection into a web of lies and misinformation. One common view has the resurrection taking place upon death. The person is then supposedly taken to a place where he or she will spend eternity either burning in hell fire, or floating around in heaven at the throne of God. It is taught that a person must accept Christ as Lord and Savior — thus guaranteed rapture into heaven — or suffer for all eternity burning in hell fire.

What such a view does not consider is that to burn forever in hell fire, one would have to be IMMORTAL ALREADY! Such thinking, however, is in *complete contradiction* with the clear teaching of the Scriptures. As was explained earlier, I Corinthians 15 clearly shows that we must be CHANGED from corruptible and MORTAL flesh and blood bodies INTO incorruptible, IMMORTAL, and glorious spiritual bodies when we shall finally bear the image of the heavenly!

It is important to understand that such a *change* emphatically proves false the idea of an immortal soul. Additionally, Romans 6:23 shows with equal clarity that *eternal life* — immortality — is a GIFT from God. If we have an immortal soul, then immortality is *not a gift* at all, yet God says that it is. This teaching from God, through the Apostle Paul, speaks of the CHANGE that *must* come before one can inherit the Kingdom of God.

This resurrection chapter is often used by those of this world to teach of a secret rapture that would sweep away all confessing Christians to be forever with Christ while the rest of mankind is left with such things as the surprise of cars speeding down the freeway having suddenly become unmanned.

This false view leaves the impression that the very return of Christ is for the sole purpose of secretly whisking off to heaven those whom Christ has not lost to Satan in His battle for salvation. Such a view would depict God and Satan in a titanic battle for the souls of all mankind. It places God and Satan on an equal footing, leaving God essentially

powerless against an evil being that seemingly has more control and power than even his own maker!

One scripture we should consider is Revelation 1:7, which says that Christ is coming with clouds “and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him ....” The Bible shows that Christ will not suddenly remove all Christians in a secret rapture, but will instead return in such a way that the very eyes of all mankind then living will see Him!

When thinking about this idea, we should additionally consider scriptures such as I Thessalonians 4:15-17. The Apostle Paul there speaks about the resurrection of the *dead* in Christ at the coming of the Lord. Notice that the context is those who are “in Christ.” While still speaking about those “in Christ,” Paul shows that something then happens to the LIVING in Christ — that is to say, those converted Christians still alive at that time.

This passage simply says that they — with those then resurrected “dead in Christ” — will be caught up into the clouds together, and will be with the Lord forever. Yet, Paul adds a very important point in the parallel passage of I Corinthians 15:51-52. There we are told that we shall not all sleep (i.e., die), but we shall all be CHANGED! The dead — those “dead in Christ” — shall be raised INCORRUPTIBLE. While they are to be raised incorruptible, those then living who are “in Christ” will be CHANGED. Both the dead in Christ and the living in Christ will be *changed* at His coming.

So, at Christ’s coming, there will be people who will then be *changed* from mortal to immortal beings. Some will have died in the faith in their mortal state, but will be RAISED in an immortal state. Others will be alive in the faith, still in their mortal state, and they will be CHANGED from mortal to immortal, from a flesh and blood body to a spirit body, from corruptible to incorruptible.

What God is describing here is actually the FIRST of *three resurrections* that will occur in a specific order (I Cor. 15:23). These resurrections are detailed more completely in Revelation chapter 20, but we will discuss them in more

detail in a future study in this series.

The *First* Resurrection will take place at Christ's return. He will change those whom the Father has given Him as the firstfruits of salvation into members of the very Family of God. They are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17), having the firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23), and they will live again and reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

This will not be done in *secret*, but for every eye to see. Instead, He will use this first harvest of souls into the Kingdom of God to bring about the *replacement* of the wicked god of this world (Satan) and his minions (the demons). The Scriptures reveal that they will be replaced, and Christ will set up the Kingdom of God here on this earth (Mt. 25:41; Rev. 5:10; 20:6)!

The rebellious being once known as Lucifer — now the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan (Rev. 12:9) — and his demons presently control this world and its governments. Yet God is now preparing a governing body with Christ as its head to REPLACE them!

