

LIFE AFTER DEATH?



LIFE AFTER DEATH?

by Herbert W. Armstrong

THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD.
It is a free educational service in the
public interest, published by the
Worldwide Church of God.

© 1978 Worldwide Church of God
All rights reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

Do you have an IMMORTAL SOUL? Do the dead know what the living are doing? Does suicide "end it all"? Will you meet departed loved ones again? Did departed ones "pass away" to heaven or hell?

WHY THIS MYSTERY about life after death? WHY so many beliefs of so many different religions? How can we KNOW? Can we believe God? Adam and Eve didn't. Few believed Christ—that is, few believed what He SAID! Could we believe God—if He *told us*?

I said to my wife more than fifty years ago, "I know the Bible says, 'Thou shalt keep Sunday.'" "How do you know?" she asked. "Did you read it?"

"No, but I know it's there, because all these Christian churches get their religion from the Bible, and they all keep Sunday."

"Why don't you look it up and show it to me?" she challenged.

But I couldn't find it.

I chanced to read in Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is DEATH . . ." "Now wait a minute!" I exclaimed, surprised. "In Sunday school they taught me the wages we earn for sinning is IMMORTAL LIFE, not death—eternal life *in hell fire*." Then I read the remainder of the verse ". . . but the GIFT of God is eternal life. . . ."

"That's a shocker!" I expressed, further surprised. "I thought I already *had* eternal life. I'm an IMMORTAL SOUL."

I had left church and Sunday school when I was eighteen. But I had been brought up in an established and respectable Christian denomination. I became intrigued. I had heard the preacher say, "The Bible says, when we all get to HEAVEN. . . ." I chanced to read where Jesus said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." And after reading a few more plain biblical statements, I began to believe that even the churches TODAY *do not believe* what Jesus SAID!

Yes, more than fifty years ago my mind was *swept clean* of all previous teaching, suppositions and ideas about things

relating to God. I had then *proved* the infallible inspiration of the Bible in its original writing.

I was right to believe what God says in His Word.

What *does* the Bible say about life after death? Did anyone ever die and then actually *experience* a life *after death*—and who could PROVE IT and explain to us what that life was like?

The answer is YES. Jesus Christ Himself died and was DEAD. But He rose from the dead and was seen by MANY—including His disciples, who had been with Him for three and a half years *before* He died, and forty days *after* His resurrection. And they went about loudly proclaiming that they were eyewitnesses of His LIFE AFTER DEATH.

In I Cor. 15:22-23, you will read: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive [after death]. But every man in his own order. . . .”

The fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians is the “resurrection chapter” of the Bible. Its subject is the resurrection to LIFE, *after death!* But there is, in God’s Master Plan an *order*—or succession—of resurrections.

Continue: “Christ the firstfruits”—this occurred more than 1900 years ago—“afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end . . .” (verses 23-24).

Later in this booklet a great deal will be said about the resurrection of those “that are Christ’s”—Spirit-begotten Christians. But what of the *others*?

The same ALL who die in Adam, it says, “in Christ shall . . . they be made alive”—by a resurrection from the dead. Verse 23 says, “. . . they that are Christ’s [shall be resurrected] at his [second] coming”—now imminent—in our present generation. “Then cometh the end” (verse 24)—but the details of the resurrection of others—the overwhelming majority of all who ever lived—are recorded elsewhere.

In Rev. 20 we find described two more resurrections.

First, verse 4, the saints who are Christ’s are to live and reign on the earth with Christ for one thousand years. Satan will be put away (verses 1-2) but the rest of those who have died will not live again until after that thousand years (verse 5). Then, beginning verse 11:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God” (the second resurrection); “and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged . . . according to their works.”

This will be by far the GREATEST resurrection, in numbers resurrected. It will include the BILLIONS who have lived CUT OFF from God—who were *not then* judged.

The Bible is essentially the Book concerning the nation Israel. The resurrection of all of them, not previously called to spiritual salvation, is recorded in Ezekiel 37.

The prophet Ezekiel was taken in a vision and set down in a valley filled with very dry bones. In verse 11 it is recorded that God told him that these bones were the whole house of Israel. They—these dead skeletons—were pictured saying, “Our bones are dried and our hope is lost.”

