

Do the
Saved Go to
HEAVEN?

by David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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

It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members 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 WORK OF GOD around the world are gladly welcomed as co-workers in this major effort to preach the gospel to all nations.

Copyright © 2008, 2011, 2012, 2017 The Restored Church of God®

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Is heaven the reward of the saved?
Have your departed loved ones gone
there? Will you? Do you have proof?
Are there plain scriptures to the
contrary? Yes—here they are!

You say heaven is the reward of the saved. Are you certain? Have you sought proof?

Almost all professing Christians believe that when they die they will go to heaven. Why? What assurance do they have? By what AUTHORITY have countless millions believed that they are bound for heaven?

Be honest. You probably consider yourself a Christian. You certainly want to be saved. You have probably also been assured that you will go to heaven some day. Should you not demand PROOF that heaven is really what you seek—and where you will go?

It is about time you know if you will spend all eternity in heaven!

An Easy Formula

Romans 10:9 states, “That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be *saved*.” Verse 13 adds, “For *whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be *saved*.”

Certain popular verses are routinely cited to validate the simplicity of just believing in Christ to be saved. This makes salvation seem routine and easy. Heaven becomes little more than an assumption in a formula that virtually every professing Christian takes for granted: “Believe in Jesus, go to heaven.”

Yet when a famous evangelist was asked, “What will we *do* when we get to heaven?” he answered, “I don’t know, but it will be wonderful.” Such igno-

rance!—and if he does not know this much, how can he “know” it will be wonderful?

Answers like this are why people assume that they will “ride clouds”—“walk the streets of gold before the pearly gates”—“play harps”—“grow wings”—or generally “roll around heaven all day.” All of these ideas are man-made, fiction. The Bible teaches *none* of them—yet almost *everyone* believes them as fact.

So, let’s get the *facts*—the TRUTH—of what God teaches.

We have many booklets explaining in detail the real reward of the saved. Though this booklet will address some of the truth on this matter, it will not and cannot cover everything about the *truth* of salvation. This is not the purpose or focus here. This booklet is written to examine whether heaven is the destination of the saved.

One of the fundamental rules of Bible study is to *always* start with the clearest scriptures on any subject. Then fit all less clear scriptures into the basic over-all picture that has been established.

The subject of going to heaven is a classic example of the need to start with the most plain, obvious verses. We will examine a number of them. After doing this, we will examine all the *supposed* “proof texts” about going to heaven. They will be correctly understood and the false idea of the saved going to heaven will collapse!

Plain Scriptures

Perhaps the plainest scripture in the Bible regarding “going to heaven” is in the Sermon on the Mount—and it does not even mention the word *heaven*. Few know of this most important verse. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall INHERIT THE EARTH” (Matt. 5:5).

Have you ever heard even one minister say that God’s purpose for Christians is to “inherit the EARTH”? I doubt it. And yet there it is—at the very beginning of the New Testament.

A second plain scripture adds another element.

The apostle John recorded the following: “And has made *them* [the saints] unto our God *kings and priests*: and *they* [the saints] shall REIGN ON THE EARTH” (Rev. 5:10).

The reward of God’s saints is to inherit future rulership “on the earth”—as “kings and priests.” This is plain!

I’ll ask again: Have you ever heard a minister say that God’s purpose for you is to “reign on the earth,” as “kings and priests”?

Be honest—of course not! You must at least admit that becoming a KING is more appealing than riding clouds, playing harps or rolling around heaven for eternity.

Now, will you believe the plain words of the Bible—or continue in popular but baseless assumptions?

What Daniel Knew

Now go to the Old Testament. The prophet Daniel, amplifying the saints' role as kings and priests, writes about the Return of Christ and the establishing of God's kingdom on Earth. Before examining three key verses, some background is important.

Before Christ's Return, God will officially grant Him the authority to rule the world. Notice: "And there was GIVEN Him [Christ] dominion, and glory, and a *kingdom*" (Dan. 7:14).

Where will this kingdom be? Daniel answers, "...that all people, *nations*, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His *kingdom* that which shall not be destroyed."

It will be on Earth.

But *how* will God rule the peoples and nations of Earth? Daniel explains: "But the *saints* of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (vs. 18). The Christian's ultimate destiny is to join Christ and share rulership in the kingdom of God over all nations and peoples ON EARTH!

Now read verse 22: "...and judgment was given to the *saints* of the Most High; and the time came that the *saints* possessed the *kingdom*." And verse 27: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the *saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

Christ and the saints will rule peoples and nations *on Earth*.

You have surely heard Christ referred to as "KING *of kings* and LORD *of lords*." Now you know *why*!

Let's confirm *where* this rulership takes place. Jesus states, "And he that OVERCOMES, and KEEPS MY WORKS unto the end, to him will I give POWER OVER THE NATIONS: and he shall RULE them with a rod of iron...even as I received of My Father" (Rev. 2:26-27). A few verses later, He adds, "To him that OVERCOMES will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne*..." (3:21).

Christians are overcomers. They do not sit idle, "just believing" in Jesus and waiting for heaven. They recognize that they are in training to become *teachers* and *rulers*! This is why the apostle Jude wrote, "And Enoch also... prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord *comes* with ten thousands of His *saints*, to execute *judgment* upon all..." (vs. 14-15).

Did you notice Jesus Christ "comes" to Earth rather than Christians "go" to heaven? And the saints assist Him in "executing judgment."

The phrase "in My throne" is used because Christ understood that His throne is on this earth—unlike the Father's throne, which is in heaven. Luke 1:32 shows that Christ sits on the throne of David, which is here on Earth. (To

learn more about this throne, read our free book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.)

Now notice Revelation 20:4, 6: “And I saw *thrones*, and they sat upon them, and *judgment* was given unto them...and they lived and REIGNED with Christ a *thousand years*...Blessed and holy is he that has part in the FIRST RESURRECTION: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be *priests* of God and of Christ, and shall REIGN with Him a *thousand years*.”

What could be plainer than these verses? When Christ returns, the saints rule with Him! Together, they will reign over the entire world!

What Christ *Did* Say About Heaven

Let’s turn the coin over. We have seen what Christ says IS the calling and reward of a Christian—but did He ever say what it is NOT? Did Jesus make any plain statements about men in heaven? He did—and in stunning clarity!

He said, “And *no man* has ascended up *to heaven*, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

There it is! Jesus *did* address people going to heaven. Take this verse for exactly what He said, neither adding to nor taking from it. “NO MAN” (not a single one) has gone to heaven!

