

**Be
Ye
Ready!**

Be ye ready!

FIRST EDITION, March 2010

COPYRIGHT 2009

Faithful Church of God in Laodicea

<http://www.fcogl.org>

This booklet is not to be sold.

It is a free educational service
in the public interest, published by the
Faithful Church of God in Laodicea.

Faithful Church of God in Laodicea

All Rights Reserved

Table of contents

Chapter 1 The *true* gospel message Pg. 5

Chapter 2 Examine yourself! Pg. 14

Chapter 3 “He who overcomes...” Pg. 39

“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Lk. 12:40).

Chapter 1

The *true* gospel message

Let us begin by asking an all-important question: what is the true gospel message? This is a topic which many talk about but few understand. In his writings, the apostle Paul clearly taught that those who preach the *wrong* gospel will be cursed (Gal. 1:8-9). It is vital that the correct gospel is taught, understood and believed. So again we ask, what is the gospel message which Christ preached?

It must be understood that the gospel is not a message *about* Christ but it is the message which He brought as God's Messenger:

“For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: *whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak*” (Jn. 12:49-50).

The word ‘gospel’ literally means “a good message”, or “a good word”. The gospel message, brought by Christ, is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Notice:

“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*” (Mk. 1:14-15).

The next question which must be asked is: what is this good news of the Kingdom of God? To understand this, we must first of all understand the meaning of a ‘kingdom’. In his

booklet entitled “What is the true gospel?”, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong clearly defines a ‘kingdom’ as:

- 1) A TERRITORY, with its specific location and definite boundary lines, with...
- 2) A KING or Supreme Ruler or governing agent, ruling over...
- 3) SUBJECTS or citizens *within* that territorial jurisdiction, with...
- 4) LAWS and form of GOVERNMENT.

These are the four requisites for a kingdom: without either of these, there is no kingdom. The Kingdom of God, however, is *spiritual* in nature. Notice what is stated in the following scriptures:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, *Except a man be born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3).

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, *Ye must be born again*. 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 every one that is born of the Spirit*” (Jn. 3:5-8).

In John 18:36 Christ further states: “...*My kingdom is not of this world...*”. Understand what these scriptures are saying: the Kingdom of God will be composed of those who are *born again of the spirit*. Those who are resurrected or changed when Christ comes in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:17) will be born again of spirit just as God is spirit (John 4:24). On this, Mr. Armstrong wrote:

“The Kingdom of GOD is composed of those BORN of GOD. And as I have explained previously, GOD is not a single person, but the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, portrays God as a FAMILY of persons - a *single* family, or *kingdom*, but composed of MORE than one person. We have the mineral *kingdom* - the plant *kingdom* - the animal *kingdom*. The Bible reveals an angel *kingdom*, created by God and composed of spirit, not matter. And then, high above all, is the very CREATING Kingdom - the GOD Kingdom, or, in other words, THE KINGDOM OF GOD! God is REPRODUCING HIMSELF! God created man in GOD'S IMAGE, so that man may become impregnated, BEGOTTEN, and, by a resurrection, be BORN as an immortal, SPIRIT-COMPOSED person in the KINGDOM OF GOD. The Apostle Paul made very plain to the Corinthians that while mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit, or enter into, the Kingdom of God, that through the resurrection of those BEGOTTEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD during this mortal life, this MORTAL then *puts on* IMMORTALITY, and we, like the very God Himself, become IMMORTAL, INCORRUPTIBLE, actually, literally, BORN of God's Spirit INTO the very GOD FAMILY” (*ibid*).

Do we understand the depth of what is being stated? Those members of God's Church, begotten through baptism, have the incredible human potential of being born as spirit beings into the Family of God! God's begotten children are joint-heirs with Christ to inherit all things:

“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” (Rom. 8:17).

“And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and *heirs according to the promise*” (Gal. 3:29).