But the prophet was told to say to these dry skeletons, “Thus saith the [Eternal] God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.”

In the vision, before God explained to the prophet the identity of the great valley of skeletons, the prophet was told to say to the dry bones, “Thus saith the [Eternal] God . . . Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live” (verses 5-6). Now back to verse 13: “And ye shall know that I am the [Eternal], when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the [Eternal] have spoken it, and performed it, saith the [Eternal].”

This prophecy is of a resurrection to mortal flesh-and-blood life—not a resurrection, like that of the saints at Christ’s Second Coming, to immortal Spirit-composed self-existent life.

God had never offered Old Testament Israel His Spirit,

or spiritual salvation. Only material and national promises—and even that for obedience which they refused to give.

But now, in this Great White Throne resurrection, along with all other peoples who had been CUT OFF from God, these Israelites (including those who were uncalled even after Christ came), would be resurrected to mortal, breathing, flesh-and-blood life. They all, hopefully, are then to come to really KNOW that the Eternal is Lord, and He shall, upon their eventual conversion, put His Holy Spirit within them. They, too—along with all of every nation, who had not been specially called prior to the Millennium, shall live again physically in this resurrection.

And after a period of growth and overcoming, then shall come their spiritual salvation—with no Satan around to deceive them!

Now back to Revelation 20. Verses 13 to 15 indicate that there will then be a last, final resurrection of the incorrigible who have rejected the eternal salvation offered them. They, with any such living at the end of the Millennium, will then die the *second death*—utter extinction—in the lake of fire, described by Peter as the face of the earth becoming a molten mass.

Malachi adds: “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall *burn them up*, saith the [Eternal] of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth . . . and ye shall tread down the wicked; for *they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet* in the day that I shall do this, saith the [Eternal] of hosts” (Mal. 4:1-3). “. . . and they shall be as though they had not been” (Obad. 16).

But, what in the meantime—what between the second of one’s death and the resurrection? The Bible teaching, contrary to much religious and church teaching—that is the WORD OF GOD teaching—is that the dead ARE DEAD—utterly unconscious. Notice the inspired wisdom of Solomon: “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything . . .”—the RSV translates it, “the dead KNOW NOTHING” (Eccl. 9:5).

Recently a Worldwide Church of God minister told me of experiences he has had with three successive would-be suicides. Each time he said to them, "Well, go right ahead—but first you'd better learn what happens at the moment you die. So far as your consciousness goes, the next fraction of a second you will wake up in the resurrection—and if you commit this self-murder, you'll *still* be facing all your problems, and the guilt of this **SELF-MURDER** crime in addition. Why not solve the problems **NOW**, before you commit this murder?" Not one of the three went on through with his intended suicide!

So, there's nothing to gain by "ending it all," thinking that is the *easy* way out. Death only brings *instant* awakening in the resurrection. You will know absolutely **NOTHING** from the second you die, till the second you awake in the resurrection. These men, the minister explained, had supposed that suicide would **END IT ALL**—and they'd be out of their troubles, but when they learned they would still have their troubles plus a **MURDER** charge against them in **THAT JUDGMENT**, it no longer seemed that suicide was the "quick way out of it all."

No, death is not a friend, but an **ENEMY!** Christ came to **DESTROY DEATH**—to make a happy, peaceful, abundant life possible for all—for each in his own due time. He came that we might have **LIFE**, "and have it more abundantly."

There most certainly is life after death—and Christ made possible a transcendent human potential so great it seems incredible. He came to **DIE** in our stead—to pay the penalty we have incurred *for us*, and to **GIVE US LIFE!**

Christ Himself taught that there is **LIFE AFTER DEATH.**

He taught the Pharisee, Nicodemus, but Nicodemus didn't believe Him! Jesus said to him, "... I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not" (John 3:12).

Why didn't the Pharisee, Nicodemus, understand when Jesus said to him: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"?

Why do people not understand those words today? How many know, today, that Jesus' gospel was a sensational, never-before-proclaimed **NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT?**

Jesus Was a Newscaster

Those in Judea knew—or should have known—Malachi's prophecy concerning this. It was the gospel of God—and the word "gospel" means GOOD NEWS!