Do you believe Him? Or do you believe the ministers of this world who virtually suggest, with their ideas about salvation, that Christ was misleading or did not know what He was talking about?

Now think of all God’s servants who had lived during the 4,000 years prior to Christ’s statement. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and many more, cannot be in heaven. So says Christ!

If heaven is the reward of the saved, then none of these men made it. They all must have FAILED! Every one of them missed out on salvation.

But, of course, they did *not* fail. Heaven is *not* the reward of the saved—inheriting rulership over Earth is, as we shall learn.

Notice that verse 13 comes only three verses prior to the most universally quoted passage in the Bible—John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Why is almost *everyone* willing to believe this verse while virtually *no one* believes what is said just three verses earlier?

Now ask: If all the Old Testament figures are *not* in heaven, where are they?

Where is David?

King David reigned over the nation of Israel about 1,000 years before Christ. Christ knew exactly where David was when He made His statement in John 3.

He was not confused or misinformed. Since we know David was not in heaven, then where was he?

Here is plain proof.

The apostle Peter answers this question in his sermon delivered on the day Christ built His Church: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch DAVID, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre [tomb] is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29).

David is literally “dead and buried.” You have almost certainly heard this common phrase. It comes from this verse and is a reference to David’s whereabouts!

Some believe Peter’s statement was incomplete or he just forgot David was in heaven. This is a ridiculous twisting of the verse. Here is what he said five verses later, removing all doubt: “For David is NOT ascended into the heavens...”

This is a direct statement. David is *not* in heaven. Yet God said that David was “a man after Mine own heart” (Acts 13:22). If heaven is the reward of the saved, and *David* did not make it, then *nobody* is going to make it.

David is in the grave awaiting the resurrection of the dead, when the just receive their eternal *inheritance*.

The Bible is quite specific about David’s coming resurrection—and his position as a ruler over the tribes of Israel. It adds further proof that David is *not* alive now but is, in fact, “dead and buried.” Centuries after David died, the prophet Jeremiah said he would be resurrected: “But they [the twelve tribes of Israel] shall serve the LORD their God, and DAVID their king, whom I will RAISE UP unto them” (30:9). To “raise up” is to resurrect.

The prophet Ezekiel also foretold David’s resurrection: “And I will set up one shepherd over them [the tribes of Israel], and he shall feed them, *even My servant* DAVID; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant DAVID a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it” (Ezek. 34:23-24). Also see 37:24.

Carefully read this verse with the whole chapter. It is obvious that Ezekiel 34 is talking about the physical tribes of Israel (vs. 2, 3, 30, 31) and how David will shepherd them *after he is resurrected from the dead*.

The Apostles Rule Under David

Consider the 12 apostles. They heard Peter’s sermon (Peter was the lead apostle, so he gave the sermon). They knew what *their* own role would be after the resurrection.

Christ had previously explained to them “That you which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, *you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt. 19:28).

The apostles knew that they will report to David in the kingdom of God. Each will rule one tribe, with David over all 12 tribes.

Much more needs to be understood—but first read where *you* may some day fit in.

Joint-heirs With Christ

When God calls people to repentance, and they are baptized, He gives them His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It is this Spirit within the mind that makes one a Christian. Paul stated, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

This much is clear. What is NOT so clear—or even *known*—to most is what Paul added in verse 17: “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 also *glorified together*.”

A true follower of Christ and the Bible is an heir *with* Christ! Heirs are not yet *inheritors*. An heir is one who later *inherits* what has been promised to him.

We have read that Christians “inherit the earth”—and “rule with Christ.” *How, when, where* and *why* does this take place? Once the answers are known, the counterfeit salvation about heaven, taught by almost every professing Christian church, collapses for the fiction that it is!

But how does one become a “joint-heir with Christ”?

An Ancient Promise

Did you realize that a Christian is a child of Abraham? Probably not. Yet this is what Paul told the Gentile Galatians: “Know you therefore that they which are *of faith*, the same are the *children of Abraham*” (Gal. 3:7).

The book of Galatians calls Abraham “the father of the faithful.” This is because those “of faith” *are* his “children.” Understanding the phrase “children of Abraham” is key to understanding what Christians will inherit.

Long ago, God made a promise to Abraham. Notice: “Now to Abraham and his seed [children] were the PROMISES made...” (Gal. 3:16). This speaks of specific promises made to Abraham and “his seed”—his children. Here is how this is tied to Christians: “And if YOU be Christ’s, then are YOU Abraham’s seed, and HEIRS according to the *promise*” (vs. 29).

This is a fascinating statement. All faithful Christians are heirs—not yet *inheritors*—to whatever was promised to Abraham.

Grasp this. *Your* salvation is tied to this promise!

Next, YOU need to know *what* was promised to Abraham. The answer is all-important since it explains how YOU will spend eternity!

Surely God would not expect any to blindly accept what was promised without investigation. The Bible does reveal the nature of this promise. Once you discover what God said, His entire purpose for mankind can be understood. It is revealed in a series of verses.

Prepare to be astonished! You are about to read things that no one understands—or even can—without God revealing it. Paul wrote, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us *by His Spirit*” (I Cor. 2:9-10).

May God’s Spirit open your mind to understand. What He has promised you is beyond the wildest dreams of your imagination.

Confirming the Promise

Christ’s role, at His First Coming, had a direct bearing on this supremely important matter: “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to CONFIRM the PROMISES made unto the fathers” (Rom. 15:8).

We will see how Christ’s sacrifice did this. But first we must identify who the “fathers” are. Acts 3:13 holds the answer: “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our FATHERS, has glorified His Son Jesus.”

The fathers referred to are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You will inherit whatever was promised to THEM—not some invention devised by the imaginations of men who neither search nor believe the Bible.

The LAND of Promise

The patriarch Abraham was obedient—faithful—in all things. Whatever God told him to do, he DID. Because Christians also faithfully obey God (Acts 5:32), this is another way in which he is a father, in *type*, to them.

Let’s begin in Genesis with what God told him to do: “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, *Get you out of your country*, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, *unto a land* that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1).

What did he do? Did he drag his feet, make excuses or complain? It says, “...So Abram departed” (vs. 4). He obeyed God without question, setting an example for every Christian. Obedience qualified Abraham to inherit the promises—and it can qualify you, too.

The promises become more specific in the next verses: “And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto your seed [children] *will I give this land*: and there built he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him” (Gen. 12:6-7).

The land that he went to is the modern-day nation of Israel. This is the first indication of what God promised him—and *you*. It is now evident that the promise involves LAND!

But how much land?

The answer to this question develops in stages: “And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now your eyes, and look

from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: *For all the land which you see*, to you will I give it, and to your seed *forever*” (Gen. 13:14-15).

