



Church of God-21st Century

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We Serve a *Faithful Creator...*

Almighty God Always Keeps His Promises!

What has God promised? Many are *unaware* of God's "**great and precious**" promises. Let us *confidently claim* His many wonderful promises!

by **Raymond F. McNair**

Have you grown "weary in well-doing"? Are you taking your *salvation* "for granted"? Do you treat God's gift of *eternal life* rather "cheaply" by *neglecting* so "great salvation"? In actual fact, have many of *God's people* lost their "first love" (Rev. 2:4)?

As the *people of God*—spiritual members of the very "Body of Christ"—we need to *re-examine ourselves*, to see if we are seriously letting down in our *zeal* for God, and for the priceless *gift of salvation* which our gracious, loving Creator has so freely offered us! The Apostle Paul encourages God's people as follows:

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall *know* that ye are not reprobates" (1 Cor. 13:5-6). We are admonished to be especially careful to *examine ourselves* before annually partaking of the bread and wine symbols, representing Christ's sacrifice as "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7; 11:28).

God's Word speaks of our salvation as "**this TREASURE** in earthly vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7). The Apostle Paul tells us that God's people have been "blessed...with **all spiritual blessings**" (Eph. 1:3). He also compares our salvation to the "unsearchable **RICHERS** of Christ" (Eph. 3:8), and speaks of our salvation as the "*prize* of the **HIGH CALLING** of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13). Furthermore, he tells us that the "*mystery*" of God consists of "*Christ in you, the hope of GLORY*" (Col. 1:26-27). The Apostle Paul speaks of the "**GREAT SALVATION**" which God has freely offered to His people (Heb. 2:3). God's *supreme goal* is that of "bringing **MANY SONS unto GLORY**" (Heb. 2:10).

Promise of a "Better Resurrection"

God's Word also states that those now being called are **God's "FIRST-FRUITS"** (James 1:18), who are destined to attain "**a BETTER**

RESURRECTION,” by taking part in the “*first resurrection*” (Heb. 11:35, cf. Rev. 20:5-6). But, in this world, God’s people have a tough, up-hill struggle against *three obstacles*: **1) Satan**, **2) his evil Society** (or “world”), and **3) the powerful down-pulling tendency of “human nature”**—all of which we have to struggle mightily against; but through *God’s Spirit* we shall *overcome* all three of these obstacles (1 Cor 10:13)!

Great and Precious Promises The *Apostle Peter* assures us, “But you are a **CHOSEN GENERATION, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, HOLY NATION, His own SPECIAL PEOPLE**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of *darkness* into His marvelous **LIGHT**; who once were *not a people* but are now the **PEOPLE OF GOD...**” (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Peter also informs us that God, “according to His *divine power* hath given unto us all things [including His] **exceeding GREAT and PRECIOUS PROMISES**: that by these ye might be *partakers* of the **DIVINE NATURE...**” (v. 4).

The Bible reveals that those whom the Father has called out of this *evil world of darkness and superstition*, are *highly favored* by God, and are promised very great *rewards* in the soon-coming Kingdom of God—if we will only “hang in there” and not let *anyone* or *anything* ever turn us aside from diligently following God and His way into His glorious Kingdom. Jesus Christ promises us, “And, behold, I come quickly; and **MY REWARD** is with Me. To give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12)!

How are many of God’s people missing out? Many brethren do not familiarize themselves with numerous *important promises* which our heavenly Father has given His people. God intends us to take advantage of His *many promises*, but we must first know precisely *what God has promised* in His Word. We must therefore familiarize ourselves with His many promises, then, we can actually *claim* those promises when in need—if we meet the *biblical conditions* which God says we must conform to.

What are some *vital conditions* we must meet before God will answer our prayers? **1)** We must “ask in [absolute] *faith*” (James 1:6), otherwise, we will *vainly* attempt to claim His promises (vv. 5-8). The Bible tells us that we must really *believe God* and His Word, *if* we expect Him to hear our prayers (Matt. 21:22). **2)** Always remember, “whatsoever we *ask*, we receive because we *keep His commandments*, and do those things that are *pleasing* in His sight” (1 John 3:22). **3)** Here is another very important condition we must meet: “And this is the *confidence [faith]* that we have in Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us**. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we *ask*, we know that we have the *petitions* that we desired of Him” (1 John 5:15). But how can we know God’s will? We need to diligently study His Word, so that we know what He has actually promised. “**Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the WILL OF THE LORD is**” (Eph. 5:17).