Jesus was a NEWSCASTER. His news was something absolutely NEW—never before proclaimed to mankind. It was the most wonderful NEWS ever reported, actually almost too wonderful for humans to believe. It was news of the utterly transcendent potential of man.

The tremendous message that Jesus brought was not a report of past events. It was ADVANCE news of an almost unbelievable UTOPIAN WORLD TOMORROW! It was news of life after death. And it was news that we may be BORN AGAIN! Yet almost nobody understands it!

Why has it never been recognized by the world as the stupendous NEWS that it actually was?

Because first-century enemies of the gospel SUPPRESSED IT!

The Church of God, on the foundation of the original apostles and Christ, was founded on the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 31. About two decades later, when the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the churches of Galatia, it had already been suppressed, and false ministers had turned the people to a DIFFERENT GOSPEL. Paul wrote, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and *would pervert the gospel of Christ*" (Gal. 1:6-7). Again, in Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness *suppress the truth*" (RSV). And in II Corinthians 11 Paul speaks of false apostles of Satan (verses 13-15) who *come preaching* "another gospel" (verses 4, 13, 15).

The time was at hand, when Jesus preached, for this message to be announced! The time is at hand, today, for its true MEANING to be made so PLAIN that people may UNDERSTAND IT! (Matt. 24:14.)

It WILL BE, in this booklet. And it is a crucial CHALLENGE to you who now read it! And you have to UNDERSTAND what

was that news announcement, or you can never UNDERSTAND what Jesus meant about being “born again.”

What Was the News?

Notice, briefly, first, what that astonishing NEWS message was! The preannouncement, in Malachi’s prophecy, says: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek [the Messiah], shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant . . .” (Mal. 3:1).

Now notice the beginning of the MESSENGER’S proclamation of the MESSAGE. It is recorded in Mark’s gospel, chapter 1: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets. . . .” Then follows the citation from Malachi, written above. That is followed by the account of John the Baptist, preparing the way before the messenger. Then, verses 14-15: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”—that is, BELIEVE the good news!

What IS the Kingdom of God?

What did He mean—the Kingdom of God? Jesus’ whole message—His gospel—was about the KINGDOM OF GOD! Yet few know anything about it, today.

A kingdom is (a) a NATION composed of people, and (b) the GOVERNMENT of the nation. (For a more complete eye-opening explanation, write for our free booklet *Just What Do You Mean . . . Kingdom of God?*)

In some cases, the people of a nation are the descendants—the children—of one man. The nation of Turkey is descended, in part, from ancient Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. He was the father of the nation Israel. Before the twins were born, God said to their mother, Rebekah, “Two nations are in thy womb . . .” (Gen. 25:23).

Now Jesus the Messiah was to come as “the messenger of the COVENANT.” The “old covenant” had established the human children of Israel as a NATION or KINGDOM of humans, called the

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. Jesus came as the messenger—heralding the message of the NEW covenant that shall set up the Spirit-composed children of GOD as the Kingdom of God!

As the ancient kingdom of Israel was composed of the human FAMILY of the human man Israel, so the Kingdom of God will be composed of the *Divine* Family of the Divine God!

And what does this have to do with life after death? It has *everything* to do with it!

WHY Jewish Rulers Rejected the Message

The Jewish rulers of Jesus' day thought He was proclaiming a government to be set up immediately—to overthrow the Roman Empire, then ruling Judea as a vassal state.

One of these prominent Jews was a man named Nicodemus, mentioned earlier. He was a Pharisee, and the Pharisees were hostile to Jesus because of this new gospel. Nicodemus, however, wanted to meet this astonishing messenger and discuss it with him. To avoid criticism from his colleagues, he came to Jesus by night.

“We know,” he said, “that you are a teacher come from God.”

The “we” implies that the divine identity of the messenger and the source of His message was known to the Pharisees. But they were “NOW” people, concerned with protecting their status as rulers under the Roman government, not with receiving revelations from God.