Conditions to enter the Kingdom of God

The Bible discusses two conditions to enter the Kingdom of God: *repentance* and *belief in the gospel* message (Acts 2:38; Mk. 1:15 etc). Notice what Mr. Armstrong wrote:

“We must BELIEVE the Gospel, and that means also believing on JESUS CHRIST, the KING of the Kingdom of God, and coming KING *of* kings over all the families of the earth. It means believing in Him as personal SAVIOUR, as High Priest now, and as coming KING. But to repent is to completely CHANGE THE MIND in respect to SIN, and "sin is the transgression of the LAW" (I John 3:4) - the Law of GOD by which God RULES the Kingdom. It means a total, complete CHANGE OF MIND AND OF LIFE. It means we REPENT of transgressing the rule, the will, the laws, of GOD. What did Jesus say to the young man who asked Him HOW to inherit eternal life? He said, "IF thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matt. 19:17)” (*ibid*).

The coming Kingdom of God is the best news that this world can hope for. It is the solution to all of mankind's problems which will bring an end to the strife, competition, greed, vanity and selfishness that is rampant in today's world. The Kingdom of God will bring about true prosperity, joy, abundance, peace and happiness. God speed the day that the Kingdom is set up (Matt. 6:10)!

Kingdom of God

Following is another excerpt written by Mr. Armstrong, and this time from his booklet entitled “Just what do you mean...Kingdom of God?”. This quote concisely explains this important subject:

“The Kingdom of God is something men shall ENTER - at the resurrection of the just! ... But one may ask, did not Jesus Christ say the Kingdom of God was

"at hand"? ... Mark 1:15. This naturally led some to mistake what He said, and what He meant, and assume the Kingdom of God was established and set up during Jesus' ministry. Thus some supposed it was the Church. But Jesus did not say the Kingdom of God had been established. It was now being *preached* (Luke 16:16). He did not say it was already here. Jesus, Himself, corrected this false notion. Will you *read this* IN YOUR OWN BIBLE? Will you then *believe* Jesus Christ - or will you call Him a liar and believe so-called "Christian" traditions of men? Will you believe YOUR BIBLE?

Notice - read it in your own Bible: Jesus "added and spake a parable ... because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11). WHY did Jesus speak this parable? Because some, even then, mistakenly thought the Kingdom *should immediately appear* - because some thought it would be THE CHURCH!

Now continue: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (verse 12). Christ is that "nobleman". He is speaking of His ascension to the throne of God His Father, in heaven. Notice, He went there to be *given* rulership of the Kingdom - to receive the Kingdom. Notice, too, He is to return, when He has received it! *He has not yet returned!* Other scriptures explain this...But continue: "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us"...Continuing the parable, spoken *because* some thought the Kingdom of God was immediately, then, in the first century, to appear: "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these

servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading" (verse 15). When Christ returns, we shall all be called before the Judgment Seat of Christ - to give account! Now notice in verse 17, the one who had gained ten pounds is given authority to RULE CITIES - "have thou authority over ten cities"! To the one who had gained five pounds, he said, "Be thou also over five cities". This is speaking of the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST and of His delegating *authority to rule* to saints converted during this Christian era, between Christ's first and second appearances on earth. This parable, then, was spoken to make clear to us that the Kingdom of God is a literal GOVERNMENT, to be set up AT CHRIST'S SECOND COMING - *and not before!* The CHURCH, then, *cannot* be the Kingdom of God. But the true Church of God is to be *changed*, by a resurrection and instantaneous change from mortal to immortal, INTO the Kingdom of God. The Church, when all its members have been changed to immortality, shall BECOME the Kingdom of God. But it is not, now, the Kingdom!

