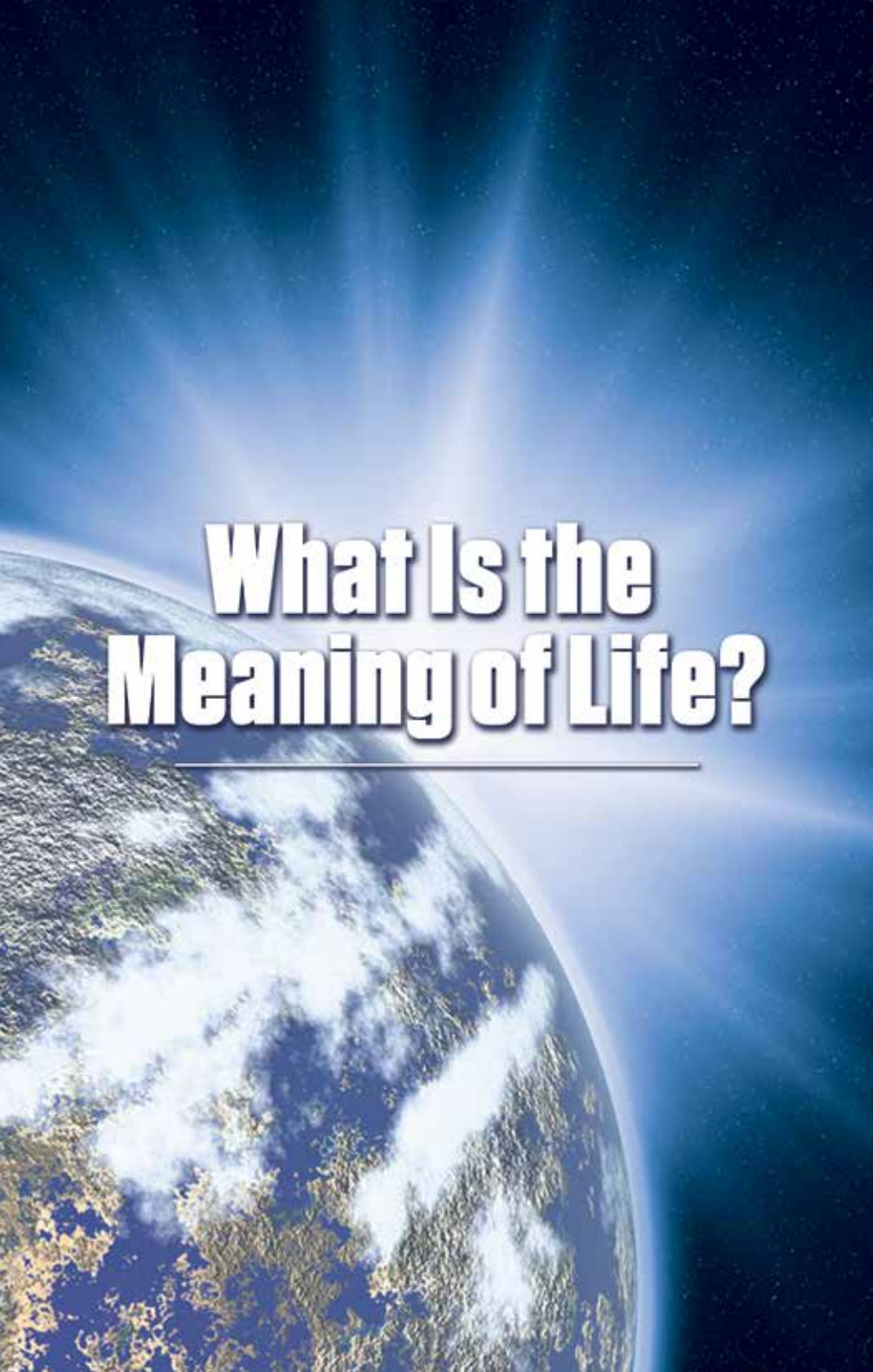
What Is the
Meaning of Life?

What Is the Meaning of Life?

By Roderick C. Meredith

Why were you born?

Why does God allow even dedicated Christians to go through years and decades of trials, tests, and persecutions?

Why is it so important that we all overcome? What is the magnificent purpose for all of our lives here on planet Earth?

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WML Edition 2.2 | October 2026
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Chapter 1

Why Were You Born?

Most people never stop to consider their real *purpose* in life. In fact, most assume there is no real purpose. How about you? Is there any transcendent reason for you to be alive? Can you have a remarkably interesting and fulfilling destiny ahead of you, regardless of your present situation? Can you be *100 percent sure* of a future rendezvous with happiness, joy, and peace?

Or are you living a fleeting, disappointing existence on planet Earth with no more purpose for your life than the birds, the bees, or, for that matter, the worms that crawl in the dirt? As a human being, you obviously have much higher intelligence than these creatures. You can visualize the future; you have hopes, dreams, and creative imagination far beyond any other form of physical life on this earth. Yet do all these gifts, potentials, and dreams rot when you die and "dust returns to dust"?

This truly is worth considering. You should think about it. Sure, some religious people may feel they will be wafted off to heaven to sit around for all eternity with *nothing to do* except "roll around heaven all day," as a song goes. But you *should not assume anything. Do not* be gullible—find out for yourself and prove *what is the meaning of life.*

The real truth of the matter has been revealed in the Creator's instruction manual for humanity, the Holy Bible. In the Bible, God decrees the fate of nations and empires. He prophesies of world-shaking future events that are to happen. And these prophecies are unfolding before the eyes of this generation.