Satan's wicked government has been in rebellion against God's way of life from the moment sin was found in him. His rebellion against God is vividly described in Ezekiel chapter 28. In that rebellion, he *twisted* the minds of a third of the angelic realm into following him, and they have been the government of this world ever since. However, THEY ARE ABOUT TO BE REPLACED by Christ and His Bride — those *changed* from mortal to immortal at the return of Christ and in the First Resurrection — who will establish the Kingdom of God *on this earth* once again.

### The Spirit Realm and Man

To truly understand the purpose of mankind and what God has in store for us, we need to first understand what happened with Satan. How did he come to be? What is he busy doing, and why? In the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel, God describes Lucifer as having once been a PERFECT, *created* angel. He was perfect in beauty, the pinnacle of God's creation at that time, the very sum of perfection, and full of wisdom (vs. 12-

13). The *Tanakh* — the Hebrew Bible — says in verse 14 that God created him “as a cherub with outstretched shielding wings.” This being apparently was one of the two cherubim whose wings were outstretched to cover the mercy seat, which is the very Throne of God (Ex. 25:17-21; Heb. 9:4-5; 4:16). All of this was how he was created, *until iniquity*, or SIN, was found in him (Ezek. 28:12-15).

Although Lucifer was created perfect, something caused him to *sin* and turn against his very creator — the Eternal God in heaven. Isaiah 14:12-14 shows that Lucifer even set it in his mind to ascend into heaven and exalt his throne above the stars of God (i.e., the whole angelic host). He wanted to sit on the mount of the congregation and make himself be just as the Most High. Put another way, he wanted to be the one in charge — he wanted to BE the Most High! His *heart* became lifted up — it became *puffed-up* (Ezek. 28:17). PRIDE and VANITY caused him to rebel against God, seeking to replace his very maker.

Isaiah 14 clearly shows Satan sitting upon a throne in a place other than in heaven. God had given him charge over all the angels that were set here on earth to administer the very government of God while assisting God in the process of increasing His Family through His human creation. Hebrews 1:14 tells us that angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.”

Paul tells us that Satan is the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4) — the god of this present age. He also explains that “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14). He is not a true angel of light, however. Notice that Paul says Satan is “transformed.” In the Greek, this means that he DISGUISES himself *as* an angel of light!

Revelation 12:9 shows that Satan is actively *deceiving* the whole world. Is it any wonder, then, that the WHOLE world and all of its religious systems do not truly understand God's plan of salvation for all mankind — that of all mankind having the same opportunity of entering the very Family of God? Should this really be much of a surprise? Satan has not yet been removed from that position

of authority over all the earth, over this present age. Christ qualified to replace him when He overcame Satan (Mt. 4). Those called now to be part of the firstfruit harvest of souls are the Church of God that is “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). We are now qualifying to be the ones who, with and under Jesus Christ, will replace that governmental system of Satan and his demons that is in rebellion against God. Jesus Christ and the Church will make up that governing body that will begin the Kingdom of God here on this earth, which is why the Church is said to marry Christ at His return (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7).

Christ is the first-born from the dead and the prince, or ruler, of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). He has made us to be Kings and Priests unto God the Father, having washed away of our sins by His own blood (vs. 5-6). Not only has He made us Kings and Priest unto our God, but Revelation 5:10 and 20:6 add that WE WILL REIGN WITH HIM ON THE EARTH!

In these passages we find two things clearly established. First, the Kingdom is coming *here on earth*. Second, we — the then spirit-born Church of God — will *reign with Christ* in that Kingdom. The word *reign* here means TO RULE! This will be a ruling Kingdom with: a King (Christ Himself), a governing body (the Church), subjects (the rest of mankind as each one is then offered the opportunity to enter the Family of God), and territory (the earth itself).

God placed Lucifer here on earth to administer the government of God. He and the angels placed under him were to be the ministering spirits to aid in the process of mankind developing the very nature and character of God. They were here to serve in the process that would one day bring all mankind into the God Family. Yet as we have seen, he and all the angels placed under his rule here on the earth (apparently one-third of *all* the angels, Rev. 12:4) rebelled against God. They thus became known as Satan and the demons.

With this rebellion, the government of God here *on this earth* ceased being

administered! Therefore, as seen earlier, God planned for Christ Jesus to replace Satan at Christ's second-coming when He will *re-establish* the administration of that government. That re-established government will be GOD'S KINGDOM here on earth, ruled by Jesus Christ and His wife — the then *spirit-born* Church of God.