Saints to Rule

Now read the description of Christ's actual *receiving* authority to RULE the Kingdom. He is the nobleman who went to heaven to receive this kingship, and to return. ...the Prophet Daniel recorded the setting up of the Kingdom of God – *at Christ's coming* - to consume all present national governments on earth, and set up the world-ruling Kingdom of God. This was recorded in the second chapter [of Daniel]. Notice now chapter seven: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man [Christ] came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him" (verse 13). Jesus continually referred to Himself as the "Son of man" - all

through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Christ ascended to heaven in clouds (Acts 1:9). He ascended to the very throne of God in heaven (Mark 16:19). Now continue: "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, 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" (Dan. 7:14). That is plain! Christ ascended to the throne of God in heaven. God is Sovereign over the entire universe. This vision shows God Almighty, Father of the resurrected living Christ, conferring on Christ dominion. Dominion means sovereign or supreme ruling authority. Also given to Him was "a kingdom." Where is that Kingdom to be? It says "a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." The people, and the nations speaking different languages, are here on earth. He is given dominion over ALL NATIONS - the whole world!

Now will you read, in your own Bible, Acts 3:21? It says the heavens have received Jesus Christ UNTIL – not permanently, just *until* a certain time. Until *when*? Until the times of RESTITUTION of all things. Restitution means restoration to a former state or condition. It is speaking of restoring God's laws, God's government - of restoring happiness and universal PEACE. In this 7th chapter of Daniel, the prophet had experienced a dream, and visions. He had seen four wild animals. Notice, verse 16, *the interpretation* begins verse 17. This is GOD'S inspired interpretation - not mine: "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the KINGDOM, and possess the kingdom forever, even for ever and ever" (Dan. 7:17-18). Notice it! Not *only* is Christ to rule - but the *saints* - that is, converted true Christians - those begotten as sons of God - are to take and possess the

Kingdom! They are to rule under, and *with* Christ! In the New Testament it is recorded that converted saints are co-heirs with Christ! In this same 7th chapter, Daniel explained another power. The fourth beast of his dream - the fourth empire - the Roman Empire, was pictured as an animal having ten horns - explained here and in Revelation 13 and Revelation 17 as ten revivals or resurrections of the Roman Empire, after its original fall in 476 A.D. But among them - after 476 A.D. - arose another little horn - a religious kingdom, actually ruling over the last seven of the other "horns" or revived Roman kingdoms (verse 20). Now read about this "little horn" - the religious kingdom - verse 21: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, UNTIL [*note, another 'UNTIL'*] the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The saints - then no longer human flesh and blood, but immortal - are to possess the Kingdom, at the second coming of Christ!

Jesus Christ makes that plain. It is Christ who is speaking in Revelation 3:21, and 2:26-27: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." The Father's throne is in heaven - where Jesus Christ is *now*; but Christ's throne, in which the saints shall sit with Him, is the throne of David, in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32). Further: "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."

What an incredible potential God's people have been given! What an awe-inspiring future awaits us if we repent, overcome and prove our loyalty to God unto the end.

The following booklets were written by Mr. Herbert Armstrong and are recommended for further reading:

- What is the true Gospel?
- Just what do you mean...Kingdom of God?
- The Incredible Human Potential
- All about water baptism
- What will you be doing in the next life?
- Why were you born?
- What is the reward of the saved?

Chapter 2 Examine yourself!

In the first chapter of this booklet we discussed the Kingdom of God and our incredible human potential. [For a more detailed explanation of these vital subjects, please refer to and read the recommended booklets listed at the end of chapter one]. In this and the next chapter we will discuss what the Bible states about doing our part to ensure that the incredible human potential is realized in our own lives! It must be pointed out that the contents of this booklet are far from exhaustive. This booklet is a guide to the scriptures, which will help set the individual on the right path as each of us works out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)!

Throughout the pages of the Bible, we are admonished to make ourselves ready to enter the Kingdom of God. To do this we must examine ourselves, acknowledge our weaknesses and sins, repent and ask God to give us more of His power to overcome them. The apostle Paul cautioned the Corinthians:

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [proclaim] the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:26-28).

Here are some other scriptures admonishing us to make ourselves ready as the bride of Christ:

“Therefore **be ye also ready**: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44).

“Be ye therefore **ready** also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Lk. 12:40).

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to **make ready a people prepared for the Lord**” (Lk. 1:17).

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and **his wife hath made herself ready**” (Rev. 19:7).