However, in a more quiet yet profound way, your Creator also reveals the meaning of mankind—the real purpose for your life and my life. In a number of places, it is called the "mystery" of God. Indeed, it is a mystery to the vast majority of people—even to most of the supposed "Christian" world, for it goes far beyond what most humans have ever visualized or imagined. Yet it is so obvious, so simple, so powerful in its logic that you may wonder why you did not understand it all along.

So, again, *what is the meaning of life? Why were you born?*

A *Purpose* in Humanity's Creation

You did not just "happen." Human beings are not the product of blind chance. By common sense, most people realize that a fine Swiss watch was not the result of slow, evolutionary processes which took place over millions of years in a mineral-rich, primordial sea, as silica and metallic elements washed back and forth while being charged by lightning strikes. Even if the sand and the elements washed back and forth for billions of years, a delicately fashioned, accurate Swiss watch would *never* be the result of unplanned, blind happenstance.

Yet some intelligent, "educated" individuals prefer to be "politically correct" and subscribe to the evolutionary theory that *your mind*—with a complexity far surpassing any watch or computer ever designed and produced—somehow came together, with your body, as an "accident" of the evolutionary process.

If you believe that, you had better *stop* reading right here, because, until God Himself wakes you up, you are not going to understand anything about the meaning of life or any other spiritual thing. As it is written, the "things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

The revealed word of the Creator shows us that man was *purposefully created.* In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God describes how He designed each creature "according to its kind" (Genesis 1:21, 24–25). Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (v. 26).

Here we discover two vital points. First, God said, "Let Us make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness." So there were two different personalities here discussing the creation of man in Their image. These were obviously God the Father and the Logos or "Word"

(Spokesman) who was later born in human flesh as Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:1–2, 14).

The second vital point is conveyed by the rest of the verse, which says that God "let them have *dominion* over the fish... birds... cattle." So, from the beginning, mankind was ordained to have dominion, to *rule,* to be in charge over all the physical creation here on earth. He was immediately given the responsibility and the opportunity to use creative imagination and judgment.

Notice these inspired words of David: "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels [the Hebrew word *Elohim*], and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:4–6). Here we see that God has a special purpose for man. Man is made a "little lower" than the "*Elohim*"—a Hebrew term denoting God. Yet man is crowned with glory and honor and given "dominion" over the work of God's hands (v. 6).

Remarkably Unique Abilities

From the beginning, man was given a *mind,* which is remarkably distinct from any animal brain. Unlike any other creature on earth, man has creative imagination and the capacity even to analyze himself. He can laugh at himself or reason between right and wrong, enabling him to make judgments—to a limited degree—like God Himself.

At the time of the building of the tower of Babel, God said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Genesis 11:6). The clear indication here is that, unless restrained by God, man might have "progressed," even back at that time, to the point of being able to destroy himself from off the face of the earth.

Today, as the abilities of different nations and races are once again being utilized in a worldwide scientific community, humanity has indeed progressed to the point where we could destroy ourselves. Man is able to launch huge, complicated rockets into outer space. He has sent spacecraft beyond our solar system and has landed spacecraft on the moon, Mars, and even passing asteroids. He is able to store and then instantly recall billions of pieces of information in

marvelous computer systems. And he is also able to break matter down to its smallest components, and to detonate the hydrogen atom in a blinding, searing *explosion.*

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ specifically prophesied this situation when He warned, "For then [when certain foreseen events take place] there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21–22).

Yes, unless the Creator intervenes to save His own creation from self-destruction, mankind will *obliterate* all human life from planet Earth. But, as we shall see, God gave man this great intelligence for a purpose—and *God's purpose shall stand.*

Chapter 2

Created to Rule

From the beginning, man was placed over the physical creation on earth. He was given the capacity and responsibility to help direct and judge his fellow man under God (cf. Exodus 18:13–26). Humanity was given God-like responsibility from the beginning.

Then, when Jesus Christ came to earth in human flesh to bring the Gospel, He continually preached about the coming government of God: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14–15). This coming world-ruling government was predicted by most of the Old Testament prophets as well as Jesus Christ, Peter, Paul, and John.

After describing the four great, world-ruling kingdoms that would govern the world until the end of this age, the prophet Daniel stated, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

Most of Jesus' parables concern the Kingdom of God. In Mark 4:30–32, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed. Jesus shows that the Kingdom of God, though starting out extremely small, will eventually grow to tremendous size. In the parable of the nobleman (Luke 19:12–19), Jesus clearly states that

those who overcome and who use their talents, as God intends, will be given authority in Christ's soon-coming government to rule over cities. To the servant who had increased his money ten times, Jesus said, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, *have authority over ten cities*" (v. 17). To the servant who had increased his money five times, Jesus said, "You also *be over five cities*" (v. 19).

Then, on the night just before His death, Jesus promised the Apostles, "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and *sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Luke 22:29–30). If we believe that Jesus meant what He said, then we know that the Son of God specifically promised that overcoming Christians will join Him at His Second Coming in *ruling* over the cities and nations on this earth.