Satan, of course, immediately began to fight against God's plan of salvation for all mankind. After the creation of mankind, Satan immediately set about trying to deceive Eve (Gen. 3:1-5). Now scripture shows that Eve was indeed deceived by the serpent, but Adam also ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil along with her (vs. 6). There is no scripture that shows Adam as having been deceived. Instead, I Timothy 2:14 quite clearly states that Adam WAS NOT deceived! It also shows that Eve was indeed deceived into eating of that tree (also II Cor. 11:3). Yet Adam — who was NOT deceived — *knew better*, but ate of the tree anyway!

Adam's sin against God pronounced a sentence upon *all* mankind to live without the relationship with God that would normally have been. ALL who have ever lived have been cut off from God because of Adam's sin. Still, there are the small few down through the history of man whom God has chosen to deal with and thus include as part of the firstfruit harvest with Christ into God's Kingdom. These include the Church of God, the Old Testament Prophets, and faithfully righteous men such as Enoch, Abraham, and David to name a few.

Nevertheless, Satan has deceived the *whole* world. Again, Satan is the god of this world — this present age, which began when Adam sinned, and which is referred to in scripture as the foundation of this world, or this present age (Lk. 11:49-51; Rev. 13:8).

As the god of this present world, Satan is thus the father of all who are cut off from God, who are the children of disobedience, and thus the children of wrath, for the wages of sin is death. Christ even referred to the Pharisees as being of their *father* the devil (Jn. 8:44)! Why did He say this? It is because they, being carnally minded, were still cut off from God! They were thus still deceived,

still disobedient and enslaved to sin, and thus still children of wrath having earned death (Rom. 6:23).

This is the *natural state* of man due to sin, which has cut all mankind off from God. Because we have all sinned, we have all EARNED the death penalty. It takes coming under the shed blood of Jesus Christ through a baptism of *repentance* to be freed from bondage to sin and from the death that we have all earned.

Yet God's word shows that NO ONE can truly come to Christ except by a *special calling* from the Father (John 6:44)! In this age, God has chosen to call only a small few out of this Satan-ruled world to make up the firstfruit harvest into His Kingdom at the return of Christ. That group is the Church of God, which we have seen is to be the governing body with and under Christ in the Kingdom. When Christ returns and re-establishes the government of God on this earth, He will then begin to offer salvation to the rest of mankind.

### Character Must Be Developed

As mankind has lived its history cut off from God, we have developed a wrong nature. While this is commonly called "human nature," in reality it is nothing more than SATAN'S nature! Just as Ephesians 4:20 says that we who are converted have "learned Christ" — that is, we have *learned* the WAY of Christ — so too has mankind in our natural state, cut off from God, *learned* Satan's nature from our youth! Satan's nature is a habit that we have all learned. After all, it is all that this world has ever known.

Yet notice what is brought out in the remaining verses of Ephesians 4. Paul goes on to say that when God calls us, we are to put off that which he calls our "old man," which simply is our old way of life — that old, carnal nature that we have learned from Satan. In essence, we are to be about UN*learning* that sinful nature and replacing it with that which Paul calls the "new man" — the nature of God!

Character is the collection of things we have learned based upon the choices we have made. It is our main, or essential

*nature*. Character is what defines and distinguishes us. As such, it CANNOT be created, but instead must be LEARNED (developed).

While cut off from God, we learned the nature, or character, of the god of this present age — Satan the Devil. When God calls us to repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are freed from our bondage to sin, which is that old carnal nature (character) that we have learned all of our lives. God then grants us the *gift* of His Holy Spirit, which opens our minds to *spiritual* things. God's Spirit in us begins to develop HIS *nature* — HIS *character* — within us! Those old carnal habits are gradually replaced with God's *spiritual nature* as we learn and develop GODLY character.

We should also understand that when the angels were created, they were not created with character! Again, character is developed by a *process* of making choices. It is the *process* that makes up the very nature of an individual. Lucifer allowed his beauty to puff himself up, and thus he developed the *wrong* type of character. The one-third of all angels whom he influenced also developed the *wrong* type of character based upon the choices they made. They were not created as flesh and blood beings, but were created *spirit*. They are now of unrighteousness and *cannot* change the nature (the character) they have chosen.