I very well remember that, as a young boy of about 12 years old, I observed an “engraved image” of a so-called “angel” of God as it was depicted on the headstone of a relative of mine. And I also vividly remember thinking the following thought: **“I wish God had made me an *angel*, rather than a *human being*.”** In my immature, childish thinking, I thought it would have been much better if God had *not* made me subject to *sickness, injury, pain, suffering* and *death*. I reasoned that it would have been much better if God had made it so that I did not get sick, or didn’t get *tired* after working hard helping with the many chores that had to be done on our farm, gathering in our crops, caring for our livestock, cutting our own firewood from a nearby forest, etc. I thought how much more *wonderful* it would have been had God created me as *a spirit-composed “angel”* rather than a lowly flesh and blood *human being!* But how wrong I was!

I later came to see that God has given His *human servants* many **“great and precious promises”** as recorded in His Word. Jesus Christ promised that the “meek” will **“inherit the earth”** (Matt. 5:5, see also Psa. 37:11, 22, 29). But God has never given such a promise to any of *His angels!* God’s Word tells us, “Do ye not know that the *saints* shall judge the *world*? And if the world shall be judged by *you*, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? **Know ye not that we [humans, then glorified] shall judge angels?”** (1 Cor. 6:2-3). I also later concluded that we humans must learn valuable lessons through *suffering!* Christ himself learned through *suffering*: “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He *suffered*” (Heb. 5:8).

And we are plainly told, “For unto the *angels* hath he *not* put in subjection the world [Gk. *oikoumene*] to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, **What is *man*, that thou art mindful of him? ...Thou madest him a little lower than the *angels*.... Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.... But now we see not yet all things put under him”** (Heb. 2:5-8). We are also told that Jesus, the “Captain of our salvation” (Heb. 2:10), has already qualified to rule this world, along with those glorified humans who will “overcome” and “qualify” to rule with Him!

Nowhere in the Bible are we told that the “angels” of God will be put over the then-glorified, immortal saints in the Kingdom of God. And nowhere does God’s Word say the angels will “inherit the earth.” We are plainly told that “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: **but the EARTH hath He given to the CHILDREN OF MEN**” (Psa. 115:16). Since Christ was a man, born of a woman, He will also inherit this earth along with the *countless billions* of brethren who will eventually accept God and His way; and together we shall “inherit the earth” as our *eternal inheritance*. God solemnly promises His saints that this beautiful earth will forever be our inheritance (Psa. 37).

After God makes this old earth into a beautiful **“new earth,”** and places the *New Jerusalem* here on this *renewed new earth*, God and Christ will *both* make their abode with the then-glorified, *immortal saints* (Rev. 20, 21, 22; 2 Pet. 3:7-14). But how is it that, of over *two billion “Christians,”* nearly all believe the reward of the saved will be to go to “Heaven” to live forever?

Nothing could be further from the Truth! God and Christ will come to this *re-formed* new earth and will forever dwell with us (Rev. 21 & 22).

“Utopia” Right Here on Earth!

The Bible clearly reveals that glorified humans will inherit this earth *after* it is *renewed* and made very beautiful. God promises, “And I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*.... And I John saw the **HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM**, *coming down from God* out of heaven.... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with *men* [who will then have become *immortal* spirit beings] and *He* will dwell with *them*, and they shall be *His people*, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. **And God shall wipe away all TEARS from their eyes; and there shall be no more DEATH, neither SORROW, nor CRYING, neither shall there be any more PAIN:** for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:1-4, see also Isa. 66:17). What a wonderful time that will be when, instead of men going up to *heaven* to dwell with God, He will bring “heaven” to this earth, where He and Jesus Christ will then dwell with mankind.