At this point, what Abraham could “see,” looking in four directions, was the region around where he stood. Yet, it was to go to his children *forever*. Did you notice that? Forever means FOREVER—eternally!

But you will see that the scope of the promise and the land involved is about to increase beyond the boundaries of Canaan. As with a deed, when one inherits land, specific boundaries must spell out *how much* land is involved. God understands this. Notice: “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto your seed have I given this land, from the *river of Egypt* [the Nile] unto the great river, the *river Euphrates* [present-day Iraq]” (Gen. 15:18).

This is specific! The Nile River bisects Egypt—and the Euphrates River divides Iraq almost directly down the middle, from northeast to southwest. So this is land *on Earth*, not heaven. And any map will show you that it is *much* land. It is more than Abraham could see. But the amount is even far greater than *this*.

Many scriptures explain that the entire earth was the land to be given to Abraham. Here is one: “Our father Abraham...For the *promise*, that he [Abraham] should be the HEIR OF THE WORLD...” (Rom. 4:12-13).

You now know why we started with Matthew 5:5, “the meek...shall inherit the earth.” It is the whole earth—the world—to which Christians are “heirs.” This *will* happen because God keeps His promises!

Obedience Is the Qualifier

God’s promise to Abraham was conditional. Abraham had to prove that he was obedient to whatever he was instructed to do. God commanded him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Without hesitation, he set out to do exactly what God said. Notice: “And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, says the LORD, for because you have done this thing, *and have not withheld your son, your only son*: That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying *I will multiply your seed as the stars* of the heaven, *and as the sand* which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; BECAUSE YOU HAVE OBEYED MY VOICE” (Gen. 22:15-18).

At this point, the promise became *unconditional*. How many people would be willing to sacrifice their only child, if God required it? Abraham *was* willing, and obeyed God in every matter. This is how God described his obedience: “Because that Abraham OBEYED My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Gen. 26:5).

The Bible plainly says, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). Abraham kept *this* law, and so must you to inherit what was promised to him.

Isaac and Jacob Included

In the next account, God included Abraham's son, Isaac, in the promise. Notice that God repeated much of what He had said to Abraham: "And the LORD appeared unto him [Isaac], and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell you of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for unto you, and unto *your seed* [Isaac's], I will give ALL THESE COUNTRIES, and *I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father*; and I will make your seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto your seed ALL THESE COUNTRIES; and in your seed shall *all* the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen. 26:2-5).

The obedience of one man, Abraham, was sufficient to pass on astonishing blessings that would eventually encompass "all the nations of the earth." (Our book *America and Britain in Prophecy* explains in detail the incredible scope of these promises, and that the modern, primarily English-speaking nations of the Western world descended from ancient Israel.)

Isaac's son Jacob was also later included in the promise. In this account, Jacob's name was changed: "And God appeared unto Jacob...and blessed him. And God said unto him, Your name is Jacob: your name shall not be called any more Jacob, *but Israel shall be your name*: and He called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; A NATION [the United States] and A COMPANY OF NATIONS [the former British Commonwealth] shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins; and the LAND which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to you I will give it, and to *your seed* after you will I give the LAND" (Gen. 35:9-12).

Where, in any of these scriptures describing God's promises, is a single reference to *heaven*?

Gentiles Are Included

God promised that "all nations" would be blessed through Abraham. This means the promise of salvation is open to all, including Gentiles. Paul wrote this to the primarily Gentile congregation at Rome: "But glory, honor, and peace, to *every man* that works good, to the *Jew first, and also to the Gentile*" (Rom. 2:10).

The promise was "to the *Jew first*." The covenants and the promises of God are clearly made to Israel. This is also found in Romans: "Who are *Israelites*; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, AND THE PROMISES" (9:4).

But if the promises are only made to Israelites, how are *Gentiles* included? Paul explains this in his letter to the Ephesian congregation. The Ephesians were mainly Gentile-born Greeks: "Wherefore remember, that you being *in time past Gentiles* in the flesh..." (Eph. 2:11).

Paul explained that the Ephesians were only Gentiles “in the past.” Upon conversion, they became *spiritual* Israelites.

The next verse makes this clearer: “That at *that time* [the past, before conversion] you were without Christ, being *aliens* from the commonwealth of *Israel*, and *strangers* from the covenants of PROMISE, having no hope, and without God in the world” (vs. 12).

I grew up believing that all the Israelites were Jews (yet Judah—the Jews—is only *one* of the *twelve* tribes of Israel), that I was a Gentile, and that Christianity is basically a Gentile religion. The truth of the Bible is that Gentiles must become spiritual Israelites.

Since most modern descendants of Israel (Jacob) think they are Gentiles, the world believes the very opposite of what the Bible teaches. In other words, those who are actually physical Israelites (and professing Christians) think that upon accepting Jesus they became “spiritual” or “Christian” or “saved” GENTILES. The truth is that those who really *are* physical Gentiles can only be *true* Christians by becoming SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES!

Can you see how God’s truth seems upside down to the world (Acts 17:6)?

The Ephesians were Gentiles who had become spiritual Israelites. They went from being “strangers” from God, His promise and without hope, to being included in God’s Plan: “But *now* in Christ Jesus you who sometimes *were far off* are made near by the blood of Christ...” and “Now therefore you are *no more strangers* and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:13, 19).

When Do We Receive Our Inheritance?

Recall that Christ said in John 3:13, “...no man has ascended up to heaven.” In John, He twice confirmed this by telling His disciples “Whither [where] I go, you cannot come” (8:22; 13:33).

Moments later, He added, “I go [to heaven] to prepare a place for you” (14:2). But exactly *where* is the place that He is preparing? Some assume Christ meant heaven. This is because they do not read the very next verse: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will *come again*” (vs. 3). Christians will not join Christ in heaven—He will “come again” to Earth.

The rest of verse 3 removes all doubt about where Christians will be: “...that where I am, there you may be also.” We will be with Christ in the place that He has “prepared.” Again, where is this prepared place?

In Matthew 25, Jesus says that after His Return He will “...sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered *all nations*” (vs. 31-32). Christ is pictured in this parable of the sheep and goats as ruling all the nations of the earth. At that point, He says to the saints, “Come, you blessed of My Father, INHERIT the KINGDOM *prepared* for you” (vs. 34).

We are to inherit the kingdom of God. What a marvelous future for the saints. If men would only take Christ’s words for exactly what He says!

Will you grasp them—understand them—and believe them?