However, God made the human family out of flesh and blood! His plan is for us to develop character within us while still flesh and blood beings *before* changing us into spirit. Once we are changed into spirit-born members of the God Family, we will *never* be capable of rebellion as Lucifer was! It is only once God's righteous character (His nature) has been developed within us that we will finally put on incorruption and immortality — that is, when we fully inherit eternal life. At that time, we will have developed such righteous character that we could never again choose to sin.

Mankind is in the process of being shaped and molded into the very nature of God. In the beginning of the creation of the human family, God made us in His image and likeness *physically*.

Upon being reconciled to Him by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we are given the gift of God's Spirit so that God can begin the process of creating His very nature within us. That process begins with the changing of our minds as we develop GODLY character, and it ends with the changing of even our *physical bodies* when we "born again" as SPIRIT-BORN members of the great God Family — when we fully inherit eternal life! That character we are first to develop is God's way of righteousness rather than Satan's ways of UNrighteousness, which was never meant to be in the first place.

Had Adam chosen the way of the tree of life, he would have qualified to be the one to replace Satan and his demons as the governing body on this earth. He would have been the one God used to re-establish and then administer God's government here on this earth. Yet when he chose to rebel — to follow Satan's way — he laid the foundation of this present age. Revelation 13:8 reveals that Christ (the Lamb) was slain "from the foundation of the world."

From the very moment Adam sinned, Christ had to become the one to qualify and replace Satan, and mankind — after being "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13) — must enter into the process of developing God's nature (His very character) in place of Satan's nature.

### What is the Promise?

The Apostle Paul stated that we whom God has called in this age to make up His Church are "sealed with that holy Spirit of PROMISE" (Eph. 1:13). He added that God's Spirit is "the earnest," the guarantee or down-payment, "of our INHERITANCE" (vs. 14). What is this promise? What is our inheritance? The answer reveals the actual potential of mankind and the awesome purpose of our creation!

In the first part of this series we saw that God (*Elohim*) created mankind in His image and likeness — *Elohim* being a collective, uni-plural noun showing a family. *Elohim* was, and at this time still is, made up of two distinct beings (Jn. 1:1) — one who, with the birth of Jesus, became known as God *the Father*, and

the other who came in the flesh as Jesus the Christ and thus became known as God *the Son*.

The Son came for the purpose of paying the death penalty that WE have all *earned* by our sins (Rom. 6:23). He died for all of us so that we could be reconciled to God as He calls us (Jn. 6:44; 14:6). Once reconciled, God then grants that GIFT of the Holy Spirit by which we are begotten of God, and by which we can begin that process of developing holy, righteous, and godly character! That process prepares us to fulfill the specific purpose for which we were created — that of increasing the very God Family (*Elohim*)!

Let's see God's words concerning the firstfruits into His Kingdom. In Romans 8:29, the Apostle Paul describes us as being predestined to be conformed. This predestination is about the *timing of our calling* (see vs. 30). The Church of God was long ago predestined to be called NOW instead of later. Predestination has *nothing* to do with being saved or lost, but with the TIMING of one's calling by God! Nevertheless, to what are we to be conformed, or made similar? We are to be conformed to the *image* of God's Son! That is to say, we are to take on the very NATURE of Christ, so that He might be the FIRST-BORN among *many* brethren.

Colossians 1:12-19 speaks of the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ over all (vs. 18). This actually means to be FIRST. He is *first* in every way in the inheritance of the Family of God!

Christ, who was the Word and later became flesh and blood as the Son of God, was in the image of God and the firstborn of all creatures (vs. 15). Here the word "creatures" means *all creation*, yet it specifically refers to those also created in GOD'S image (Gen. 1:26-27). This is specifically about mankind, not the rest of creation such as animals.

Christ is also referred to in this passage as head of the body (*the Church*), and as "the beginning, the FIRSTBORN *from the dead*" (vs. 18). He was the *first* to be RESURRECTED TO ETERNAL LIFE! Now, others had been raised before Him, such as Lazarus (Jn. 11:43-44). Yet *Christ's* resurrection was to incorruption and immortality (I Cor.

15:50, 53)! This was so that HE would have *pre-eminence* over ALL others. He is to be the Head, now and forever.