What will this new earth then be like? “And there shall be *no more curse*: but the THRONE OF GOD and the LAMB shall be in it [the *New Jerusalem*]; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall *see His face* and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no more *night* there; and they need no candle, neither light of the *sun*; for the Lord God giveth them light: **and they shall REIGN for ever and ever**” (Rev. 22:3-5).

A Most Amazing Prophecy What does God’s Word mean when it says God will “**PLANT the HEAVENS**”? “I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee with the shadow of mine hand that I may **PLANT THE HEAVENS**, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto *Zion* [God’s children], **THOU ART MY PEOPLE**” (Isa. 51:16). Is it reasonable to believe that, once God has saved all of the “humans” who freely accept His free offer of immortality, that He and His children will just “sit back and enjoy themselves” as they live on the beautiful, newly re-formed earth? Is it not more likely that God will use those who are redeemed from the earth to help Him “harvest” countless trillions of “people” whom He will later create and place on other planets? In any case, it is certain that we will not just sit around *idly doing nothing* through eternity.

After God has perfected His work here on this earth, making it His own perfect **Universe-ruling Headquarters**, will He then use the *glorified saints* to continue the awesome task of assisting Him in taking salvation to *countless trillions* of other humans whom He will create and place on other “planets”—thereby giving them *immortality* if they obey Him and qualify, just as He has done with us “humans” on this earth?

Whether or not Isaiah 51:16 implies that God will create human-like beings on other planets, we *know* that all of God’s *glorified saints* will have a very *productive* and *glorious* future in the everlasting Kingdom of God, where we are told that we “**shall reign for ever and ever**” (Rev. 22:5). Since we are

to “reign forever,” it is quite natural to ask: “Over *what*, or over *whom*, will we reign?”

Think seriously about that for a moment! What an *awesome future* will be given to us as we serve God with *joy* and *accomplishment* in our Father’s eternal Kingdom (John 14:2)! What a wonderful future we all have to look forward to—if we *continue* “keeping God’s commandments,” and “doing those things which please Him!”

“Great and Precious Promises!”

The Apostle Peter unveils the mind-boggling magnitude of *God’s promises* to His people. He reminds us that God, through “**His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to** [eternal] *life* and *godliness*, through the knowledge of Him who called us to *glory* and *virtue*, by which have been given to us **exceeding great and PRECIOUS PROMISES**, that through *these* you may be partakers of the **DIVINE NATURE**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:2-4).

What does Peter mean by us partaking of the “*divine nature*”? Clearly, he means that God will *elevate man* from his lowly carnal, weak and beggarly state of *human frailty* up to the very *God plane* by placing us all in His great “**DIVINE FAMILY**”—for whom the “**WHOLE FAMILY** in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:15). Most professing Christians somehow cannot grasp this simple fact that we are all to be *elevated* from the *human plane* up to the *divine plane*, according to God’s Master Plan.

This same apostle further explains what he means: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has **BEGOTTEN us again** to a living hope through the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an *inheritance incorruptible* and undefiled and that does not fade away, *reserved in heaven* for you who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.... In this you greatly *rejoice*, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various *trials*, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than *gold* that perishes...may be found to *praise, honor* and *glory* [at His *Coming*] whom having not seen you love [and] rejoice with *joy unexpressable*...full of *glory*” (1 Pet. 1:3-8).

Peter then takes us back to a pre-historic *time frame* when God formulated His great *Master Plan* by which He would later offer salvation to *all* humans who would accept His free gift of *immortality*. He says we were [redeemed] “with the *precious blood of Christ*, as a LAMB without blemish and without spot. He [Jesus] **indeed was FOREORDAINED before the foundation of the world** [*kosmos*], but was manifest in these last times [but, says Peter] God...raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (vv. 18-21). True Christians must be “**born again** [more properly translated, “**BEGOTTEN again**”] not of corruptible *seed* [*sperm*] but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (v. 23).