Jesus perceived the import of Nicodemus's first words. His message was the good news of the coming WORLD GOVERNMENT of GOD—that is, the KINGDOM OF GOD, which shall rule all nations with the GOVERNMENT of God.

These Jewish rulers feared that message. Jesus was of their race—a Jew. If they did not oppose Him, they feared being shorn of their power and perhaps put to death as subversives threatening the overthrow of the Roman government. And the Pharisees thought Jesus proclaimed the *immediate* takeover of that rule!

Not of This Age

Therefore Jesus did not waste words. He struck straight through to the crux point—the Kingdom of God is *not of this*

world—this time, this age—but of the WORLD TOMORROW—a different and a following AGE. Not composed of humans, but of immortals—the GOD FAMILY!

So Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Notice carefully that being “born again” has a vital connection with the Kingdom of God—with THE FACT that it is not of this time—this age.

But Jesus’ abrupt opening statement left Nicodemus confused. The religious leaders and the hundreds of denominations and sects professing Christianity today are confused and deceived! Today’s religionists put a different twist on it than did Nicodemus, however.

Nicodemus *did* understand clearly what is meant by being *born*. He knew it meant being delivered from his mother’s womb. It meant being delivered into the WORLD! Today’s religious leaders read into it a different meaning! What Nicodemus could not understand was *how*—in what manner—anyone could be born AGAIN! And of course, being carnal-minded, he could only conceive of a second *physical* birth. But he *knew* what being *born* meant!

Born Human a Second Time?

Puzzled, he asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” He was not confused about what is meant by being BORN. What Nicodemus could not understand was a *second* birth. He thought Jesus was talking about a second *human* birth.

He was unable to conceive of any but a second *physical* birth. His mind could not *grasp* spiritual things.

Now Jesus had made clear that the Kingdom of God is something that can be seen—but not until or UNLESS one is “born again.” Not during his physical *lifetime*! Also, verse 5, the Kingdom of God is something a man may *enter into*—but not until after he is born AGAIN—another and entirely different birth.

Here is the crux point that explains it all: Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*.”

Man is now flesh—human. He is MATERIAL SUBSTANCE. “Dust thou art,” said God to Adam, “and unto dust shalt thou return.” Again, “And the [Eternal] God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 3:19; 2:7).

Those Born Again to BE Spirit

But, said Jesus plainly, when one is born of the Spirit HE WILL BE SPIRIT! Look at it! Read it in your own Bible.

The Kingdom of God will be composed of SPIRIT BEINGS—not of humans!

At birth of human flesh, one is delivered from his mother’s womb into *this* world. When born of the Spirit, one will be delivered from the CHURCH of God (physical)—the mother of begotten Christians—into the KINGDOM of God (a Kingdom of SPIRIT BEINGS).

Man is now COMPOSED of flesh—material substance—matter. When BORN AGAIN he will BE spirit—a SPIRIT BEING, no longer human. He will be COMPOSED of Spirit—of Spirit composition—with life inherent—with self-containing life—not then existing by the breath of air and the circulation of blood.

Of the next age when the Kingdom of God will rule the world—the life after death—the next LIFE—Jesus said, “They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God . . .” (Matt. 22:30). Marriage is a physical, fleshly union. In the age of God’s Kingdom, when “born again” we shall BE spirit, not flesh. Born of God as SPIRIT BEINGS, no longer human. Angels are spirits—composed of Spirit (Heb. 1:7). Jesus did not say we shall then *be* angels—but AS the angels—sexless and composed of SPIRIT. Angels are spirit beings—created as such—but not begotten and BORN of God as God’s own born children. We therefore shall be greater than angels!

Jesus explained this further to Nicodemus: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

You cannot see wind. Wind is compared to spirit. It is INVISIBLE. That’s why mortal FLESH, as we now are, cannot SEE

the Kingdom of God. Those who inherit it will *be* spirit—normally invisible to eyes still human.

Not While Flesh and Blood

The apostle Paul made clear that the Kingdom of God is something a human may INHERIT, but not in THIS AGE—not while he is composed of material flesh.

“The first man is of the earth, earthy [human]; the second man is the Lord from heaven [a divine God being]” (I Cor. 15:47).