Notice these direct statements by Jesus the Christ, as recorded in the book of Revelation: "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father" (Revelation 2:26–27). "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

Then note the prayer of the saints as recorded in Revelation 5:10: "[You] have made us kings and priests to our God; and *we shall reign on the earth.*"

Finally, notice Revelation 20:6: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the *first* resurrection. Over 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.*"

Yes, the true saints are called of God and are being trained through an entire lifetime of overcoming to join Jesus Christ in *ruling* over the cities and nations on this earth. Could anything be plainer than that?

Yet, somehow, many misguided people, even theologians, still believe in the idea of "doing nothing" for all eternity. They do not remotely realize that true Christians are called for a wonderful, exciting, awe-inspiring *purpose.*

Only Overcomers Need Apply

God says only overcomers will be in His kingdom. Only overcomers will join Christ in ruling this earth. We are told throughout the New Testament to *become like* God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Again, Jesus instructed, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

The Apostle Peter instructed Christians that "as He who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16). The Apostle John exhorted God's faithful, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). The Apostle James wrote, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

So there it is. True Christians are to overcome their own human vanities and sinful passions, overcome the world and its temptations, and finally resist Satan himself. Peter concluded his last letter with the searching admonition to "*grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Now, in the human flesh, we are subject to all sorts of weaknesses and sin. But by regular, diligent *study* of the Holy Bible, by daily, fervent *prayer* on our knees, and by continually yielding and actively surrendering ourselves to God, we are to *overcome* our sinful ways and let God, through His Holy Spirit, build within us the holy, righteous character of God.

We know that we will not achieve perfection in this life, but we must be making real progress, for we are to *grow* in the very nature and character of God Himself. Therefore true Christians are ensured of constant trials, tests, and persecution.

The Apostle Paul predicted that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34–36). The Apostle Peter warned, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (1 Peter 4:12).

It is clear that the true Christian is required to overcome himself, the world, and the assaults of Satan. He will be harassed, persecuted, and perhaps even martyred by the enemies of God.

Chapter 3

Why We Must Build Righteous Character

Is a Christian to go through life's difficulties just so he can take a very long celestial vacation to do nothing but "roll around heaven all day" and be bored watching the clouds pass by while plunking out harp music? Is he to serve God as a messenger like the angels? After all the remarkable trials, tests, tears, and perhaps even the agony of overcoming physical sufferings, is our reward to be no greater than that of the multiple millions of created beings in the angelic host? No way.

The truly awesome purpose of human existence goes far beyond even what the righteous angels and archangels will experience. Why do we go through trials? Why are we tested time and again? God wants to see if we are willing to *totally surrender* to Him. His ultimate purpose is to reproduce in us His mind, His love, and His character. *God is reproducing Himself.*

Yes, you read it right. At this point, I should exhort all of you who read this *not* to tune out. Ask God for an open, inquiring mind—do not make assumptions. Spiritual safety rests with a sincere desire to "test all things," according to the words in your own Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The great purpose for human life, which truly makes sense, has clearly been inspired and placed in the pages of the Holy Bible for centuries.

Now go back to Genesis and review again what God did in the beginning. Each animal was created "according to its kind" (Genesis 1:24). So, cattle reproduce cattle, lions reproduce lions, and so on.

This was God's mind or pattern as He created each creature. Then God said, "Let Us make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness" (Genesis 1:26). In plain language, God was indicating that they—the God Family now known as the Father and His Son Jesus Christ—would begin to reproduce themselves, adding more members to the "God Family." Does it sound blasphemous to you that God planned to reproduce after His kind?

Some of the self-appointed religious leaders during Jesus' day thought so. You might be surprised to learn that this matter of God having a family was a big issue of debate between Jesus and that day's religious authorities. Jesus had said to them, "I and my Father are *one*" (John 10:30). This statement by Jesus angered the religious leaders enough that they considered Him a heretic worthy of death.

When Jesus asked them why they were trying to kill Him, these honored religious authorities retorted, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and *because You, being a man, make Yourself God*" (v. 33).

Notice *carefully* what Jesus said to defend Himself against this charge of blasphemy: "Is it not written in your law, *'I said, "you are gods"'?* If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the scripture *cannot* be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (vv. 34–36).

The passage Jesus referred to is Psalm 82:6. The Hebrew word translated as "gods" is *Elohim.* It is the same word translated "God" in Genesis 1:1 and used *hundreds* of times throughout the Old Testament to denote the divine Being. Many modern religious scholars maintain that this word just means "mighty judges." But this is not a valid understanding of the usage of the Hebrew word *Elohim.* Otherwise, Jesus would not have been so quick to pick this passage in a life-or-death situation. Jesus used this passage in the psalms to clearly show that *man does have God-like potential,* that humanity is truly "made in the image" of God. Obviously those incensed religious authorities recognized that Jesus was flesh and blood just as they were. Further, since Jesus was the "Son of God," He was *not* blaspheming by making Himself equal with God when He called God His Father.

In fact, this issue came up earlier in John's gospel when these same religious authorities sought to kill Jesus because they accused

Him of breaking the Sabbath, and also because He "said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). They obviously recognized that a *real* son is, in fact, *equal to his father.*

I am a father myself. I am privileged to have four sons and two daughters. As God has ordained, I have reproduced "according to my kind." My sons and daughters are *fully human,* just as I am. Though I may be greater in experience and wisdom, and am the patriarch of my family, my children are as fully of the human family as I am, and have completely the same human capacity, potential, and dignity that I do.