God’s Wonderful Master Plan

Many have failed to understand that, even before the *beginning of the world*, God Almighty formulated a great Master Plan by which He would make salvation freely available to the *countless billions* of humans whom He planned to create here upon this beautiful earth. The “Golden Text” of the Bible states: “For God so loved the world that **He GAVE His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not *perish* [*die in the Second Death*, Rev. 20:6, 14] but have *everlasting life*” (John 3: 16).

What is God’s *transcendent purpose* for “man” here on this earth? God *promises* us that He fully intends to bring “**many sons unto glory**” (Heb. 2:10). He will eventually give *everyone* who will have lived upon this earth a *chance* to understand and follow Him and His way. It is His will that *all* be “saved.” “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **Who will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the TRUTH.... Who gave Himself a ransom for all...”(1 Tim. 2:3-6).

But God made us humans *free moral agents*, and He requires that each of us must *freely choose* to obey Him and follow His way, after He first reveals His Truth to us—which He will do in His own time and way (John 6:44)! God will never *force* anyone to choose “life” and “His way.” However, He will require everyone to *choose* whether or not they are willing to live forever under Him and His way of “love” (1 John 4:8, 16).

Many have never fully considered that the *greatest gift* anyone (whether *God, angels or man*) ever gave was the **GIFT/SACRIFICE** of God’s obedient Son on behalf of all humanity, in order that we might: **1) be forgiven our sins, 2) and receive the Spirit** of the resurrected, indwelling presence of Christ into our hearts and minds, thereby granting us *eternal life* (John 6:47-58). When the Father agreed to give up His Son to die on behalf of all mankind, this was the *greatest gift* that any being could ever make! We all need to realize more fully the *mind-boggling magnitude* of the “divine Sacrifice” made on behalf of both the *Father* and His dear *Son!* That “gift” will eventually result in the saving of *countless billions* of humans who will be crowned with *immortality*, after they voluntarily accept the Father’s priceless gift (that is, “Christ’s sacrifice”) on their behalf.

What Is the “Mystery” of God?

The Apostle Paul speaks of God’s great “**mystery**” of salvation in the following words. He says that this “**MYSTERY...has been hidden** from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to *His saints*. To them God willed to make known what are the **RICHERS** of the glory of this **MYSTERY** among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you the hope of glory [immortality]**” (Col. 1: 26-27). Mankind’s only hope of achieving *immortality* is through *Jesus Christ* and through Him alone (John 10:1-30). Jesus is the “**STONE**” which the “religious authorities” of the first century AD rejected. And Peter tells us, “**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved**” (Acts 4:11-12; Acts 2:38-39)!

The Awful Fate of the Wicked

If we *reject* Jesus Christ as our only Savior, then we can never be saved, nor can we receive God's free gift of *immortality* (Heb. 6:1-12)! God will not **force** His great gift of Christ's sacrifice on anyone! "For if we **sin willfully** after we have received the knowledge of the **TRUTH**, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.... Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, he will be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, counted the *blood [Christ's blood]* of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:1-39).

If we willfully reject His wonderful gift of *immortality* and choose the "way of death" (Deut. 30: 15-20), we will, of necessity have to experience the "**second death**" which is **eternal death** (Rev. 20:6-15). The incorrigibly wicked will become mere "ashes" under the feet of the righteous (Mal. 4:1). By their own choice, they will forever pass into *total oblivion!*

Notice how Paul described the *awful fate* of those who *willfully turn* from God and His way: "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we **drift away**. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, **how shall we escape if we NEGLECT so GREAT SALVATION?**" (Heb. 2:1-3; 6:1-11; 10:26-31).

What are some of the important "**mysteries**" contained in the overall "**mystery**" of God which Christ and the N.T. apostles mentioned? God's Word fully explains many *mysteries* that His people can understand. **Here are a few of the many "mysteries" and important questions which are clearly explained in the Word of God:**