As the Church of God, we see our inheritance clearly described in Romans 8. Starting in verse 14 we read, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, THEY ARE THE SONS OF GOD." As sons, we call God, Father. We have received the Spirit of "adoption," which in the original Greek means, "to place as a son." Paul adds that that Spirit of God within us bears witness with our spirit — the spirit in man — that *we* are the CHILDREN OF GOD! He continues in verse 17, saying, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." and we are to be glorified together with Him.

Do you truly grasp what this means? To be an *heir* of God is to be an *inheritor* of what God is! Still, we are not only to be "heirs of God," but also JOINT-HEIRS (*co-inheritors*) with Christ! That means we are to inherit the *same things* HE inherits. We are to inherit the Kingdom *with* Him. We are to rule *with* Him in that Kingdom as Kings and Priests. Yet in ALL things He has pre-eminence. Thus He is to be KING of kings and LORD of lords.

Being a King means holding an office of *rulership* in God's Kingdom, while being a Priest means being a *teacher* of the way of righteousness in that Kingdom — more on this in a bit. The calling of the Church at this time to be the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ is all well and good, but what about the rest of mankind?

We saw earlier how the Church is the firstfruits in God's master plan of salvation for all mankind. As firstfruits, this naturally means that there are more fruits to come afterward. We'll see this in more detail in a future study, but for now it is enough to understand this vital truth: while Romans 8 is indeed NOW for the Church, seeing as we are the ones God is calling *at this time*, it is equally true for ALL God will call, both now and forever. This is a VITAL KEY to understanding the plan of God!

When God calls someone to Christ, that person is reconciled to God *through* Christ. If reconciled, God then gives that person the *gift* of the Holy Spirit. If

one receives this gift, he or she becomes a child of God, and if a child, then an HEIR — *an heir of God!* You see, ALL mankind was made in the image and likeness of God (*Elohim*, Gen. 1:26-27).

We've already seen how no one can come to Christ except the Father draws him (Jn. 6:44, 65). GOD then will grant that person *repentance* (Rom. 2:4)! And just what is true repentance? Sin, from which one must repent, is defined by God as BREAKING His Law (I Jn. 3:4). To repent, then, is to unconditionally surrender to God and His will — to come into obedience to His eternal Law! It is upon this repentance and baptism in FAITH of the reconciliation to God by the shed blood of Jesus Christ that God then gives the *gift* of His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). That Spirit is the very LIFE that is in Jesus Christ and God the Father (Jn. 1:4; 5:26). It is what imparts God's divine nature — His character — to us, as described earlier.

Yet we should not see the receiving of God's Spirit as the *end* of the process of salvation. It is but the beginning! We are clearly told in I John 3:1-2 that even though we have received God's Holy Spirit — thereby making us the sons of God — it DOES NOT YET APPEAR what we will be! Now, this is speaking first and foremost to the Church. Why? It is because until the return of Christ, *only* the Church of God is being called at this time! Thus, at His return, the Church alone will be "like him; for we shall see him as he is" (vs. 2). Yet that is not the end of the plan of God for the salvation of ALL mankind.

In I Corinthians 15:21-22 we are told that death came upon all mankind by Adam's sin — thus in Adam, all die. Yet by man (Christ Jesus) came also the resurrection of the dead, thus in Christ shall ALL be made alive. Do you grasp what this is saying? ALL mankind will be made alive! Upon repentance and baptism in FAITH of the reconciliation made to God by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, *all mankind* will receive the very same promise — the GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!

God's Spirit within us first changes our minds by allowing us to put off the "old man" (that carnal way of life) and replace it with the "new man," which in

full conformity with God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24). Ephesians 1:13-14 explains that the Holy Spirit is the very PROMISE that seals us "until the redemption of the purchased possession." This is more clearly put by the Moffatt translation: "... you also by your faith have been stamped with the seal of the long-promised Holy Spirit, which is the pledge and installment of our common heritage, that we may [in the future] obtain our divine possession ...."

You see, while receipt of the Holy Spirit begins to change our minds *now*, it will also lead to the change of even our physical bodies! Romans 8:23 calls this the "redemption of our body." This is how we will *inherit* the Kingdom of God, for flesh and blood — physical human beings — CANNOT inherit God's Kingdom (I Cor. 15:50). When we are sealed by God's Spirit as a guarantee and a down payment of this inheritance, we become the children of God and the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14).