What about God's *sons?* Are we so accustomed to modern religionists using religious-sounding "fluff words" that we no longer have real *understanding* as to the *meaning* of the words we use? Do we fail to recognize that a literal "son" of God would *truly be like God?*

Biblical Meaning of "Elohim"

The very first name that God applies to Himself in the Old Testament is *"Elohim."* "In the beginning God [Hebrew *Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). *Elohim* is used 31 times in the first chapter of Genesis—and clearly identifies "God" as the *Creator.* But what does *Elohim* mean?

All authorities are agreed that this Hebrew name for "God" is plural in form. Some think this plural name of God *proves* that the Old Testament "God" is comprised of more than "one Being." Others *deny* this, but there can be no question that the plural ending *-im* of this Hebrew word clearly *allows for a plurality of Beings* in the concept of the Hebrew God as mentioned in the Old Testament.

> Grammatically the form "Elohim" contains the plural ending *-im*. The function of "Elohim" as *a true plural* ("gods") is reflected in numerous biblical texts (e.g., Exod 12:12: "all the gods of Egypt"). In this function "Elohim" can be preceded by a definite article ("the gods"; e.g., Exod 18:11: "now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods"). In Heb "Elohim" can be accompanied by *plural adjectives* (e.g., very frequently in Deuteronomy: "other gods") and construed with *plural verbal forms* (e.g., Ps 97:7: "all gods bow down before him [Yahweh]"). The striking feature of the OT text lies in the use of this *plural form* "Elohim" in order to designate the one

God of Israel (David N. Freedman et al., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary,* vol. 4, p. 1006, emphasis added).

There is irrefutable biblical proof that this plural noun (*Elohim*) is to be understood as conveying not the sense of a dual or a triune God, but of a "God Family" with more than one member. If God were to be forever limited to only Father and Son, then presumably they would have used another Hebrew word to convey such a limited, two-member Godhead. The Hebrew word *Elohaim* does connote duality; however, God did not use *Elohaim* (conveying *duality*), but *Elohim,* indicating *plurality. Why* did God use *Elohim?* Simply because *Elohim* is a divine family of Beings—a family into which many divine sons and daughters will later be added, as revealed in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 6:18).

One of the greatest proofs that *Elohim* is to be understood as being plural in actual meaning is the undeniable fact of *how* the Creator used that word in the Bible, "Then God said, 'Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness'" (Genesis 1:26). Clearly, God did *not* say, "Let *Me* make man in *My* image, according to *My* likeness." God nowhere says that the angels are creators, but always speaks of only God as Creator.

Proof that *Elohim* is to be understood as plural in meaning is found in numerous other scriptures:

1) Christ said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Clearly, though there is only *one God,* it is *un*scriptural to say that God is "one Being" or "one Entity." If the Father and His Son were not two distinct Persons (Beings/Entities), Christ could not have said that His Father was "greater than" He.

2) In Matthew 22:41–46, Jesus revealed that Psalm 110:1 refers to Himself and His Father: "The LORD [the Hebrew name *Yahweh*—in this case, the Father] said to My Lord [the Hebrew word *Adonai*—in this case, the Son], 'Sit at My [the Father's] right hand, till I make Your [the Son's] enemies Your footstool.'" Many scriptures reveal that only two Persons—the Father and His Son—now comprise the divine Family. The Trinity is nowhere taught in the Bible—it is not so much as even once mentioned in either the Old or the New Testaments. Rather, God Almighty reveals that all who become His sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18) by a new *spiritual begettal* will—at the

resurrection of the just—be born of the spirit as immortal, glorified spirit beings in the very God Family (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Corinthians 15:50–57).

Such glorified saints will then be changed from human into divine—from mortal into immortal beings. As immortal sons and daughters of God, they will then be higher than the angels (whom they will then judge—1 Corinthians 6:3), and will at that time be worthy of receiving the worship of mortal humans (Revelation 3:9).

Elohim is a plural noun, denoting that God is a Family of divine Beings—not a closed Trinity, which could never admit other sons and daughters of God into the God-plane *Family of divine beings. Elohim can* and *does* allow for a *plurality of divine Beings in the Family of God;* the Hebrew Scriptures clearly prove that this word, *Elohim,* is to be taken quite literally. Can we believe the plain word of God? God meant what He said: "Let Us make man in Our image."

"Born" of the Resurrection

In this life, we are "begotten" or regenerated through conversion and the impregnation of God's Spirit. This Spirit is the Spirit "of *power* and of *love* and of a *sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7). The Spirit of God imparts to us the very nature of God.

As we surrender our wills to God, yield to His Holy Spirit, and drink in of it through regular Bible study and prayer, we *grow* in spiritual maturity until it is time to be fully "born of God" at the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus Christ is our example and forerunner. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the *resurrection* from the dead" (Romans 1:4). Later, in Romans, Paul was inspired to write that true Christians are "predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the *firstborn among many brethren*" (Romans 8:29).

Notice. All who truly yield themselves to God will become like Christ, so that He, then, will become the *firstborn* of many other sons of God—literal sons just like Jesus Christ, the firstborn and Captain of our salvation.