No human being is worthy of Christ’s sacrifice (see Rom. 3:23; 5:8)! However, we can be worthy in our attitude – it must be a repentant attitude (Acts 2:38; 1 Jn. 1:5-9)! We must have a deep respect for Christ’s sacrifice and what it means, and to do this effectively we must *examine* ourselves by taking a close look at how we are living our lives (1 Cor. 11:28). We must be totally aware of the fact that our individual sins required Jesus Christ to pay the death penalty for us (Rom. 3:24-25). Only if we are in a deeply repentant attitude can we truly shun sin and draw closer to God, otherwise we fall guilty of Jesus Christ’s death (1 Cor. 11:27). We have a responsibility to judge ourselves by seeing how our lives measure up to the life of Christ. We must acknowledge our successes and failures, and use God’s Holy Spirit to work on changing our failures into successes. We must dig deep and avoid justifying our sins and shortcomings! God wants us to strive for perfection, just as He is perfect (Matt. 5:48). God’s Word must be our Standard by which we judge ourselves, and then we must use His Spirit to completely eradicate sin from our lives. We must constantly and consistently do this so that we may grow spiritually.

Examine yourself...first step in getting ready

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had

given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body” (1 Cor. 11:23-19).

“**Examine yourselves**, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

“**Examine me**, O LORD, and **prove me**; try my reins and my heart” (Ps. 26:2).

“**Search me**, O God, and know my heart: **try me**, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I **try the reins**, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 17:9-10).

Questions & tips

For the remainder of this chapter, we will ask a series of questions that will help us to examine ourselves. The questions will be answered with scripture. Please meditate carefully and

sincerely on these questions, answers and tips. They are only meant as a guide and help as we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12):

- **How deep is my conversion?**
- **What is my focus as I go about my daily life?**
- **Am I careful to seek the spiritual rather than focus on the physical?**
- **Do I place God and His Kingdom first and foremost in my life?**
- **Do I register daily spiritual growth?**
- **Have I died to sin?**

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: **But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,** where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21).

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon.** Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven,

shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But **seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness**; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:24-34).

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life**” (Rom 6:4).

“**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 2:5).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That **the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works**” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, **cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter**, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:25-27).

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, **let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again

the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1-2).

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Tit. 2:7).

- **Do I clearly see my own carnal nature?**

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but **I am carnal, sold under sin**. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:** for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, **evil is present with me”** (Rom. 7:14, 18, 21).

“And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? **there is none good but one, that is, God:** but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17).

- **Am I careful to do everything possible to avoid temptation? Even though ‘the spirit is willing’, ‘the flesh is weak’. I must avoid anything or anyone that will cause me to compromise with God’s laws and ways:**

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God**” (Gal. 5:19-21).

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.** Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:1-8).

“And **if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out**, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And **if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off**, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:29-30).

“**Flee fornication.** Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18).

“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

- Out of love for God, do I strive to repent and overcome?

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10).

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:4).

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom. 7:24-25).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to

himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:28-31).

- Do I study the Bible to learn and understand what God expects of me?

- Do I allow myself to be disciplined by God's Words?

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Phil. 2:15-16).

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas. 1:22).

- Do I love the brethren the way I should?

- Do I communicate with others to encourage them and increase the unity within the Body of Christ?

- Do I pray for my brethren?

- Do I have love for my neighbor as well as for my enemies?

- Am I careful not to condemn or judge others?

"Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers" (1 Cor. 6:8 [NIV]).

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but **whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.** And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, **Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;** That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? **Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect**” (Mat. 5:38-48).

“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (Jn. 13:12-17).

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what

measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:1-5).

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom. 2:1).

- Do I hold anything against anyone?

- Do I have compassion for others?

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt" (Matt. 18:23-28).

"And when ye stand praying, **forgive, if ye have ought against any**: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mk. 11:25-26).

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

- Do I allow myself to be corrected, or am I stubborn, refusing to see where I might be wrong and thus rejecting the opportunity to build righteous character?