When the kingdom of God is established, the whole world will learn God's truth. Only a *few* now know of the peace, happiness and abundance that come from obeying God and living His Way.

Eventually, universal prosperity, joy and peace will literally “break out” all over the world. Everyone will be taught God's wonderful law of love. Satan will be bound, sickness will disappear and sin will not be tolerated.

Abraham Has Not Yet Inherited

When do Christians become *inheritors*—and no longer heirs? Abraham is also a key to properly understanding this. Where is he now? Is he in heaven? Has he already inherited the promises made to him? When put together, three verses answer these questions. They form a complete picture.

Recall that God told Abraham to depart and he obeyed. Here is what Paul said about this: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should *after receive for an inheritance*, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went. By faith *he sojourned in the LAND OF PROMISE*, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles *with Isaac and Jacob*, the HEIRS with him of the same PROMISE: For he *looked for* a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:8-10).

There are several important elements here. Abraham was to “*after receive*” his inheritance. In faith, he “looked for” what God was building, but understood that he was in a “strange country.” He and his sons remained “heirs” all during their lifetimes—and they still are!

Next comes a remarkable statement. Every Christian must grasp and live by it: “These all died in faith, NOT *having received the promises*, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were *strangers* and *pilgrims* on the earth” (vs. 13). The land that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sojourned in never became theirs during their lifetimes. They died “in faith,” but they did see God's promises “afar off.”

Many do not want the truth of God's words explained to them. They prefer the empty traditions of men to the awesome truth of God.

Some have even paid with their lives for telling others what I have just told you.

The deacon Stephen was martyred—stoned to death!—just moments after telling his listeners the following: “And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father *Abraham*, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I shall show you. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from there, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein you now dwell. And He gave him *none inheritance in it*, no, not

so much as to set his foot on: *yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession...*" (Acts 7:2-5).

This scripture confirms Hebrews 11. Abraham received "none inheritance" during his lifetime. It says, "not so much as to set his foot on (the land)."

How much plainer can God be?

So then, where *is* Abraham? The Bible answers, "Abraham is dead" and "the prophets are dead" (John 8:52-53). Christians are heirs in this lifetime. Like Abraham, they see God's promises "afar off." Also like Abraham, when they die, they are dead. They wait in the grave to become inheritors upon Christ's Return. Scripture after scripture confirms this.

Jesus taught the gospel of the kingdom of God. As with the truth of salvation, the ministers of this world have created a substitute gospel about the *Person* of Jesus. But the truth is that Jesus announced that an all-powerful, world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT would one day come to Earth. It would be preceded by a time of terrible world trouble and confusion—our time NOW! The saints would receive their inheritance at His Return, and the establishing of His government. Honest seekers of truth cannot get around the plain meaning of the Bible!

Paul wrote, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot INHERIT the kingdom of God; neither does corruption INHERIT incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50).

Fleshly human beings cannot enter the kingdom of God—the Family of God, ruling over the entire earth—"all nations"!

Christ told Nicodemus that, "Except a man be *born again*, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." When Nicodemus was confused, Christ said, "That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit *IS* spirit" (John 3:3-6).

God's Word teaches that a resurrection of the dead occurs at Christ's Return. Some will not believe this, preferring to believe the dead go straight to heaven. Probably nothing can change their minds.

Paul explained, "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that *there is no resurrection of the dead*? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and *your faith is also vain*."

This is God's answer to those who will not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Paul continues, "...For if the dead rise not, *then is not Christ raised*: And if Christ be not raised, *your faith is vain*; you are yet in your sins [understanding the resurrection becomes serious!]. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:12-14, 16-18).

There are few scriptures stronger than this. Many are now "asleep in Christ." Obviously, they are not sleeping *in heaven*, for hundreds or thousands of years, awaiting the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then Christianity is a vain religion! So says God!

Now here is *what happens* at the resurrection: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, 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 shall be CHANGED. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:51-53).

Only at the resurrection is flesh *changed* to spirit.

Let’s examine one more important verse, from Paul, to remove all doubt about *what* happens: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which *are asleep*.” Most *are* completely ignorant about this resurrection—and them that are asleep—but they need not be. Now notice *why* Paul taught what he did: “...that you sorrow not, even as others which have *no hope*” (I Thes. 4:13).

Now let’s see *when* this resurrection occurs. Notice: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and *the dead in Christ shall rise first*: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the *clouds*, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vs. 16-17).

Clouds are only a few miles above the earth. Airplanes fly much higher than this. So, this is not a picture of people in heaven, but rather of those who are resurrected to be with Christ *on Earth*—where the clouds are.

Remember, Christ said, “I WILL COME AGAIN” (John 14:3). The prophet Isaiah wrote this, “Behold, the Lord GOD will COME with strong hand, and His arm shall RULE for Him: behold, *His reward is with Him*, and His work before Him” (40:10). Of that time, Daniel said, “And many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall *awake* [from sleep]...to everlasting life” (12:2). The knowledge that the dead are asleep in the ground has been understood long before the New Testament.

Finally, the Old Testament prophet Zechariah spoke expressly of where Christ will eventually come. Now notice: “And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south” (14:4).

Do you now understand why Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David have not inherited God’s promised reward? They are dead—asleep in the grave—awaiting promises that they only saw “afar off” during their lifetimes. Without a resurrection, none of them—or YOU—can inherit anything. All that they did would have been “vain” (empty, meaningless).

Take a moment and ask yourself some questions. Do you believe that the clarity and number of the scriptures you have read can be ignored? Do you believe that they can be explained away? Will *you* do this?

Supposed Heaven “Proof Texts” Examined

Most people read the Bible with preconceived ideas. They study it to find verses that support what they already believe. Heaven is a classic example.

Vast millions would not believe they were going to heaven unless they had been told “the Bible says so.” By now, you know the Bible says no such thing. However, there are various supposed “proof texts” that are most often cited to prove the “saved go to heaven” fallacy.

This booklet would be incomplete without examining them. The next section will look at the texts most frequently cited as “proofs.” As you read them, ask yourself, why would God directly contradict the plain statements that you have already seen proven from His Word?

Some require little explanation. Others require more to correctly understand the truth of what they are saying.

The Thief on the Cross

LUKE 23:42-43: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me *when* You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in paradise.”

Along with the principle of “deathbed repentance,” represented by the thief, this account is often cited as proof that “the saved go to heaven.” It proves neither—and there are a number of points to examine.

Consider: King David was “a man after God’s own heart” (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). Abraham was God’s friend (II Chron. 20:7) and the “father of the faithful” (Gal. 3:7-9). Moses was the meekest man who had ever lived (Num. 12:3) and spoke with God personally (Ex. 33:11). If none of these great servants of God had ascended to heaven, how is it possible that a *thief*, although repentant at the end of his life, could have a guaranteed reward in heaven?