This is what Jesus was saying to Nicodemus. He was of the earth, earthy—human. He was flesh, not spirit. He was born of the flesh, so that’s what he was—FLESH. When one is born of the Spirit, he will BE spirit. Paul is here explaining the same truth.

But we cannot BE spirit in this present age.

THERE IS A TIME ELEMENT CONCERNED WITH BEING BORN AGAIN INTO GOD’S KINGDOM.

Continue, now, in I Corinthians 15:49: “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall [future—resurrection] also bear the image of the heavenly” (verse 49). As we are now flesh, we shall be SPIRIT—at the resurrection, that is, when we shall be “BORN AGAIN”—when we shall *see*, enter into, the Kingdom of God—when we *are* spirit—at the resurrection!

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [be dead], but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the then living] shall be *changed*” (verses 50-52). *There* is the TIME when we may be born again—when we may *see*, enter into, and inherit the Kingdom—when “BORN AGAIN,” and NOT BEFORE!

How shall we be changed? The next words answer! “For this corruptible [flesh, as we now are] must put on incorruption [Spirit—that which is born of God *is* spirit], and this mortal must put on immortality”—be changed from material flesh to spirit!

Until born again, we cannot *see* the Kingdom of God—Jesus to Nicodemus, John 3:3.

Until born again, we cannot *enter into* the Kingdom of God—Jesus to Nicodemus, John 3:5.

Until no longer flesh, but *changed* into SPIRIT, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God—Jesus to Nicodemus, John 3:6-8.

While still flesh and blood (as Nicodemus was and we are) we cannot *inherit* the Kingdom of God—Paul to the Corinthians, I Cor. 15:50.

Until the resurrection, at Christ's coming, we shall not be changed from corruptible flesh into incorruptible SPIRIT—Paul, I Cor. 15:50-53 and verses 22-23.

Until the resurrection, therefore, we cannot *see, enter into, or inherit* the Kingdom of God. We CANNOT BE BORN AGAIN UNTIL THE RESURRECTION!

Now Heirs—Not Yet Inheritors

While in our present status, born of the flesh and composed of flesh, we cannot see, enter into, or inherit the Kingdom of God. Notice, now, the status of the truly converted Christian, in this life—this world:

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). Unless one has received the Holy Spirit, and this Spirit is dwelling in him, he is not a Christian. Joining a church does not make one a Christian. Receiving and following God's Spirit does!

Spiritual Birth Process Compares to Physical

But now see how God's Spirit entering and dwelling in one compares to the physical sperm impregnating the ovum—the imparting of eternal SPIRIT life, later to produce a SPIRIT PERSON! A fertilized ovum—an embryo—is NOT a *born* human person. Life from the father has been imparted to it. He has begotten it, but neither embryo nor fetus is YET a *born* person. In the same manner the Spirit-begotten human is not, yet, a SPIRIT PERSON or BEING, as Jesus said he shall be *when* born again!

Continue: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (verse 11).

UNDERSTAND THIS! There is a direct comparison between having been born of the flesh and being born AGAIN of God. Jesus said that which is born of the flesh *is* flesh—a born *human*. That which is born of the Spirit (God) *is* spirit—a born SPIRIT PERSON!

A mortal human life *starts* when a sperm cell from the body of the father impregnates—imparts physical LIFE to—an ovum (egg cell) in the mother. At this point the father begets, sires. He does not “bring forth.” The mother does that, later. His part in the PROCESS leading to final birth is then *done*. BUT THERE IS A TIME ELEMENT. At the TIME of begettal, birth (parturition) has not YET occurred.

It is necessary to give this explanation, at this point, because the popular deception of a deceived traditional “Christianity” is to claim that when one “receives Christ,” “accepts Christ,” “professes Christ,” or first receives God’s Holy Spirit to dwell in him, he is already “BORN AGAIN.”

First, then, notice the physical type and comparison.

The TIME Element

In human physical reproduction, there is a TIME ELEMENT. From impregnation—*begettal* on the part of the father—having *conceived* on the part of the mother—to BIRTH, or *parturition*, or being delivered from the mother’s womb is a TIME ELEMENT of nine months.