“My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Prov. 3:11-12).

“Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die” (Prov. 15:10).

“But thou shalt say unto them, This *is* a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth” (Jer. 7:28).

- Am I quick to point out the faults in others, and slow to see my own?

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye” (Matt. 7:3-5).

- Have I allowed the Holy Spirit to produce its fruit within my life?

- Does my example show evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in my life?

- Do I allow others to feed off these positive fruits?

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matt. 5:13-16).

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But **when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:** That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:1-4).

“Thou hypocrite, **first cast out the beam out of thine own eye;** and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye” (Matt. 7:5).

“Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words:** and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (Jn. 14:23).

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:** for without me ye

can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. **Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples**” (Jn. 15:4-8).

“**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:** against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

- **Do I allow Christ to live in me through the Holy Spirit?**

“Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words:** and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (Jn. 14:23).

“Abide in me, and I in you. As **the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine;** no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:** for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (Jn. 15:4-8).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

- **Do I ensure positive behavior in my life?**

“**Blessed are the poor in spirit**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed are they that mourn**: for they shall be comforted. **Blessed are the meek**: for they shall inherit the earth. **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness**: for they shall be filled. **Blessed are the merciful**: for they shall obtain mercy. **Blessed are the pure in heart**: for they shall see God. **Blessed are the peacemakers**: for they shall be called the children of God. **Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake**” (Matt. 5:3-11).

- **Am I a peaceful individual or am I ready to get into debates, controversy and arguments?**

- **Am I confrontational, self indulgent, offensive, insulting, provoking others to anger?**

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy**” (Ps. 103:8).

“A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but **the way of the righteous is made plain**” (Prov. 15:18-19).

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and **he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city**” (Prov. 16:32).

“And **rend your heart**, and not your garments, and **turn unto the LORD your God**: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:13).

“**Blessed are the peacemakers**: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).

“That ye may **be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke**, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

“**Sound speech, that cannot be condemned**; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Tit. 2:8).

- Do I sin through pornography, lust, adultery?

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That **whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery** with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28).

- Do husbands fulfill their God-given roles within the family?

“For **the husband is the head of the wife**, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23).

“Husbands, **love your wives**, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. **He that loveth his wife loveth himself**. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (Eph. 5: 28-29).

“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Col. 3:19).

“Likewise, **ye husbands**, dwell with them according to knowledge, **giving honour unto the wife**, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7).

- Do wives fulfill their God-given roles within the family?

“**Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands**, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

“Therefore **as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands** in every thing” (Eph. 5:24).

“**Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands**, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col. 3:18).

“Even so must their **wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things**” (1 Tim. 3:11).

“Likewise, **ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands**; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives” (1 Pet. 3:1).

- Do children fulfill their God-given roles within the family and society?

“**Children, obey your parents** in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” Col. 3:20).

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and **honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God**: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:32).

- Do grandparents fulfill their roles within the family and society?

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That **the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.** The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may **teach the young women** to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Tit. 2:1-5).

- What are my motives for doing good works?

“Take heed that ye **do not your alms before men, to be seen of them:** otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 6:1).

“And when thou prayest, **thou shalt not be as the hypocrites** are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matt. 6:5).

- Have I been quick to forgive those who trespass against me?

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and **go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.** Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matt. 5:23-26).

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but **whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.** And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away” (Matt. 5:38-42).

“For if ye **forgive men their trespasses,** your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14-15).

“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; **thou shalt forgive him**” (Lk. 17:4).

- Do I think before I speak, ensuring that I guard my tongue and ensure that everything I say is pleasing to God and in accordance to His Word?

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But **let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay:** for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt. 5:33-37).

“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many

things we offend all. **If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,** and able also to bridle the whole body” (Jas. 3:1-2).

“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And **the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity:** so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (Jas. 3:5-10).

- Do I appreciate what God and Christ have done for me?

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that **he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.** For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect **through sufferings**” (Heb. 2:9-10).