1) Who and what is *God*? 2) Who and what are the "*holy angels*" of God? 3) Who and what is *man*? 4) Who and what are the *Devil* and his *angels*? 5) What is *man's incredible potential* and *future destiny*? 6) What is man's *reward*—to live forever *in heaven* with God and His angels? 7) Or, is man's destiny to *inherit* this *beautiful earth*, and dwell therein forever (Matt. 5:5; Psa. 37)? 8) Exactly what is *salvation*? 9) And how may we freely receive God's wonderful gift of *immortality*? 10) Why must men *suffer*, and especially why *innocent people suffer and die* at the hands of evil men? 11) Why didn't God create men as "*spirit beings*" so they would *not* have to suffer so much *anguish, pain, misery* and *death*? 12) **Was there a better way for men to have been given salvation?**

The Bible reveals the answers to the above questions. **It is clear that if there had been a way for God to "create perfect character instantly" by divine fiat, He would have done so!** Such perfect spiritual character in any "free moral agent" can only be the result of: (a) **free choice** of such a being to *choose* for himself, and (b) he must be given a **sufficient period of time** in which to prove he really wants to *choose* God's way, and have a firm resolve to stick by that decision!

Let us never treat God's wonderful offer of salvation cheaply! How much do we treasure God's freely offered gift of salvation/immortality? Do we treat our salvation rather *cheaply*? Or, do we look upon it as a precious

“PEARL of great price” (Matt. 13:46)? “For it is...God who commanded *light* to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.... But we have *this TREASURE* [of salvation] in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of *God* and not of *us*” (2 Cor. 4:6-7).

Do we really *highly prize* this treasure of God’s Truth—which contains many very important “mysteries”? When Christ’s disciples asked Him to explain the meaning of a parable of the “Sower,” Jesus told them, “To you [My disciples] it has been given to know the **MYSTERIES** of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may *not* see [and] may *not* understand’” (Luke 8:10).

Isaiah’s version of this says, “Go, and tell this people, *Hear* ye indeed, but *understand not*; and *see* ye indeed, but *perceive not*. Make the *heart* of this people fat, and make their *ears* heavy, and shut their eyes; *lest* they see with their *eyes*, and *hear* with their *ears*, and *understand* with their heart, and CONVERT, and be healed” Isa. 6:10).

Truly, God’s Word contains *sound answers* to all of man’s *spiritual questions* and gives *realistic solutions* to all of the *spiritual problems* that confront mankind. Why, then, are so many *ignorant* of the answers to the important spiritual questions? Many simply do not really diligently *study* and *live* by the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). If, like the noble Bereans, we have *open minds* (Acts 17:11), and *if we obey God* and “keep God’s commandments”—then “whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we *keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*” (1 John 3:22).

Further, we are told, “And this is the *confidence [faith]* that we have in Him, that, *if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us*” (5:14). And the Apostle James tells us, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye *ask amiss....*” God does not hear the prayers of those who refuse to *obey* Him and are unwilling to do those things which please Him. We are told that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: **a good understanding have all they that do His commandments**” (Psa. 111:10).

The *Prophet Isaiah* also tells us that if we cease committing *wickedness*, and really obey God, then He will hear us and answer our prayers (Isa. 58:3-14). “Behold, the LORD’S *hand* is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His *ear heavy*, that it cannot hear: **But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear**” (59:1-2). Verses 3-19 further explain the importance of living upright, godly lives—if we truly want our prayers to be heard by the Most High Creator God.

An angel of God told the *Prophet Daniel*, “But thou, O Daniel... many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.... And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: **for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end**. Many shall be purified and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do

wickedly, **and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand**” (Dan. 12:4, 9-10). Thus we see that *spiritual understanding* of the Word of God is dependent upon *two things*: **1)** our *obedience* to God and our *implicit faith* in Him and His Word, and **2)** God’s willingness to *reveal such spiritual knowledge* and understanding to us, when the *time* has come for Him to reveal such knowledge.