However, as heirs, we have not yet inherited. Our inheritance will come when this mortal, fleshly body and this corruptible carnal mind will fully put on incorruption and immortality (I Cor. 15:53)! It is only "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (vs. 54). This is made possible only by receiving God's special *promise* of being sealed with His Holy Spirit as a guarantee of this inheritance. It is a *gift* that is promised to ALL mankind when God calls them to be reconciled to Him through Christ Jesus. That gift *begins* a PROCESS that will end when we finally become inheritors of all things.

This is the promise for ALL mankind, but we've already seen that God is only calling at this time those whom He has predestined to make up His Church. What about the Church? What is its role in all of this?

### The Role of the Church

The Priests in the Old Testament administered the very Laws of God for the rest of physical Israel. That

Priesthood was formed out of one tribe of Israel (the tribe of Levi) that God selected to work in His Temple. They administered the things pertinent to the worship of and obedience to God. Numbers 3:6-9 shows that God gave Aaron and his sons special charge over the Levites who would perform the service of the Tabernacle under them.

As spiritual Priests under Christ in the coming Kingdom, we will perform all the duties of the Priesthood. We will administer the duties of the Temple, *teaching* all humanity to love and serve God with every fiber of its being. God gave the Levitical Priesthood specific instructions on how to administer those ways in the book of Leviticus. All the proper teachings and ways of living were specifically spelled out throughout that book so that the Levites could properly administer God's Laws. It included God's Sabbath and His Holy Days, the year of Jubilee, the laws of tithing and clean and unclean meats, and much more. As Priests, they were responsible to know God's teachings so as to assist the children of Israel in keeping them. It will be the same for the Church of God in the Kingdom.

We are presently still living in the time commonly known as "the Church Age," which is the whole time from Christ's first coming until His return to establish the Kingdom here on the earth. Those whom God predestined *to be called* during this age are being called to be part of the Church, which is SPIRITUAL ISRAEL — the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

First Corinthians chapter 10, verses 6 and 11, says that all that happened to ancient Israel became examples for us, and they were thus recorded in God's word for our admonition, or instruction. Paul explained in Romans 2:28-29 that a person is not a Jew — that is, one of God's chosen people — just by *outward* appearances. Instead, a person is truly a Jew (one of God's chosen people) when he is one *inwardly*, of the heart! This describes one who, by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit from God, has been converted from the "old man" — one's carnal nature — to God's great way of righteousness.

Paul here speaks about circumcision

as well. While the *physical* action was a sign of being a Jew, it was only so in the flesh. Paul explained that *spiritual* circumcision was to be circumcised of the heart! The physical act was merely a forerunner of the spiritual. The removal of our fleshly, or carnal, WAY OF LIFE is what makes us *spiritually* circumcised! The indwelling of God's Spirit makes one converted, or circumcised of the heart.

In verse 15 of Galatians 6, the Apostle Paul says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." He is saying that circumcision, or being a Jew physically, does not really have any bearing. Instead, being a new creation in Christ is what counts. Paul continues in verse 16, saying, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." He is speaking of those who walk in the way of righteousness as a new creation to which God has called them. The rule, or principle, that such people follow is that of walking (living) as a new creation, which is made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit from God. Such are, then, the true ISRAEL OF GOD!

When Christ started His Church, it began with the outpouring of His Spirit upon those whom God had chosen and called to be a part of His Church. When asked what to do, the Apostle Peter told the people to REPENT and be BAPTIZED in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*, and then they would receive the *gift* of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). He added that this promise was made even to "AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALL" (vs. 39).

John 6:44 again says that no one can come unto Christ except the Father calls them. It is only by special invitation — a special *calling* — that those called NOW are able to come to Christ. We've seen that God's promise was made to all mankind, as ALL humans are created in the image and likeness of God (*Elohim*). Yet God has set an order to this process. We also saw that God *predestined* the Church to be called NOW, in this age, prior to the coming of the God's Kingdom to this earth. We'll see in a later study where the rest of all mankind fit when we discuss God's Holy Days

and what they represent.