Upon death, did Christ go *directly* to “paradise,” which *is* in heaven (II Cor. 12:4)? Did He promise the thief that he would join Him there the *same day*? No! Notice the key phrase “*when* You come into Your kingdom.” This alone shows there is an important time element involved in Christ’s statement.

Before continuing in Luke 23, read I Peter 3:19-20: “By which also He went and *preached unto the spirits in prison*; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

This verse is often cited to prove that Christ was preaching to demon spirits in an ever-burning hell during the seventy-two hours He was supposedly in heaven, while His body was in the tomb. This reasoning shows the inconsistency of those who do not carefully study the Bible. It also ignores the time element in I Peter. Careful reading reveals that Christ preached to the “spirits in prison” *just before the Flood*, not when He was in the tomb. The Greek word for “prison” is *tartaroo*, meaning *prison or place of restraint*—the earth.

Could Christ have (1) preached to “demons in hell” while also (2) enjoying paradise (heaven?) during the three days and three nights that He was supposed to be in the tomb? Both would be impossible and *neither* is true.

Now notice John 20:17. Christ told Mary Magdalene, four days *after* Luke 23:43 occurred, that He had still not been to heaven! Could He have so quickly forgotten what He told the thief?

Reread Luke 23:43, but now read it with the comma *after* the word “today” and not before. The Greek is best understood as “Verily I say unto you today, shall you be with Me in paradise.” In verse 42, the thief said, “*remember me when You come* into Your kingdom.” He would not say “*remember me,*” unless he correctly recognized that much time would pass before Christ could fulfill this promise. Christ used the word “today” as if to say, “Right now, *even while we are dying on a stake,* I can tell you with certainty that you shall be with Me in paradise.”

Notice verse 42. The emphasis is that Christ would be *coming* somewhere—not that the thief would be *going* somewhere.

Christ could not have *literally* meant the same day, since He would not be resurrected until *three days and three nights* after burial (Matt. 12:40). (Read our booklet *Christ’s Resurrection Was Not on Sunday.*) Obviously, at the point Christ said this, He had not yet died. The three days and three nights had not even started. Since God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), and Christ and the Father are of the same mind (John 10:30), He was not telling the thief that he would be with Him “in heaven” that same day.

The meaning of the Luke 23 account is distorted largely because of a simple error in grammar. The comma, which follows Christ’s lead-in statement, “Assuredly, I say to you...” was inserted and misplaced by men. It changed His entire meaning. The original Greek, the language of the New Testament, did not use certain punctuation, such as commas and quotation marks. Translators using their own discretion added them later. The correct rendering is, “Assuredly, I say to you today [in other words, “I tell you right now”], you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

The thief will receive his opportunity for salvation after Christ has come to Earth with His kingdom in the resurrection described in John 5:28-29 when the world will have truly become “paradise.” Satan will have been removed from influencing the nations, unable to deceive mankind.

The Kingdom of Heaven

MATTHEW 7:21: Does the Bible’s periodic reference to the kingdom of heaven mean that Christians are going there? Some cite verses like Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall *enter into the kingdom of heaven;* But he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven.”

The Bible teaches that Christ and the apostles taught the gospel of the kingdom of God. The word *gospel* is found 101 times in the Bible. Sometimes it is found alone, and sometimes as “gospel of the kingdom.” Other times it appears as “gospel of the kingdom of God” or the equivalent phrase “gospel of the kingdom of heaven.” Recognize that this version of the phrase says, “*OF* heaven,” not

“*IN* heaven.” It is heaven’s kingdom, and this is a big difference. Just as kingdom *OF* God means God’s kingdom, not the kingdom *IN* God, the same is true of the kingdom *OF* heaven, or *heaven’s kingdom*. The preposition “of” connotes possession.

The phrase *kingdom of God* is synonymous with *kingdom of heaven*.

“Great is Your Reward in Heaven”

MATTHEW 5:11-12: “Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is *your reward in heaven*: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

This verse is found just seven verses after Christ said, “the meek shall inherit the earth.” Did Christ forget what He had just said? Or did He teach two separate rewards—one for the meek and another for those who are persecuted for following Him? What *does* this scripture mean?

Notice: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an *inheritance* incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, *reserved in heaven* for you” (I Pet. 1:3-4).

By now you understand the meaning of the word *inheritance*. Notice the word *reserved*. It is the REWARD of Christians that is *reserved in heaven*, to be “revealed” (i.e., salvation) “in the last time” (vs. 5). Every Christian holds a reservation for a future event. Peter says nothing about going to heaven to either obtain this reward or to stay there—only that our reward is *reserved there* until the “last time”—when Christ returns. In this way, a Christian’s reward remains “incorruptible,” “undefiled” and “unable to fade.”

Some also claim that I Peter 1:4 is, in itself, a “heaven proof text.” Recognize two points. The verse does not say that Christians are *going* to heaven to receive their reward. Here is why. Revelation 22:12 states, “And, behold, I [Christ] *come* quickly; and MY REWARD IS WITH ME, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Christ is coming to Earth, bringing our reward with Him—not the other way around.

The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect

HEBREWS 12:22-23: “But you are come unto...the heavenly Jerusalem, 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*.”

Does this verse prove that there are immortal souls of “just men made perfect” in heaven?

The Bible *does* teach that Christ, many angels and the spirits of men are in heaven! It plainly says that there is a spirit in every person—but it is not an immortal soul. (I Cor. 2:11; Zech. 12:1; Prov. 16:32; I Cor. 6:20; Job 32:8; Prov. 20:27, all reference this spirit in man. You may read our booklet *What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind*. It thoroughly explains this subject.)

Humans do not have immortal souls—see Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Matt. 10:28; Rom. 6:23; and other verses. (You may also read our booklets *Just What Is Salvation?* and *The Truth About Hell* to learn why you do not have an immortal soul.)

At the end of a converted person’s life, God returns his or her human spirit to Himself. In it, He has preserved a complete, detailed record of all that pertained to that person’s life. This is the plain teaching of scripture. Notice: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God *your whole spirit* and soul and body be *preserved blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thes. 5:23).

The spirit, soul and body represent all that was the person. The personality, experiences, accumulated knowledge and character of each human being is reflected in the human spirit. This is why it returns to God at death.

Now notice: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and *the spirit* shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). And Ecclesiastes 3:21 states, “Who knows the *spirit of man* that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?” You now know what few know—that there is a spirit in man that returns to God at death.