Again Paul states, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the *firstborn from the dead,* that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

So, for the second time, God shows clearly that to be ultimately "born again" like Christ, the *firstborn from the dead,* we must finally be "born" into the *very Family of God* by the *resurrection* from the dead.

In Revelation 1:5, the Apostle John was also inspired by God to describe Christ as "the *firstborn* from the *dead.*" If Christ is the "firstborn," there must be others. If the "firstborn" of God is fully *God,* then those later born of the *very same Father* must also become full members of the God Family.

The entire Bible is clear on the fact that you do not leave the state of death *except* by the *resurrection.* We have just discussed three scriptures showing clearly that those truly "born again" are born of the resurrection from the dead and that they become full members of the God Family—the God level of existence—just as Jesus did.

Who Will Always Be in Charge?

The Bible indicates the Father will *always* be greater in power and authority. Obviously, God the Father will never get old, retire, or die, so He will *always* be the unquestioned Head of the God Family. Even Jesus Christ said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

Similarly, the Bible clearly shows that Jesus Christ will *always* be greater than the other sons to be born into the God Family. He is to sit at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 8:1). He is to be "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16). He will *always* be our High Priest (Hebrews 6:20).

It is obvious that the major purpose of the Christian life is to reconcile man to God. The Holy Spirit guides a person through an entire process of *total surrender* to God and to the Savior, Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit, a person *grows* in the grace and knowledge—the very character—of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). With God's help, this process involves overcoming and learning to "live... by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). For a person to draw near to God, he must deeply study the Bible, "eating" of the spiritual bread of life (John 6:56–63), so that it literally becomes the way he thinks and acts. Overcoming involves regular, heartfelt prayer to God every day of one's life—often several times a day—and always being in a spirit of prayer. It involves constantly meditating on God's word and purpose, and occasionally fasting to draw closer than ever to God.

In all this, and then in daily, active yielding to *let Christ live His very life within us* through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20), the true Christian learns to walk with God. Month by month, and year by year, the totally

surrendered Christian becomes increasingly like God. Indeed, a person with genuine faith should live this way, for Jesus instructed us, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). The Apostle Peter exhorted Christians, "But as He who called you is holy, *you also be holy in all your conduct*" (1 Peter 1:15).

In his final letter, Peter described how God's "divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... that through these [promises] you may be partakers of the *divine nature,* having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3–4).

Do all these scriptures mean what they say? Can we honestly "spiritualize away" the many, many inspired scriptures that tell us to be holy, to be like God, and to yield to Him so He can place within us His own *divine* nature? Consequently, it is logical to consider the idea that it has been God's plan all along to reproduce Himself. This *is* what the God Family (*Elohim*) had in mind when they said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

"Born Again"—But Are We to Be *Inferior* Sons?

We have already seen that Jesus Christ was "the *firstborn* among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Will the younger brothers yet to be born have far less glory than Christ?

Although, as just explained, Christ will always be greater in power and authority, the Bible clearly indicates that the Spirit-born sons of God will share the same level of glory and majesty as their elder Brother, Jesus Christ. Notice Romans 8:18: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Throughout the Bible, there are literally dozens of verses that indicate that our sufferings, our trials, and our tests—the whole process of overcoming—are to help fashion and mold us into God's image. They prepare us to be born at the resurrection from the dead and to be glorified as Christ was glorified.

Of course, the truly converted Christian is regenerated or "begotten" of God in this present life. But the final, *ultimate birth* is to be born into the very Family of God at the resurrection.

As the Apostle Paul wrote:

> But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man

> came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.... And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.... And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man (1 Corinthians 15:20–22, 45–47, 49).

Yes, we are to be sons of the resurrection—not falsely "born again" in front of an emotional crowd of people in some "revival meeting." The *true* "born again" experience will so far surpass these counterfeit emotional outpourings that confuse today's religious world that there is no room for comparison, for, at the "last trumpet," Christ will return to this earth as King of kings, and those found worthy will find themselves surging upward toward the clouds to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). They will have *spirit bodies* and will be glorified as newly "born" members of the divine Family. They will not be regarded as "adopted" or merely "created" beings. Rather, these Spirit-born sons will *come right out from God,* having His very *divine nature* just as surely as we in this life have the human nature and characteristics imparted by our human parents.

Using a human analogy, we are now "begotten" children of God, still in our Mother's womb (Jerusalem above, Galatians 4:26), but growing in grace and knowledge so that we may be born of God at the resurrection (cf. Romans 1:4; 8:29). The Apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him,* for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Yes, we shall look "like" Christ at that time.

How does the living Christ look? We find His present appearance described in Revelation 1:13–16. Now, following His resurrection, Jesus' eyes are like "a flame of fire." His face is like the "sun shining" in full strength. He is glorified, as we *shall* be *glorified,* according to the marvelous purpose of the great God who made us in His own image.

Chapter 4

What a Future for Those Who Overcome

After describing how we shall be "like" Christ and be able to look right into the face of that blinding glory, John writes, *"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:3). Once we grasp the ultimate *purpose* of God, the truly incredible human potential that our Creator has planned for us, we have every reason to want to be pure, to live a righteous and holy life.

Our true reward is not some vague and nebulous "pie in the sky" concept of rolling "around heaven all day" with nothing to do. Rather, it involves becoming "sons of the resurrection" and joining Christ in actively ruling this planet for at least the next 1,000 years. What will Christ's saints be doing? They will be cleaning up pollution, stamping out pornography and war, and healing the sick. The saints' job will be to bring indescribable joy to a shell-shocked world. Could anything be more personally rewarding?