Even those who responded to Peter and the other Apostles there in Acts 2, as the Church was beginning, were called of God. Verse 37 shows that they were PRICKED *in their hearts* and then asked what they should do. This pricking was actually the Spirit of God working *with* them in their own personal calling due to the teachings they were hearing from God's called and chosen Apostles.

Even though these people were not yet converted, God's Spirit was WITH them because of God's calling, and their hearts (their minds) were being stirred. Because of this pricking of their hearts by God's Spirit, they followed Peter's instructions of repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Their sins were thus forgiven, which reconciled them to God, and God then gave them the *gift* of His Holy Spirit WITHIN them.

This special calling is given to those whom God chooses to be a part of the firstfruits with Christ in His Kingdom. They are those whom, in this present age, God is working with to overcome and be made ready to rule *with* Christ. They are being called now to assist Him in the Kingdom in bringing salvation to the rest of mankind. Again, we will see this in more detail as we cover the Holy Days and what they picture.

In John 17 we find the true "Lord's Prayer," as it is what Christ prayed to the Father just before His death. Christ first prayed for those whom the Father had already given Him (vs. 9, 15). Yet that was not all He prayed about. He went on to pray about all those the Father would give Him in the future — again, by God's calling — who would come as a result of hearing the teachings of the way of righteousness and true holiness (vs. 20).

In this same prayer, Christ repeated the idea of "whom THE FATHER has given to me" in verses 2, 6, 9, 11, and 24. Christ even spoke in parables so that others, not yet being called, could not understand. In Matthew 13:10, the disciples asked why He spoke unto them in parables. Christ answered, "Because *it is given unto you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, BUT TO THEM IT IS NOT GIVEN" (vs. 11).

God has not chosen to call everyone NOW to salvation. Despite what many in this world believe, today is NOT the *only* day of salvation! Isaiah 49:8 says so. But what about II Corinthians 6:2? The Apostle Paul quoted from Isaiah 49:8, which rightly say, "A day of salvation." The fact is that both passages, in their original languages, lack the word "the"! It is, of course, true that today indeed is *the* day of salvation for those whom God has called and whose minds have been opened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They have entered into that process of salvation. But to say that this is THE day of salvation grossly limits the power of God!

Let's go back to the day in which Paul wrote II Corinthians 6:2. He wrote that letter in about 55 AD. If Paul indeed said "THE day of salvation," then we today — about 1950 years removed — are without hope of salvation! And even Paul was merely *quoting* what had been written even hundreds of years before his day. Was *then* THE day of salvation? Of course not.

Today, then, is A day of salvation — specifically for the Church, whom God is calling *now* to be the firstfruits with Christ in the Kingdom at His return as already described above. Yet, it is not the ONLY one. Instead, God has planned for "A day of salvation" for all mankind — each one of us in our own order, or time, as God has designed it!

Yet in God's master plan, the Church is being made up first. It is the firstfruits of the great spiritual harvest of souls in God's plan of salvation for all mankind, and Jesus Christ is the FIRST of those firstfruits — the *chief* cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; Col. 1:18; Rom. 8:29). These are they who will have been called *in this present age* to become the governing body with and under Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God. They are being called *now* to be in the FIRST Resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6. They will be the first (with Christ) to actually become *inheritors* of that which they are now only heirs and for which they continue to hope (Rom. 8:23-25).

Yet since there is a *First* Resurrection, then there must naturally be more that follow! And therein we find the fate of the majority of all mankind fulfilled —

either of *sin* unto the second death in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, or of *obedience* unto righteousness and the inheritance of all things (Rom. 6:16; Rev. 21:7-8).

Thus, when Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, he was primarily writing to a group of people whom God had already called in this Church Age to be part of that First Resurrection. So it is that we find him writing about that resurrection in I Corinthians 15:20-28. Paul explains that Christ, having risen from the dead, has thus become “the firstfruits of them that slept,” or of all who have died (vs. 20). Because Adam — the first man — brought the penalty of death through sin upon mankind, so must the resurrection of the dead occur through man.

Therefore, Christ Jesus became that sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Yet notice verse 22 very carefully. Although Paul was primarily speaking to those who would be in the First Resurrection at Christ’s second coming (vs. 23), he said that in Christ shall ALL be made alive! This being made alive is for all eternity, and not meant in the physical sense. It is all mankind, *in our own order (or time)*, as God Himself calls us and begins to work with us! But mark that well — ALL shall have the very same opportunity to be “made alive”!