“For God so loved the world, that **he gave his only begotten Son,** that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Jn. 3:16-17).

“For **Christ also hath once suffered for sins,** the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, **being put**

to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

Be ye ready

The Bible is replete with scriptures admonishing us to closely examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Tim 2:15 etc). We must do this to know the areas in our lives where we need to overcome to measure up to Christ.

“...by ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh...” (Matt. 24:44)

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night... But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief... Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:2, 4, 6).

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night... Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:10, 14).

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

The book of Revelation is full of incredible promises from God concerning our salvation. For example, Jesus Christ says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21). We are *promised* a shared rulership with Jesus Christ—*if we overcome*. Our future rule with Jesus Christ will be a “great salvation” (Heb. 2:3). The question is, will we make it? We must be busy making ourselves ready to ensure we are accounted worthy!

We must understand that salvation is an individual matter (Phil. 2:12). Each one of us has the individual responsibility to respond to God and His direction. A minister of God can only help, feed and nurture the flock, but they do not have the authority to force anyone in any direction; ministers do not have the authority to force anyone to take certain decisions. God gives the individual member the freedom to make their own decisions. It is the responsibility of each individual to obey and submit to God. He is the one who corrects: blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience. Following Christ is an *individual* matter. He is knocking on each individual's *spiritual* door. How will we individually respond to Christ? The individual who responds positively receives the awesome rewards promised within the pages of the Bible. No human being, no minister or human organization can obtain salvation for any individual. No one but our own personal efforts, with the help of God and His Holy Spirit, can get us into the Kingdom of God. Each individual must obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. We must meticulously follow *Him!* The way we do that will decide whether we make it into the Kingdom or not!

Passover and Unleavened Bread

As we get ourselves ready, we must understand the meaning and importance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Christ is our Passover who was sacrificed for us! The possibility of our salvation was brought about by Christ's death. Now we must do our part – *we must examine ourselves*, acknowledge our shortcomings and overcome.

In the 1979 Good News magazine, Mr. Armstrong wrote:

“The Passover pictures the DEATH OF CHRIST *for the remission of sins that are past*. The accepting of His BLOOD does not forgive sins we SHALL commit — it does not give LICENSE to continue in sin — therefore

WHEN we accept it, our sins are forgiven only up to that time — PAST SINS.

But shall we *stop there*? Past sins forgiven. But we are still *flesh beings*. We still shall suffer *temptations*. Sin has held us *in its clutch* — we have been SLAVES to sin, in its power. And we are *powerless* to deliver ourselves from it! We have been in BONDAGE to sin. Let us understand the picture — the meaning.

Quitting sin utterly

To what extent shall we put away sin? Not partially, but COMPLETELY! And, as leaven is also a type of sin — leaven puffs up, and so does sin — and, as SEVEN is God's number symbolizing COMPLETENESS, we are to *follow* the Passover with the *seven Days of Unleavened Bread!*

The picture — the meaning — the symbolism, is not complete with Passover alone. Passover pictures the acceptance of Christ's blood for the REMISSION of *past* sins. It pictures the CRUCIFIED — the DEAD — Christ.

Shall we leave Christ hanging on the cross? The seven Days of UNLEAVENED BREAD, following Passover, picture to us the COMPLETE *putting away* of sin, the KEEPING of the Commandments — after past sins are forgiven. They picture the life and work of the RISEN CHRIST — who ascended to the throne of God where He is actively at work in our behalf as our HIGH PRIEST... The seven Days of Unleavened Bread picture the *keeping of the Commandments*, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin”.

Sin is like leaven. Just like leaven, it puffs up and grows very quickly. When we sin, we transgress God's law (1 Jn. 3:4). One sin leads to another and before we know it, it has a

snowball effect. One little piece of leaven leavens the whole lump! If we do not examine ourselves and overcome our sins, we will reap curses, which could even end up in eternal death (Deut. 28:15; Rom. 6:23). This is how serious we must take our self-examination and the overcoming of our sins.

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14).