Stephen understood. As he was being martyred for preaching a powerful sermon, the Bible records, “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, *receive MY SPIRIT*. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell *ASLEEP*” (Acts 7:59-60).

That is right! Stephen fell asleep (died) knowing that God would receive his spirit and it would reunite with him at the resurrection.

Hebrews 12:22-23 is amazing, revealing that the God “of all spirits” (Num. 27:16), of all “just men made perfect,” keeps all these spirits with Him.

The “spirits of just men made perfect” are human spirits containing the stored character, knowledge, personality and experience of every converted person who has ever lived. Heaven—the heavenly Jerusalem—is where the spirits of all God’s saints from the last 6,000 years are held—are *preserved* intact—awaiting their coming resurrection.

But Didn’t Paul Want to “Depart and Be With Christ”?

PHILIPPIANS 1:23-24: Paul stated, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire *to depart, and to be with Christ*; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide

in the flesh is more needful for you.” Was Paul saying that he wished to die and immediately go to heaven? Be careful of assumptions. Remember that this verse cannot contradict everything that you have read so far.

II Timothy 4:6-8 shows Paul knew he would have his reward “at that day” and at His (Christ’s) glorious appearing, rather than at death: “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day*: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love *His appearing*.”

When is “that day”? Recall Revelation 22:12 stated, “behold, I come quickly; and *My reward is with Me*, to give every man...” (see also I Cor. 15:52 and Dan. 12:2-3, 13).

Christians do not die and go to heaven. They wait (in the grave) for Christ to return to this earth, “His reward with Him.”

Paul knew the dead who “sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (Dan. 12:2). He also understood Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, 10 and Psalm 146:4. These verses show that when a person dies, his thoughts perish, and he is unaware of the passing of time. Paul knew that his next waking moment would be in the resurrection, and seem as though it happened immediately, not 2,000 years later.

Is Paul Now “Present With the Lord”?

II CORINTHIANS 5:1-8: Take time to read these verses. Paul speaks of being “at home in the body” and “absent from the Lord” (vs. 6), and then “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (vs. 8). This passage is similar in principle to Philippians 1:23-24.

Does verse 8 prove that going to heaven is the reward Paul *seemed* to look forward to at death? Was Paul’s immortal soul waiting to be “absent from his body” to go join Christ? Notice that he said nothing of *when* and *where* he would be with Christ! Nothing in the text implies that this would happen immediately. Verse 2 references how Christians “groan” to become spirit with God. This is what Paul wanted above all things.

All of I Corinthians 15 explains that Christians have two bodies: one physical (the first body), then a spirit body (at the resurrection). Paul was speaking of this spirit body, which comes later at the resurrection.

Verse 4 is key to the entire passage! Our physical bodies are a type of “clothing” and, when we are dead, we are *unclothed*! Paul recognized this and, because he did not merely want to die (and “be unclothed”), he put the emphasis on having “mortality [death] be swallowed up of life”—eternal life!

Verse 7 shows that Christians walk in faith looking to salvation, while Hebrews 11:13 reveals that Christians see salvation “afar off”—not immediately at death. All the verses disproving the concept of an immortal soul (Ezek. 18:4, 20; Matt. 10:28, etc.) also apply to verse 8.

Were Enoch and Elijah Taken to Heaven?

Many people cite Genesis 5:24 and II Kings 2:11 as proof Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven. But this is contrary to John 3:13, which states, “no man has ascended to heaven.”

Where then were Enoch and Elijah taken?

First, let's consider Enoch, who was the seventh of eight preachers of righteousness (Gen. 5; II Pet. 2:4-5). Genesis 5:24 states, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

Enoch “walked with God”—faithfully obeyed God—for 300 years (vs. 21-24), until his death. He “was not” in the sense that he “was not *found*” (Heb. 11:5). Verse 5 explains that God “translated” him; here, the Greek term for “translated” means “to *transfer* or *transport*.”

God removed Enoch's body to another location for burial (as He did with Moses, Deut. 34:6). The same Greek word for “translated” is also used in Acts 7:16 to describe Jacob's body being transported to Sychem for burial.

If Enoch had been taken to heaven and is *still* living to this day, he would *still* be walking with God—present tense. Enoch is awaiting his resurrection with the other servants of God (Heb. 11:5, 39-40).

Next, let's examine Elijah. II Kings 2:1 states, “And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.” Verse 11 continues, “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and *Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*”

Throughout the Bible, the word “heaven” is used to describe three locations: First, there is the atmosphere that envelops the earth; this is the *first heaven*. Next, the vast regions of outer space are collectively referred to as “heaven,” or “the heavens”; this is the *second heaven*. Finally, the location of God's throne is specifically called “the *third heaven*” by Paul (II Cor. 12:2).

We already know that no human being has ascended into heaven—to God's throne in the third heaven. Therefore, only two possibilities remain for Elijah: outer space or the earth's atmosphere. Since human beings cannot breathe in space, Elijah must have been taken up into the atmosphere. Clearly, this is the only logical alternative.

Different from Enoch, the evidence is that Elijah was taken to another location on earth, where he lived the rest of his life. Consider further proof. A few years after he had been taken away, Elijah wrote a letter to Jehoram, king of Judah, rebuking him for not following God as his father Jehoshaphat did (II Chron. 21:12). Only people *on Earth* send letters!

Hebrews chapter 11 summarizes the future reward of Enoch and Elijah as having part with the patriarchs and other servants of God throughout the ages: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (vs. 13).

Also read verses 39-40: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

The scriptures show that Enoch and Elijah were not taken to heaven, but are in their graves awaiting the resurrection, at which time they will receive their reward along with Christians still alive at Christ's coming to Jerusalem.

Souls Under the Altar?

REVELATION 6:9-11: John wrote, “I saw under the altar [in heaven] the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” The context continues with the souls asking God a question.

Some cite these verses to validate both the immortal soul doctrine and that the saved go to heaven. This description is not literal, but rather is symbolic, as is much of the book of Revelation. Notice the four horses (of the apocalypse) described earlier in this same chapter. No one believes that these horses are literal, but rather that they are symbolic and part of a VISION seen by John. A consistent standard must be used, without randomly picking and choosing which should be considered literal and which should be considered a vision. Surely, no one believes that such “souls” are literally required to remain under any kind of altar in heaven.

In vision, John saw before him a book or scroll sealed with seven seals. As Christ opened each seal (Rev. 5:5), John was shown a preview of a future event (“hereafter” [4:1]). Since John was “in the spirit” as the seven seals were opened (vs. 2), the events he witnessed were not actually occurring when he saw them. They were *heavenly previews* of things that would happen later *on Earth*.