After Christ’s second coming and the firstfruit harvest into that Kingdom (the First Resurrection), the end will come when all things will be delivered unto God the Father. The entire Kingdom will be delivered to the Father after He has completed His purpose for mankind. Christ will first reign until all of this is accomplished. All rebellion that is brought about by the god of this present world will be brought into subjection. Then, the last thing that will be destroyed is death itself, for all things will then be eternal and righteous, “that God may be all in all” (vs. 28)!

### **The Human Potential**

The potential of the human family is to become spirit-born members of the eternal God Family! The great God is in the process of reproducing Himself by the creation of mankind and through the creation of *holy, righteous, and godly*

*character* within each and every one of us. That is God’s incredible purpose for His creation. The AWESOME POTENTIAL of *human beings* is to become future spirit-beings in the Family of God. God is not willing to loose *any* (II Peter 3:9).

To further understand God’s Family and our incredible potential to be born into that Family (and how it includes all mankind and not just those who have been granted understanding now), we need to understand the plan of salvation as revealed by God through His Holy Days, which are still in effect today. We will go into this in the next installment of this Bible Study Series.

Still, before bringing this portion to a close, let’s review two more important passages in God’s word. We’ll begin in the eighth chapter of Romans, verses 5-9. Paul here explains that those who are “after the flesh” are simply those whom God has not yet called and thus are still *carnally minded*. Being carnally minded is the exact opposite of being *spiritually minded*. It is the state of mind in which mankind naturally finds itself because of sin. It is the mind that God has NOT YET called and brought to repentance of past sins. Specifically, it means that the person does not yet have God’s Holy Spirit within them.

In verse 7, Paul explains that a person in this state is *hostile* toward God and His way of righteousness. Of course, they most likely don’t even realize this, as a person who is deceived does not know that he is deceived! Such a person is not subject to God’s Laws — nor can they be subject to them — because *they do not understand them* and the need to keep them in order to please God (vs. 7-8). Paul adds that this is not so with those God has called *now*, as we have already been given the gift from God of His Holy Spirit within us. Therefore, we are His people who are subject to His Laws and ways of righteousness, and who indeed can be subject to them.

The other side of the coin, so to speak, is found in I Corinthians 2:9-16. It is the way of understanding of God’s way of life in the midst of a world that does not have that understanding.

Here Paul says that those who have been called and given God’s Holy Spirit have understanding of *spiritual things*

that the carnal mind CANNOT see or understand. The things, or ways of God are foolishness to the carnally minded person. They cannot understand God’s plan of salvation, His great purpose for mankind, the eternal God Family, God’s Sabbath, or His Holy Days. And the list goes on and on. Yet to those called *now* to be part of that firstfruit harvest of souls, that understanding has indeed been given!

Verse 11 explains that mankind is different from the animals in that there is a spirit in man that gives us the ability to think, reason, and learn the things pertaining to man. When God gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit, that Spirit couples with our human spirit and gives us understanding of *spiritual things* that the rest of the world does not know. For those whom God has called NOW, His Spirit has already become coupled with our human spirit, and thus we are now even different from the rest of mankind. We are now able to understand spiritual things, such as being subject to God’s Law (Rom. 8:5-9), because those things are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED.

When we receive the gift of God’s Holy Spirit in us, we become a NEW CREATION. And just as a human child grows unto the day of its birth, so too are we growing unto the day of the redemption of our bodies when we will fully and literally become the very sons of God (Rom. 8:23). And as we are called by God and given His Spirit, we are begotten and have the *hope* of salvation, the *hope* of glory, and the *hope* of eternal life as heirs — not yet inheritors — of God (Col. 1:27; I Thes. 5:8; Titus 3:7; Rom. 8:24-25). So it is that *all* mankind will one day become literal children of God in the great God Family.

In the next article, we will see the overall plan of salvation for the rest of mankind as well as those given God’s Spirit now. We will see how the timing of the salvation of all mankind is clearly revealed in God’s Holy Days and the two major *physical* harvests of ancient Israel that God created. All of this was set up by God to picture this amazing potential of the human family entering the very Kingdom of God as spirit-born members of His eternal Family. □