We are human and there are times when we will fail, however, we must learn not to repeat those failures. We must live a life of overcoming and spiritual growth. With the help of the power of the Holy Spirit we will succeed. To do this we must examine ourselves, recognize our weaknesses and sins, repent of them and overcome. If we do this effectively, God *will* cleanse us from our sin (Jn. 15:1-6).

“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of *sincerity* and *truth*” (1 Cor. 5:8).

This is the attitude we must have as we prepare ourselves to partake of the Passover in a worthy manner, and it is also the attitude we should have as we get ourselves ready as the bride of Christ! We are *now* being refined and measured: God wants a bride suitable for His Son. Do we qualify? Do we measure up to God’s Word and what He expects of us? Are we doing what needs to be done to eliminate the leaven out of our lives? We must study God’s Word diligently, digest it and apply it to where it makes a noticeable difference in our lives! Now is the time to do this! More than ever before, we must be feverishly working and doing whatever it takes to take on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

In this chapter we discussed the subject of self-examination. This subject is one of a number of most important pre-requisites which needs to be applied as a potential

candidate for the Kingdom of God. Self-examination helps us ensure we acknowledge our shortcomings and wrongdoings. In the next chapter we will discuss the next vital step to attaining the Kingdom of God.

The following booklets were written by Mr. Herbert Armstrong and are recommended for further reading:

- The Ten Commandments
- The Seven Laws of Success
- Teach your children about God
- What is a real Christian?
- What is faith?

Chapter 3

“He who overcomes...”

Each converted individual, who has received a portion of God’s Holy Spirit through baptism and laying on of hands, is expected to stir up that Spirit, grow spiritually and build character (Acts 8:17; Gal. 5: 22-23; 2 Pet. 3:18). From being given a portion of God’s Holy Spirit at baptism, the individual Christian is expected to work that Spirit, allow it to produce its fruits and in so doing take on the mind of Christ (Lk. 19:10-27; Phil. 2:5). The New Testament makes it clear that Christians will not be saved by works (salvation is a free gift from God), but each shall be *rewarded* according to their works (Lk. 19:11-27). As baptized members, we are to multiply our spiritual gifts through application of God’s Word and submission to Him. The Christian life is one of growing in grace (spiritual strength) and knowledge (understanding) as we train for positions in the Kingdom of God. Understand: God’s Holy Spirit is given as a free gift at baptism. It comes by grace; it isn’t something we can earn, but we qualify to rule by being obedient and submissive to God. Notice the promises Christ makes to the seven Churches listed in the Book of Revelation:

Church in *Ephesus*: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

Church in *Smyrna*: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

Church in *Pergamos*: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev. 2:17).

Church in *Thyatira*: “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; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:26-27).

Church in *Sardis*: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Rev. 3:5).

Church in *Philadelphia*: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Rev. 3:12).

Church in *Laodicea*: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21).

Of course, as is clearly stated in Revelation 21, each of the promises listed in the above mentioned scriptures are made to ALL of God’s people who overcome irrespective of when they lived during the history of the Church (Rev. 21:7; Acts 10:34). All the Firstfruits will sit with Christ on His throne, all the Firstfruits will be a pillar in the temple of God, all the Firstfruits shall rule the nations with and under Christ, and none of them will be hurt by the second death and so on, however there will certainly be different levels of authority and rewards in the Kingdom corresponding to our works (Matt. 16:27). Notice carefully that the promises made to the seven

Churches listed in the book of Revelation are all contingent on *overcoming*. God stresses the fact that His people *must* conquer and gain the victory over Satan, self and society for these promises to be realized in our lives. Understand further: God is reproducing Himself through human beings. This requires that we, as God's people, must develop Godly, holy and righteous character by rejecting Satan's self-centered rebellious ways in whichever form they present themselves. We must wholeheartedly accept God, His way of life and absolutely reject and completely overcome Satan's ways and vices. Each individual must make his or her own decision to reject Satan's way and obey God (Phil. 2:12). Satan will constantly barrage God's people with his deceit in a number of subtle ways, and we must build the courage and strength to reject him. Notice what Paul told the Church at Corinth:

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, **as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty**, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2-3).