Upon opening the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9), John “saw under [at the base of] the altar the souls of them that were slain.” In Matthew 24:9-28, Christ had shown a parallel that confirms the meaning of the seven seals. The fifth seal symbolizes a coming Great Tribulation, which will occur *on Earth*.

In the vision, John was shown the future, with a long period of martyrdom having taken place (up to and through the Middle Ages), and a later one (the Great Tribulation) that is yet to happen in our time. The souls who were “slain” (martyred Christians throughout the ages) were told (vs. 11) to “rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Many of those who have died will continue to “rest” (remain “asleep” in their graves—Eph. 5:14; I Cor. 11:30) until others are also martyred.

The “souls” (dead saints) crying “avenge our blood” (vs. 10) is akin to Abel’s blood (his life—note Lev. 17:14) crying to God from the earth (Gen. 4:10). Since neither blood nor the dead talk (Psa. 115:17; Ecc. 9:5, 10), the meaning is symbolic, not literal. Therefore, the “souls under the altar” represents a future martyrdom of saints. (You may read our booklet *Revelation Explained at Last!* to more fully understand Bible prophecy, including the seven seals.)

Who Are the 24 Elders?

REVELATION 5:8-10: “And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals

thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed *us* [them] to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And have made *us* [them] unto our God kings and priests: and *we* [they] shall reign on the earth.”

Some falsely claim that the 24 elders are taken from saved human beings. This idea comes from a mistranslation of the italicized words. These should be replaced by the words in brackets. See the Revised Standard Version, and also the margin of the New King James Version, which both render them correctly.

These elders are spirit beings created by God to be His counselors. They were probably created before the physical creation, along with the cherubim (Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer—who became Satan—are the only three mentioned in the Bible), the seraphim, the four living creatures and the billions of other angels that serve God.

It is impossible that the 24 elders are resurrected saints. Christ stated, “And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” Only when Christ returns in glory to Jerusalem will Christians be given immortality (I Cor. 15:23)!

The 24 elders rule with God *in heaven* and have been given an advisory role to Him. The resurrected saints rule *on Earth* (Rev. 20:4; Matt. 5:5; Dan. 7:27).

Much People in Heaven?

REVELATION 19:1: John records, “And after these things I heard a great voice of much PEOPLE in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God.”

The word “people” is improperly translated from the Greek word *ochlos*. This word has a variety of synonyms in the English language, *one* of which is “people.”

Since the Bible shows that the reward of the saved is rulership on Earth—not in heaven—it is clear that another synonym for the Greek word should have been used.

The Moffatt translation of the Bible interprets *ochlos* as “host,” while the Revised Standard Version and the Goodspeed translations render it as “multitude.” The Numeric English New Testament and the Amplified New Testament translate it as “crowd.”

While each of these translations uses a slightly different word, they more accurately deliver the meaning of the original Greek. The “people” in heaven referenced in Revelation 19:1 are, in fact, the “host, multitude or crowd” there. This scripture refers to angels that are in heaven. *They* are the multitude there, which sing and praise God (see Rev. 5:11-12).

Moses and Elijah in Heaven?

MATTHEW 17:1-3: In these verses, Peter, James and John saw Christ in glory “transfigured” and appearing with Moses and Elijah. Does this show that these men are now in heaven?

The explanation lies in verse 9: “Tell the *vision* to no man.” This entire account is a vision. It had to do with what three men *saw* (vs. 7-8), but only *in vision*. It was not addressing where they were literally. Remember, no man has ascended to heaven. This would certainly have applied to Moses and Elijah.

Did Paul Visit Heaven?

II CORINTHIANS 12:1-7: The following verses raise the question of whether Paul visited heaven during his lifetime: “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory, I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord (vs. 1). I knew [know] a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) such an one caught up to the THIRD HEAVEN (vs. 2). And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows; [vs. 3]) How that he was *caught up into paradise*, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (vs. 4).

This question arises: Does verse 4 prove that Paul went to heaven, because “he was caught up into paradise,” and that this is *our* reward as well? Revelation 2:7 does, in fact, prove that paradise is near God’s throne in the third heaven: “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the *paradise of God*.”

There is no doubt that this account refers to Paul and no one else. He uses the pronoun “I” fourteen times.

It is also clear that this event was a vision—and a revelation—from God. Verse 1 mentions “I will come to VISIONS and REVELATIONS of the Lord.” In verse 7, Paul added, “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the REVELATIONS, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”

Verse 2 shows that Paul’s experience was so real to him, he could not discern if it was a vision or something that really happened! The word “knew,” in verse 2, should be translated “know.” Paul was speaking of himself. This is not past tense, as though he spoke of having once known someone else to whom the account pertains.

In verse 3, he repeats his uncertainty for emphasis. Understand! In no way does this represent Paul’s future in heaven! Remember again, Paul could not have literally gone to heaven, because Christ said, “No man has ascended up to heaven, but...the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

This unusual experience was given to Paul for a reason—so that he would have the special strength to endure all of what he would be required to suffer over the course of his ministry. In the previous chapter, 11:23-33, Paul describes the terrible and seemingly endless trials and persecution that he experienced. His ability to endure all these difficulties required special encouragement from God. This was why Paul was allowed to see his future glory after being resurrected—when he will actually *receive* salvation.

Verses 5-6 show that Paul described himself indirectly so that people would not think too highly of him. He realized that some could begin to view him as a special person merely because of the vision God had shown him. So this is what he said: “Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or that he hears of me.”

Paul remained humble by “glorying in his infirmities.” Yet he received great inspiration from the vision to press on through the rest of his difficult ministry. This account has nothing to do with Paul having been to heaven during his lifetime.

Christ Leading People to Heaven?

EPHESIANS 4:8: “Wherefore he says, When He ascended up on high, He led *captivity captive*, and gave gifts unto men.”

Does this verse teach that Christ takes people “captive” and leads them to heaven? How does Christ lead “CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE”? What does this short phrase mean?

The great universal church teaches that this is a reference to LIMBUS PATRI—meaning the place of *limbo* occupied by the *fathers* (Old Testament fathers like Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Isaiah, etc.). Their idea asserts that these men were captives trapped *in limbo* before Christ “ascended” to heaven and made it possible for them to go there, too. In this way, Christ supposedly led “captivity (the fathers) captive” to Himself and took them to heaven.

This whole concept is foolish—even silly—when one thinks of men trapped in captivity in some vague spiritual “neverland” or “prison” for thousands of years until Christ could “free” them.