That nine-month period is called *gestation*. Upon conception, the now fertilized *ovum* is called an *embryo*. A few months later, it is called a fetus. But *during* this nine-month period of *gestation*, we do not speak of the embryo-fetus as having been *born*. It is in the PROCESS toward birth. It is the child of its parents. But it is then the *unborn* child of its parents. The father has already begotten it—sired it. But the mother has not yet given *birth* to it. Yet it is, during the gestation period, the *unborn* child of its parents.

Now in being “born again,” the PROCESS of this birth begins when GOD’S divine SPIRIT-LIFE is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, from His very PERSON, entering to dwell within us. Repeat, from Romans 8: “But if the Spirit of him that raised

up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [change to immortal spirit] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11). This is describing the very same thing explained in I Corinthians 15:50-53, the resurrection.

I want to make this crystal clear. Millions of sincere professing Christians believe that when they profess Christ (or receive His Holy Spirit) they are "born again." What actually happens is this:

When one, after repentance, faith, and baptism receives the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God puts him into—baptizes him into—God's Church. The Church is called the body of Christ. So we read: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13).

The Church Our Mother

Again, the Church is called "Jerusalem above" or "the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22-23). Now notice, in Galatians 4:26: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

The analogy is this: When begotten by God the Father by receiving His Holy Spirit, we are put into the Church, which during this gestation period is our MOTHER.

The human mother of the fetus within her womb serves the function of feeding her unborn child with physical food, so that it may develop and grow physically. And also she carries it where she may best protect it from physical injury or harm, until parturition—delivery from her womb.

The spiritual mother—the Church—is commissioned to "feed the flock" (I Pet. 5:2) through the ministry which God has set in the Church "for the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man . . ." (Eph. 4:11-13). Just as the human fetus develops and grows physically during the PRE-birth gestation period, so WE, after begetting by God's Spirit, develop and grow SPIRITUALLY in PRE-birth state.

Human life *starts* with what the Bible terms "corruptible seed"—physical male sperm. Divine life *starts* with that which is incorruptible—the Holy Spirit of God entering the

human person. But as the human embryo must GROW till it becomes a fetus, which must GROW to the point of being born into the human family, so the Christian in whom divine life has been started by the gift of God's *incorruptible* Spirit must GROW toward perfection to be born into the God Family. He will *then* be perfect, unable to sin.

But—that perfection of holy righteous CHARACTER must be developed (with God's help and the in-filling of His Spirit during this *human* life—the spiritual “gestation” stage).

But not only is the Church to feed the members on the Word of God—spiritual food—but also to protect these conceived but yet unborn children of God from spiritual harm, as the very next verse shows: “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive . . .” (Eph. 4:14).

Then, at the time of the resurrection, we in the Church—the spiritual mother—shall be DELIVERED from her, and born into—brought forth into—the Kingdom, the Spirit-composed FAMILY of God.

Sons of God NOW

Now, further: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). The unborn child in his mother's womb is the child of his father and mother, though not *yet* born—delivered from the womb. So are we, if God's Spirit dwells in us—if we are being led by God's Spirit—children of God. Yet, at *this time*, we are in the *gestation* state, not yet *parturition*. And only HEIRS, not inheritors!

Continue: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be [future—at resurrection] also glorified together” (verse 17).

Now see how this passage designates the resurrection into GLORY, when we shall BE spirit, as a BIRTH!

“For the earnest expectation of the [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God”—that is *the time* of

Christ's coming to REIGN and of the resurrection to SPIRIT composition—"... because the [creation] itself also *shall be delivered [a birth]* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and *travaileth in pain* together until now" (verses 19-22).

Here is another comparison. We shall be delivered from *this world* (the Church is *in*, though not *of* this world) into the glorious WORLD TOMORROW and the Kingdom which shall rule it.

The CREATION is waiting for this time of Christ's coming, the resurrection, and the Kingdom of God, because the creation *shall be DELIVERED* from the bondage of corruption or deteriorated decay. It is not now delivered. It SHALL BE—at the resurrection. Although this is not referring directly to *our* being born again, it is a direct comparison to the BIRTH of a child being DELIVERED from its mother's womb.