We shall not merely rule over humans, but over the mighty angels of God. Notice 1 Corinthians 6:2–3: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? *Do you not know that we shall judge angels?* How much more, things that pertain to this life?" Our whole Christian experience of developing Christ's mind (Philippians 2:5) and character is for this supreme purpose.

It will be an exciting, stimulating, productive, and incredibly fulfilling experience. It is real.

What comes after this? Read Paul's inspired statements in Hebrews 2:5–7: "For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: 'What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands.'" Notice man's ultimate superiority to the angels. Man was made a "little lower"—or, as many scholars translate it, "a little while lower" than the angels. Ultimately, God plans to put "all things" in subjection under man.

Even now, man is creating computer systems that can almost rival the human mind in their astonishing capacities, and he is also capable of annihilating all human life from this earth through nuclear bombs and other weapons of mass destruction. Yet because of the need for food, water, and oxygen to sustain human life, and because of the exceedingly vast distances between the planets, man could not conceivably explore the entire universe even *if* he could travel at the incredible speed of light.

Inheriting a Universe

But, describing tomorrow's world, God indicates that "all things" will be put under man. The Greek word here used for "all things" may correctly be understood as *"the entire universe."* In fact, in the *Weymouth Version*, Hebrews 2:8 is translated, "For this subjecting of the universe to man."

Immediately after that, Paul wrote, "For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him" (Hebrews 2:8). Notice that nothing is excluded from being under man's dominion. But it is not yet accomplished. Commenting on those verses, the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* states, "As no limitation occurs in the Scripture, the 'all things' must include heavenly, as well as earthly things" (vol. 3, p. 530).

The New Bible Commentary: Revised also comments on this passage: "Further, these verses indicate that not only Jesus, but men—through Jesus as their High Priest and Author of Salvation—are called to inherit a destiny of *glory* and dominion" (Donald Guthrie et al., pp. 1196–1197, emphasis added).

In plain language, then, it is clear that God created man to be truly *like Him.* We who overcome are destined to be real Sons of God—not "pseudo-sons" of a much lower rank and level of existence.

Speaking of the "sons of the resurrection," the book of Hebrews says, "He [God] left nothing that is not put under him" (Hebrews 2:8). The meaning of life, then, is to become *full-fledged Sons of God* and help rule the entire universe under the direction of our elder Brother and High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Then we will have glorified spirit bodies that will not be subject to physical laws, as we know them now. We will be able to hurtle throughout the universe far faster than the speed of light, for we will be full members of the Creator Family—the Family of God—able to move at the speed of thought.

Serving our Father and Jesus Christ in the *perfect* government of God, we will undoubtedly be challenged in ages to come to rejuvenate and beautify vast portions of the universe that are now bleak, lifeless, and desolate. No doubt there will be further creative activities and exciting projects of all kinds to contemplate. As the Scripture says, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6–7).

Once this awesome purpose for mankind is fully understood, many other things involving human life and the true Christian way of life begin to make a lot more sense.

Notice Romans 8:17, which says that we are "if children, then heirs—heirs of God and *joint heirs with Christ,* if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be *glorified together.*" When we grasp what that supreme glory really involves—the very *glory* of *God*—then our human trials do truly seem less formidable. Philippians 3:21 speaks of the returning Jesus Christ, "who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

Spirit Beings Will Teach God's Way to Mankind

Speaking of the ultimate "born again" experience, Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must

be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. *So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:6–8).

In the resurrection, the Spirit-born saints will be like Christ was after His resurrection. We will be able to simply pass through walls (John 20:19) and disappear into thin air (Luke 24:31). At the same time, the resurrected saints, like Christ, will also be able to appear in human form and visit with, eat with, and teach human beings during Christ's millennial reign on earth. John 21 describes the risen Christ preparing an outdoor fish barbecue (v. 9) for the disciples and then teaching them. Of course, many interesting, exciting, and even amusing situations may be envisioned when the resurrected sons of God may surprise or even temporarily frighten ("It's one of them again!") unsuspecting human beings in tomorrow's world.

Isaiah 30 describes the time when the whole nation of Israel is brought back from its coming captivity to be governed and taught by divine Beings: "And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (vv. 20–21).

During the soon-coming millennial rule of Christ and the resurrected saints, those millions of humans still living on earth will be taught the *way* to peace, prosperity, and true happiness.

> Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Micah 4:2–3).

God's great purpose in giving us life and breath is that we may join Him and His firstborn Son, Jesus, in a *real family relationship* based on love, service, and obedience to the way that produces peace

and happiness—the spiritual law of God as revealed in the Ten Commandments and teachings of Christ.

Chapter 5

A Stupendous Truth Explained

Before we are even "converted" in this present life, we must deeply repent of "sin"—which is simply the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4, *KJV*). Then we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), which God gives to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

Then, we must overcome through the strength and help of God's Spirit within us and grow in the *grace* and *knowledge* of Christ, in the very character of God, for our heavenly Father, through this process, puts *His very nature* within us. So, in that way, we are not merely "adopted," but we are literally begotten and finally born of God, having been impregnated with the divine nature and continuing to grow spiritually until we are ready to be "born of God" at the resurrection.