It was through subtlety that Satan beguiled Eve, and this is what Paul admonishes us to guard against. Satan will try to get to us through flattery, vanity, selfishness, lies, deceit and much more. We must guard against Satan and his vices. (For more information, please request or download the *Faithful Church of God in Laodicea's* booklet entitled “Mark them...and avoid them”).

Human nature

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to discuss the subject of human nature. On this, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote the following on page 8 of his booklet entitled “Human nature – did God create it?”:

“...the former great archangel cherub Lucifer, was the most perfect and powerful being that God could create as an individual being. He was perfect as originally created. But he is composed of spirit, and thus he is invisible to human eyes. This great and powerful being, even though evil, has power literally to surcharge the air around this earth. HE BROADCASTS!

Wherever you are as you read these words, chances are there are voices and perhaps music *in the air* around you. A radio or television set tuned to the right wavelength would make them audible to you. The spirit in every human being is automatically tuned in on Satan's wavelength. You don't hear anything because he does not broadcast in words nor in sounds, whether music or otherwise. He broadcasts in ATTITUDES. He broadcasts in attitudes of SELF-centeredness, lust, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, resentment, competition, strife, bitterness, and hate. In a word, the selfishness, hostility, deceitfulness, wickedness, rebellion, etc. that we call "HUMAN NATURE" is actually SATAN'S NATURE. It is Satan's ATTITUDE. And broadcasting it, surcharging the air with it, Satan actually NOW WORKS *IN* the unsuspecting all over the world today! That is *HOW* Satan deceives the whole world today (Rev. 12:9; 20:3). Being invisible, Satan is not seen by people. This prince of the power of the air - this god of this world - is THE REAL SOURCE OF WHAT WE HAVE COME TO CALL "HUMAN NATURE"!

The true Christian will embark on repenting of his or her human nature which includes the negative attitudes and ways in which Satan broadcasts. As already discussed, we must do all we can while engaging the power of God's Holy Spirit to reject and turn away from Satan, self and society. We are called to a life of overcoming selfish, negative thoughts, attitudes and practices:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded...”
(James 4:7-8)

Jesus Christ Himself had to resist Satan. Please read what is commonly referred to as the ‘titanic battle of the ages’ which is recorded in Matthew 4. Here we see that Jesus Christ in the flesh rejected Satan and, in so doing, demonstrated absolute loyalty to God and His ways. Once Jesus Christ conquered him, He qualified to restore the government of God and to rule as King of Kings. In order for us to qualify to rule with and under Christ in the near future, we must use the power and help of God’s Holy Spirit to reject Satan and overcome. Jesus Christ qualified! We too have been placed in this testing ground to prove ourselves and qualify to rule with Christ. God will not allow another Satan on His hands, so He is using this time to test, train and mold us, and in so doing He is discerning those of us in His Church (1 Pet. 4:17).

Put on the whole armour of God

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:10-12).

This is what we must do to overcome and claim the promises stated to the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation: we must put on the whole armor of God so that we can be best equipped to withstand the evil one (Eph. 6:14-17). Those of God’s people who will overcome and qualify, will soon be resurrected or changed to immortal spirit beings, and will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 5:10; 20: 4,

6). Meanwhile, we now have the responsibility to examine ourselves, repent, overcome and be trained as Kings to rule with and under Christ.

The following booklets were written by Mr. Herbert Armstrong and are recommended for further reading:

- Just what do you mean...conversion?
- Human nature did God create it?
- What is a real Christian?
- What do you mean...salvation?

We are here to help! Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions. Our address is: Faithful Church of God in Laodicea, P.O. Box 311021, Capitol Heights, Maryland 20731, USA. Email: info@fcogl.org. Our web address is: www.fcogl.org

Please address all letters to “Faithful Church of God in Laodicea” and not to an individual so that the post office will not return your letter to you.