The resurrection—the time when we are changed to BE Spirit and to INHERIT the Kingdom will be a time of DELIVERY FROM the bondage of corruptible flesh and from this world of SIN—A REAL BIRTH!

Christ Born a Second Time By the Resurrection

Continue in Romans 8: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [Jesus] might be the *firstborn* among many brethren" (verse 29).

Now compare with Romans 1:3-4: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God . . . by the resurrection from the dead."

Jesus was, in the human flesh—His first birth—a descendant of David. But, by the resurrection from the dead (born AGAIN), Jesus became the born Son of God, now no longer human, but composed of SPIRIT—a spirit Being. He thus became the FIRST SO BORN of many brethren who *shall be BORN AGAIN* at the time of the resurrection of those who are Christ's.

Of course we understand, and so did Paul in writing the above, that Jesus was also the Son of God while in the human

flesh. Though *born of a human woman*, He was sired by God. But this is comparing the two births: the one from the human Mary, as descended from the human David, and the other, by His resurrection to glory, as Son of God.

Emphatically this does NOT imply that Jesus was a sinner needing salvation. He was the pioneer, setting us the example, that we, too, may be BORN of God.

When Born Again What Shall We Be Like?

When we are born again, what shall we be like? The Bible gives us the answer: "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; *from whence* also we look for the saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall *change* our vile body [FLESH], that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body . . ." (Phil. 3:20-21).

Now notice a scripture in the third chapter of I John. Here it plainly says that "WE"—meaning begotten, converted Christians—are now, already, the SONS of God, as was explained earlier. Next, this scripture reveals that "it doth not yet appear WHAT WE SHALL BE." We are, later, to be something different. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus, we SHALL BE immortal spirit. That is what we shall later be.

"But," this scripture continues—read it—understand this WONDERFUL TRUTH—"we know that, when he [Christ] shall appear [at His second coming to earth] WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM. . . ." We shall look like Christ!

What does the GLORIFIED Christ look like? His eyes blaze forth like flames of fire! His feet glow like finely burnished brass. His face shines like the SUN, in FULL STRENGTH—so bright it would blind your eyes if He were visible to you now! (Rev. 1:14-16; 19:12-13; Matt. 17:2.) And THAT is the way YOU and I shall look if and when we are finally BORN of God!

Our Transcendent Potential

There is another passage, understood by almost none, that reveals our astonishing *transcendent* potential! It begins in Hebrews 2:6: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

Yes, why should the great God be concerned about us mortals? WHY did He put us here on earth? What is the PURPOSE of life? What is our transcendent potential? It is so

far above and beyond anything you have thought or imagined, it seems shockingly incredible!

Can you believe it? Are you willing to believe what is now plainly stated? Here comes the astonishing answer, beginning verse 7:

“Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.” Some translations have it, “for a little while lower than the angels.” Continue: “Thou crownedst him [kingship] with GLORY and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands . . .”—that is, God’s creation.

NOT Yet the Universe!

“Thou hast put ALL THINGS [Moffatt: the universe] in subjection under his feet. For in that he put ALL in subjection under him, he *left nothing* that is not put under him. . . .” Can you grasp that? The entire, vast, endless UNIVERSE! But that is for BORN sons of God. Man is not yet BORN—except Christ only! Continue: Here comes the answer:

“But *now* [in this present gestation state] we see NOT YET all things [the universe] put under him” (verse 8).

But what *do* we see, NOW?

“But we see JESUS . . . crowned with glory and honour” (verse 9). Yes, Jesus has already been given the executive administration of God’s government—the KINGDOM of GOD—over the entire UNIVERSE! Only, *until* our time to inherit and possess the government of EARTH, at Christ’s return, He is allowing Satan to continue on this earth his work of deception. Now continue:

“For it became him [Jesus], for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto GLORY, to make the captain [margin—leader, forerunner, or pioneer—the one who has gone on before us, as we are to follow] of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*” (verses 10-11).

Christ Our Elder Brother

We are, as quoted before, heirs of God, and joint-heirs—as BRETHERN—with Christ. He has gone on ahead, through a resurrection, to GLORY as the pioneer!