As Supreme Ruler over all that is, God is taking no chances that His sons would ever rebel against Him. Only those who have totally surrendered their lives and wills to God and to their Savior and coming King, Jesus Christ, will be considered worthy of becoming members of the divine Family—the ruling Kingdom of God.

The above analysis should thoroughly disprove one objection some have voiced against this marvelous truth. Some people think that if the resurrected saints were to become truly God—with the power of God—then there would be a grave danger that they would rebel against God the Father and perhaps start a spirit war as Lucifer did (Isaiah 14:12–15). But this objection reveals an almost *total*

lack of understanding of what real conversion is all about, for after we have surrendered to our Creator, "walked with God" in our Christian lives over years while suffering trials, tests, and persecutions (the expected lot that befalls every true Christian), and, in spite of these trials, hung in there and endured faithfully to the end (Matthew 24:13), there is no way we would ever turn aside and fight our own heavenly Father.

As "sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36), we will be like God. Remember, "God cannot be tempted by evil" (James 1:13). God will not sin—because of His very divine character, which is eternally and naturally faithful and righteous. So the idea of a full member of the God Family rebelling or sinning is a *contradiction in terms.*

Another objection is the idea that since God the Father is uncreated and has always existed, we could never be like Him. But this neglects the wonderful truth that, at the resurrection, we are to be literally *born* of God. We will *not*—at that time—be merely "created." Rather, we will *come right out from God,* being literally filled with and *composed of the Holy Spirit,* like God Himself.

Again, God is reproducing after His kind just as surely as we humans do. His Spirit-born sons, in the resurrection, are *not* "lesser" types of spirit beings any more than your children turn out to be something less than human.

Another vital point to remember in this connection is that Christ is to "marry" the Church at His second coming (2 Corinthians 11:1–2; Revelation 19:7). Is the bride of Christ to be something inferior to Him—a completely different class of being? Will the glorified saints exist on some lower plane of existence from God, like a pet dog compared to a human? Think about it.

Some people are sincerely shocked, at first, by this stupendous truth involving the meaning of life. But there are others who seem interested only in playing word games to try to confuse the issue and obscure one of the most *vital* and magnificent truths revealed in the entire Bible—the awesome, inspiring, supreme purpose of our Creator in giving us life and breath and making us "in His image."

As I have already said—and I repeat once more lest someone try to twist these words—God the Father and Jesus our Head and Savior will always be greater in power and authority than we will be. But, as "sons of the resurrection," the saints will be on the *same level of exis-*

tence, just as your sons and daughters are on the same *human level* as you are. Truly, God the Father and Jesus will always have existed longer and done more in the past than any of the resurrected saints. But while you and I have lived longer and done more in the past than our human children, they are *fully human* just as we are.

We need to realize that the continuum of "eternity" goes on and on and that, as full members of the Creator Family, the saints will also join God in ruling, creating, and accomplishing awesome projects throughout the universe in ages to come (Isaiah 9:7).

God Is Eternal

One false argument against the truth of the meaning of life goes like this: "We can never become fully like God because God has *eternally* existed and has been the Creator of all that is—and we have not."

Is there an answer? Part of the real answer is found in Romans 4:17. Here Paul notes that God called Abraham "a father of many nations." God stated this as a fact *long before* it ever occurred. So Paul was inspired to write, "God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist *as though* they did."

The *ultimate reality* is God's will. God had already willed that Abraham was to be "a father of many nations." So, in God's mind, it was a fact because God had *willed* it so.

In like manner, God must have planned from the beginning to reproduce Himself "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Again, "whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

God's plan is to bring more full sons of God into His Family so that Christ might be "the firstborn among many brethren." All this was predestinated—willed—by the mind of God "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). So, in the terms of the will of God, we who overcome are already eternal, have *already* been given the gift of eternal life through the immutable will of God.

Another clear indication that this is the way God thinks of things is found in Hebrews 7:9–10: "Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."

So God says that Levi "paid tithes through Abraham" even though Levi did not *yet* exist. As Levi was "in the loins" of his great-grandfather Abraham, so we—so to speak—have certainly been in the spiritual "loins" of our heavenly Father, who has *willed* that we become His full sons. So in that way—the way God Himself thinks and acts—the true saints who remain faithful and overcome *have always existed* in the mind of God.

We were in the "loins" of God when He created the angels, when He later created the earth and put mankind upon it, and when He still later sent His Son to make possible our entrance into the eternal Family of God.

Jesus said, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). He also said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). When we are truly "born of God" and become "sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36), we will have the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). So we will be *composed* of the Holy Spirit as God and Christ are composed of that same Spirit. The Holy Spirit *is* eternal—it has always existed and will always exist.

Therefore, although we will be new personalities added to the Family of God by a literal spiritual birth in the resurrection, we will *always* have existed in the mind and will of God. We will have been in the "loins" of our Father from eternity, and we will then be *composed* of the Spirit, which *is* eternal.

So our spiritual birth as *full sons of God* is merely part of the spiritual continuum of God's will. And once we (*if* we are overcomers) are members of the extended Family, or Kingdom, of God, we also will then join with the Father and our older Brother in creating, recreating, building, working, and improving this vast universe. God's word tells us truly, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7).

True Christians have an absolutely awesome opportunity and future ahead. A billion years from now, when we have been working and creating for an "eternity" under the direction of our Father, the specious arguments and word games employed by the blinded theologians of this world who deny the clear intent of God to make us His genuine sons will seem trite indeed.