The real meaning here is simply that those who serve sin *are captive to it* and are its *servant* or *slave* (Rom. 6:16-19), until they repent. Christ ascended to heaven, to become our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16) and intercede for us, so we can receive *forgiveness* of sins and be offered salvation—and the gift of God’s Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:6; II Cor. 13:5). At conversion, Christians become captives *of Christ* (instead *of sin*) and servants (slaves) of righteousness.

Ephesians 4:8 references conversion, not salvation. Romans 6:17-18 states, “But God be thanked, that you were the *servants of sin*, but you have obeyed from the heart. . . . Being then made *free from sin*, you became the *servants of righteousness*.” When this occurs, one is no longer captive to sin—and Satan (II Tim. 2:26)!

Conversation in Heaven?

PHILIPPIANS 3:20: “For our *conversation* is in heaven; *from where* also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Does this verse prove that the dead converse in a strange, new and truer “conversation” in heaven? The word *conversation* is the Greek word *politeuma*. It should be properly translated *citizenship*. The word *politics* derives from it.

This is a fascinating passage. It reveals that Christian “citizenship” is held in heaven, not on Earth. It also explains why Christ said, “My kingdom is not OF this world” (John 18:36). This is because it is of—belongs to—another place, heaven.

Christians are ambassadors for another government (II Cor. 5:20) and citizens of the kingdom of God. This is why they do not participate in man’s systems of government. Their citizenship derives from and is held by a different authority—HEAVEN! (Read our booklets *Should Christians Vote?* and *War, Killing and the Military* to understand much more.)

The citizenship of Christians comes *FROM* heaven by the authority of God *IN* heaven. Recall that Revelation 22:12 shows that Christ brings our reward with Him! Verse 21 of Philippians 3 shows that it is speaking of the resurrection (see I Cor. 15), when our bodies shall be changed. Philippians 3:20 is not a reference to any kind of conversation.

Matthew 6:19-23 shows that Christians can store eternal reward in heaven. The analogy is that a Christian’s citizenship is held in heaven for him *where no one can destroy it* (“neither moth nor rust doth corrupt”).

Finally, Philippians 3:20 uses the phrase “*FROM* where” in describing Christ’s Return. He comes *here* with His reward, not the other way around!

Are the Fathers Alive?

MATTHEW 22:31-32: “But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*” Does this say Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive?

This text is often twisted to try to prove that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not really dead, since it states that God is the God “of the living.” Careful reading cuts through this argument.

Christ is speaking “touching [concerning] *the resurrection.*” He is not speaking of these men living in heaven now, but rather about who *must* be resurrected *in the future*, since God is the God “of the living.” This is the subject He is explaining—the RESURRECTION! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are dead. Therefore, the God of the *living* must resurrect them back to *life* at some point in His Plan. This was the specific point Christ was explaining. He was not attempting, in one verse, to explain all of the other understanding we have read proving the *what*, *when*, *where* and *how* of that Plan!

God to Dwell With Men

This booklet has shown that no human beings go to heaven upon death. Heaven is NOT the reward of the saved!

Eventually, God will dwell on Earth—beginning with Jesus Christ, then later, God the Father. Christ will initially sit on David’s throne before eventually sitting on His own throne in Jerusalem. During that time the Earth will be filled with “the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). All mankind will be given a chance to live God’s Way. John records the much later time when New Jerusalem will come *here* from heaven and God the Father will dwell among men: “And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, *coming down* from God *out of heaven*, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is *with men*, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:2-3).

There is no question that these verses reveal God will eventually come to Earth to dwell with His people. Read it carefully. It speaks of the Tree of Life coming to Earth. Revelation 2:7 explains that this tree is now in “paradise.” Recall that the thief hoped to join Christ *in paradise*. At the end of God’s Plan, paradise will be *on the earth!* God reveals His marvelous purpose to us at the very end of the New Testament.

Revelation 22 begins by confirming this event—and what will happen when it occurs. The Tree of Life will “heal all the nations of the earth.”

Notice: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the TREE OF LIFE, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: *and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; 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 night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: *and they shall REIGN for ever and ever*” (vs. 1-5).

Heaven has *never* been the reward of Christians. God has promised something far greater for you than “rolling around heaven all day” or “taking walks on streets of gold.” This idea of salvation would be *prison* or *torture* compared to your real destiny, which is to rule the nations beside Christ—ON EARTH!

What could be more incredible?

You Will NOT Go to Heaven

In the conclusion of his booklet *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* Herbert W. Armstrong wrote this under his final subhead “The Reward is NOT Heaven”:

“And Jesus said: ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit THE EARTH’ (Matt. 5:5). That’s part of the Sermon on the Mount—and certainly every Christian must believe the Sermon on the Mount! Then we must believe, if we are Christians, that what the saved inherit is the earth—and not heaven! Jesus plainly said, ‘*NO man* has ascended up to heaven’ (John 3:13).

“David was a man after God’s own heart. David has the promise of being in the Kingdom of God, ruling over Israel under Christ, when Christ will rule all nations. But on that day of Pentecost when the New Testament Church began, the inspired Peter said: ‘David is not ascended into the heavens’ (Acts 2:34).

“The wisest man who ever lived was inspired to write, as part of the divine Word of God, ‘The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth’ (Prov. 10:30).

“I think most of you have read those scriptures. That’s the ‘Thus saith the Lord’ on the question. There is absolutely no scripture in all the Holy Bible that promises heaven as the reward the saved shall inherit. And yet, have not most people just sort of blinded their minds to these positive, plain statements from God Almighty, and carelessly taken for granted, without question, the idea of going to heaven?

“Notice when the Kingdom shall be inherited—when the heirs of the promises to Abraham shall come finally into their reward, and receive the actual inheritance. It is recorded in Matthew 25:31, 34:

“‘When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.... Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared* for you from the foundation of the world.’ Yes, the Kingdom of God is the place prepared. Jesus said He went to prepare a place for us. He also said He went to get for Himself a kingdom, and to return. And when He returns, as King of kings, and that Kingdom is established (we find it is the place prepared), then it is that the joyful call goes out, ‘Come! ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.’”

The following literature expands on topics discussed in this booklet:

- America and Britain in Prophecy
- Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday
- Just What *Is* Salvation?
- Revelation Explained at Last!
- Should Christians Vote?
- The Truth About Hell
- War, Killing and the Military
- What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind

020317
DSG

The Restored Church of God

1000 Ambassador Drive
Wadsworth, OH 44281
USA

P.O. Box 4064
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7S3
CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266
Fax: (330) 334-6513
E-mail: info@rcg.org
Web: rcg.org