He is the firstborn of many brethren! He has INHERITED “all things”—the UNIVERSE! We are still heirs—still in the gestation stage of the process of being BORN of God. Jesus is now our elder brother and high priest, supervising our spiritual development—preparing us to be kings and priests, reigning *with Him!*

The first thousand years we shall reign ON THE EARTH. For He shall have “made them kings and priests: and they shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10, RSV).

Ruling With Christ

For that first thousand years, Jesus is to reign on the throne of His earthly ancestor DAVID in Jerusalem (Isa. 9:6-7). And “he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . .” (Rev. 2:26-27). But how and from where shall we rule?

Jesus said, again, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne [at Jerusalem], even as I also overcame, and am [now] set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21).

When BORN of God, we shall BE spirit, no longer human flesh and blood. We shall be given POWER!

As Daniel revealed, the saints then shall take the kingdoms of earth’s nations and rule them for the first thousand years—establishing WORLD PEACE and divine government under Christ.

And after that? The passage in Hebrews 2 shows that then, again under Christ, we shall be given power to rule over the entire vast universe—literally all things. For that is the power that has been given to Christ and will be ours as joint inheritors with Him!

Yes, there is a LIFE AFTER DEATH for those obedient to God—a SPIRIT life of incredible potential beyond our wildest dreams! Can we humans grasp the awesome portent of these astounding truths? Attaining immortal life should be our all-encompassing goal. For that is the gift and desire of our merciful Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

MAILING ADDRESSES WORLDWIDE

United States: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123

United Kingdom, rest of Europe and Middle East: The Plain Truth, P.O. Box 111, Borehamwood, Herts, England WD6 1LU

Canada: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2

Canada (French language): Le Monde a Venir, B.P. 121, Succ. A, Montreal, P.O. H3C 1C5

Mexico: Institucion Ambassador, Apartado Postal 5-595, 06500 Mexico D.F.

South America: Institucion Ambassador, Apartado Aereo 11430, Bogota 1, D.E., Colombia

Caribbean: Worldwide Church of God, G.P.O. Box 6063, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936

France: Le Monde a Venir, B.P. 64, 75662 Paris Cedex 14

Switzerland: Le Monde a Venir, Case Postale 10, 91 rue de la Servette, CH-1211 Geneve 7, Suisse

Germany: Ambassador College, Postfach 1129, D-5300 Bonn 1, West Germany

Holland and Belgium: Ambassador College, Postbus 333, 3500 AH Utrecht, Nederland

Belgium: Le Monde a Venir, B. P. 31, 6000 Charleroi 1, Belgique

Denmark: The Plain Truth, Box 211, DK-8100 Aarhus C

Norway: The Plain Truth, Box 2513 Solli, Oslo 2

Sweden: The Plain Truth, Box 5380, S-102 46, Stockholm

Australia: Worldwide Church of God, G.P.O. Box 345, Sydney, NSW, 2001

India: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 6727, Bombay 400 052, India

Sri Lanka: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 1824, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Malaysia: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 430, Jalan Sultan, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Singapore: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 111, Farrer Road Post Office, Singapore 9128

New Zealand and the Pacific Isles: Ambassador College, P.O. Box 2709, Auckland 1, New Zealand

The Philippines: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 1111, M.C.C., Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines 3117

Israel: Ambassador College, P.O. Box 19111, Jerusalem

South Africa: Ambassador College, P.O. Box 1060, Johannesburg 2000

Zimbabwe: Ambassador College, Box UA30, Union Avenue, Harare, Zimbabwe

Nigeria: Worldwide Church of God, PMB 21006, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria

Ghana: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 9617, Kotoka International Airport, Accra

Kenya: Worldwide Church of God, P.O. Box 47135, Nairobi

Mauritius and Seychelles: Ambassador College, P.O. Box 888, Port Louis, Mauritius

THIS BOOKLET IS PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE BY THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the membership of the Church and others who have elected to support the work of the Church. Contributions are welcomed and gratefully accepted. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support this worldwide Work of God are gladly welcomed as co-workers in this major effort to preach the gospel to all nations.

16144/6305