Jesus said, "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

God's Awesome *Love*

God has created humans so that, after a young man and woman marry, they most sincerely desire children. They want to *share* their home, *share* their lives, and *share* their love with a little human being made in their image. They look forward to having a baby—a child who, as a full human being, will develop, learn, and grow to fully *share* its life, plans, hopes, and dreams with its parents and brothers and sisters in a loving family relationship.

So it is with God. "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). And because God *is* love, He wants to share His love, His glory, His eternity with billions of others who will become His *genuine* Sons in the resurrection. If God the Father and Christ were selfish, aloof, or lacking in love and outflowing concern, perhaps they would want to keep to themselves and not make it possible for others to join their Family in a complete God-plane relationship by literally reproducing themselves.

But in the transcendent spiritual love that motivates our Father and our Lord (*Elohim*—the God Family), they have chosen to reproduce themselves by placing within surrendered Christians their *very own "divine nature."* Then, God nurtures these "begotten" sons through this physical life of overcoming until they, like Christ—"the *firstborn* from the dead"—are also literally born of God as "sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36).

How great is the love of Christ? The inspired Apostle Paul prayed that Christians "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the *love* of Christ which passes knowledge; *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*" (Ephesians 3:18–19). How can you be filled with *all* of the "fullness of God" and not *be* God?

The love of Christ and of our heavenly Father impels them to share with us their eternal glory as full sons of the Kingdom, or Family, of God. In the future, when you read passages in the New Testament concerning the resurrected saints inheriting God's glory, perhaps they will now have much deeper meaning, for this "mystery, which has been hidden from ages and from generations... now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26–27).

Yes, men have always wondered, *"Why* was I born? What is the purpose of life? If there is a real God, *why* does he try and test mankind so much and allow so much suffering to occur?"

Now, the mystery is solved. If your mind and heart are open, you now *know* the answer to these profound questions that have puzzled philosophers and scholars for centuries. You should be everlastingly grateful and thankful to our God and our Savior, Jesus the Christ, for making us after their kind.

Jesus' Fervent Prayer

In the final 24 hours of His life, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus offered to God His most complete prayer recorded in the Bible. Let us review some highlights of that inspired prayer: "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). Here we find Christ specifically asking that the stupendous glory He had shared with the Father from eternity be restored to Him—He who was to be "the firstborn among *many* brethren" (Romans 8:29).

In verse 11 of John 17, Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are." Christ and the Father are *one* God, *one* Family, *one* level of existence above all other creatures. Jesus prayed that the saints would become one in the *same way.*

Notice John 17:20–23:

> I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:* I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

These words of out-flowing love are inspiring and magnificent. They certainly make clear that those of us willing to utterly surrender to God and let Christ live His life in us through the Holy Spirit will at-

tain to the same type of glory that He attained. We will be completely *one* with God—as Christ is one with the Father—and therefore obviously *be* God. This will be the supreme fulfillment of God's own purpose in giving us life and then calling us to spiritual understanding, "that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have *loved them as* You have loved Me" (v. 23).

The indescribable love of our Father is somewhat beyond full human comprehension. Yet we who understand must respond to that love with deep reverence, thankfulness, and obedience to our great God. We must strive to "live... by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). And we must learn to "walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7), keeping our eyes always on the magnificent goal our God has set for us.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). And how great is that reward.

With all my heart and all my being, I encourage all of you who read this to truly "*seek Him*"—diligently. Do not allow yourself to put *anything* ahead of God and His truly wonderful purpose for your life. Learn to truly study the Bible as never before. Learn to get down on your knees before the Supreme Governor of the universe and pour out your heart in prayer to Him for the love, the wisdom, and the strength to truly be an overcomer and to become His *real son* in a world-ruling kingdom soon to be set up on this earth.

Nothing is more exciting. And, when you really understand, nothing is more "real" than what the Great God says will happen. This is the final fulfillment of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the ultimate good news—that man can be born into the God Kingdom, the God-level of existence.

The ancient patriarch Jacob had twelve sons. Those sons collectively had sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—millions and millions of descendants—and so became the nation, or the kingdom, of Israel. So, as Christ assists the Father in "bringing many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10), they are bringing into being an entire Spirit-composed nation. It is a spiritual "kingdom" of God, comprised of real sons of God—who have been literally born of God by the resurrection and are possessed of the full nature and character of God. Again, I say, this is the ultimate meaning of the "Gospel," the ultimate good news and transcendent purpose for your life.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2–3). Now that you understand *the meaning of life,* you know why God wants you to let Him and His Son build within you their holy, righteous character.

God the Father is not a permissive wimp, a stern and unsmiling puritan, or an impractical philosopher. He and His firstborn Son, like a loving family, are preparing other sons to join with them in ruling this world and, later, the entire universe. So go out under the stars some clear night—try counting as many stars as you *can* see, and think of the billions of stars scattered across the vast universe you *cannot* see—and then *meditate* on this awe-inspiring purpose for your life and thank God for it. Then, get down on your knees and begin to zealously do *your part* to make it all possible.

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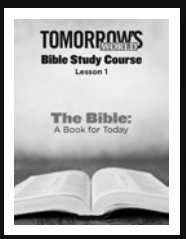

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