The really **big question** is: “Do we really value God’s freely given offer of salvation to us? Do we truly prize the many *infallible promises* He has given us? Here are a few of the many *hundreds of promises* which Almighty God gives His people:

1) God promises *eternal life* to all who accept Jesus Christ, and obey Him by keeping His commandments (Matt. 19:16-29; Rev. 22:14-19). “In hope of **ETERNAL LIFE** which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:3). **2)** God promises **life and health** to those who live by His Word (Prov. 3:1-10; 3 John 2). **3)** Our Creator promises *divine healing* to those who are sick, if we meet His conditions of *faith* and *obedience* (Exod. 15:25; James 5:13-16; Mark 16:17-18). **4)** Our great God promises complete *forgiveness* of all our sins (Psa. 103:3; Isa. 1:17-20; Rom. 8:1). **5)** God also promises—that His holy angel(s) will protect His people (Psa. 34:7; Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15). **6)** He also promises to give His people badly needed *wisdom, understanding* and *knowledge* (James 1:5-8). Much *wisdom* and *knowledge* is provided in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. **7)** God promises us that we will “inherit the earth” as our eternal inheritance (Matt. 5:5; Psa. 37). **8)** And the Great God also promises that all true “**overcomers**” will “**inherit all things**” (Rev. 21:7)! **We will become co-inheritors with our Creator God**, Who will graciously share all of His creation with all of His children! Besides these promises, He has given us literally hundreds more in His Word!

Highly Cherish Your “Spiritual Birthright”!

What will we do with the *wonderful knowledge* of God—containing many *infallible promises*, and of God’s *gracious offer* to freely bequeath *immortality* to all who *voluntarily choose* to obey Him and His Word? We have been offered a tremendous “**spiritual birthright**” which guarantees us **immortality**, to live in perfect *peace, joy* and *unity* for all eternity. Will we forget God’s many solemn promises to bless us with *such transcendent blessings*? Will we *to treat “cheaply” our wonderful spiritual birthright*? Will we, like Jacob’s profane brother *Esau*, “despise” our *spiritual birthright*, and give up that wonderful birthright for the Satanic clever enticements found in this world’s cheap pleasures, riches and deceitful allurements (Gen. 27:30; Heb. 12:14-17)?

“But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the CITY of the living God, the *heavenly Jerusalem* [the **New Jerusalem**, Rev. 21, 22], and to an innumerable company of *angels*, to the general assembly and **CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN** which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all,

and to the **SPIRITS OF JUST MEN** *made perfect*” (Heb. 12:22-23). God is “perfecting” in “His people” the “**spirits**” of just *men and women*, who have voluntarily yielded to Him and His way of life.

God is helping us overcome all wrong *attitudes* and “*imperfections of the spirit*” which we have acquired by contact with Satan’s utterly **corrupt world**. God is eliminating the *rough edges* in our character, and is “polishing” our *spiritual character* so it will forever shine as the **STARS** of heaven. But we must cooperate with Him *if* we are to overcome the *imperfections* in our character, by receiving more and more of the perfect “mind” and “character” of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). After going through many “fiery trials and tests,” our God-like character will shine like **polished gold** that has been *refined* in the fire (1 Pet. 1:6-7)!

The *Prophet Daniel* describes the time of the *First Resurrection* (the “resurrection of the just”) when God’s people “shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the BOOK [Book of Life]. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [be *resurrected*], some to **everlasting life.... And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the STARS for ever and ever**” (Dan. 12:1-3)!

Those who will be with Christ at His glorious *Second Coming* (1Thes. 5:13-18), will be among the relatively few who have been “**CALLED, and CHOSEN and FAITHFUL**” (Rev. 17:14). Jesus warned, “Many be CALLED, but *few* are **CHOSEN**” to become members of His True Church, the spiritual “Body of Christ” in this N. T. Church Age (Matt. 20:16)!

The *Prophet Malachi* also describes this process of *spiritual refinement*, and the end result, which will produce **beautiful God-like character**: “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a **book of remembrance** was written before Him for them that *feared* the LORD.... And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up **MY JEWELS**, and I will spare them.... Then shall ye return and discern between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not” (Mal. 3:16-18).

Daniel and *Malachi* describe the wonderful “**First Resurrection**” (the “**better resurrection**”), when Christ will tell His obedient children, “**Come, ye blessed of My Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you from the foundation of the world**” (Matt. 25: 34). The *righteous* will then be given joyous “**ETERNAL LIFE**” in God’s glorious Kingdom—and will forever *shine* “as the *stars*” in heaven above (Dan. 12:3)!

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