

# **CHURCH OF GOD BIBLE COURSE**

## **LESSON NO. 18**

### **WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?**

**Jesus Christ came to earth almost 2,000 years ago to announce a message from God. He was killed for bringing it! What was that message?**

"Just believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved," is the message of most professing Christian ministers today. But is that what the true gospel really is? Almost nobody seems to know!

#### **WHAT THE GOSPEL IS NOT**

Tune in a television set any Sunday morning in the United States to so-called "gospel programs" and you'll see and hear preachers telling you about Christ-urging you to believe on Christ - to accept Christ-telling you what a wonderful person He was. They will talk about "getting out the gospel," meaning the message about Christ. Thus every Sunday morning, millions of viewers assume they are hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Believe it or not, preaching Christ and belief on Him is not preaching Christ's gospel!

Christ was a messenger. He brought the gospel-the message God sent by Him for all mankind. That message is good news. The very word gospel means "good news."

True, Jesus Christ, the person, is the most important individual ever to walk this earth. True, He is the Savior of all mankind. But Christ, the person, is not the gospel! The miracles He performed are not the gospel. The things Jesus did are not the gospel. What He preached-the tremendous good news He announced - IS the "gospel"!

What people have accepted without question as the gospel offers no solution to humanity's sufferings, frustrations and indescribable evils. The true gospel Jesus brought proclaims the solution to the world's troubles. But men rejected that gospel and crucified Jesus for preaching it!

#### **"BELIEVERS" WANTED TO KILL CHRIST!**

There were those in Christ's day who "believed on Him," just as millions do today.

These same people were influenced on occasion to want to kill Him! Notice the astounding truth in your Bible. It's an eye-opener, for the Bible does not say what most people have been taught.

Jesus was speaking in the Temple at Jerusalem: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Jesus' "word" was His message-the gospel He was teaching. He was saying, in other words: "if you continue doing what the gospel teaches, you will be my disciples."

But they refused to believe what He taught - His gospel - and to do what He taught. They believed on Him. They liked Him. They believed in His identity. They believed He was the Messiah, the Christ, but they did not believe HIM - or what He said! They called Him a liar.

Continuing, Jesus said, "But ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father" (verses 37-38). These very people who "believed on him" sought to kill Him because they hated what he said - His gospel-the very solution to mankind's troubles that will usher in peace, prosperity and happiness in all the earth!

These who believed on Him continued to argue. Then Christ said: "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God ... I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me ... And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (verses 40, 42, 45).

### **MILLIONS DECEIVED TODAY**

Millions today also believe on Christ, but do not believe His gospel because most have never heard it! They have heard of Christ-of what He did - but not His message of the solution to all man's troubles and how to receive eternal life in joyful happiness, abundance and accomplishment! So millions today have been deceived into believing a false gospel that does not lead to salvation! Strong words, but backed up by the Word of God, as we shall see.

This lesson of the Church of God Bible Correspondence Course will show you what the gospel of Jesus Christ really is, why it is so vital for your salvation, exactly when and where it was first preached, and who is preaching it today.

So be sure to get your Bible before you read another word. Look up every scripture given in answer to the questions as you study the truth about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We hope you are also taking the time to copy these verses in a notebook. This will not only help you to concentrate on your studies, it will also help to implant the truth of God's Word more firmly in your memory. Writing down the scriptures will also enable you to easily review this study material at any time in the future.

### **FALSE GOSPELS PREACHED TODAY**

In today's professing Christian Western world, we find a variety of "gospels" being preached. Some designate their gospel as "The Gospel of Jesus Christ." Others call their gospel "The Gospel of Salvation." Still others profess "The Gospel of Grace. There is also a modern "Social Gospel," while some call their gospel "The Israel Message."

None of these are the gospel Jesus proclaimed! Why doesn't professing Christianity preach the only true gospel that God sent by Jesus Christ?

1. Did Jesus tell His disciples that prior to His return, many would be deceived by the false teachings of ministers claiming to represent Him and professing that He is the Christ? Matt. 24:4-5.

COMMENT: Untold thousands of professing Christian ministers have, over the centuries, "preached Christ." They have professed to be His ministers-to represent Him. They have said Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. But they withheld Christ's gospel. Thus the vast majority have been deceived by false gospels!

Remember, a deceived person does not know he is deceived. Otherwise he would not be deceived. Millions have been deceived into accepting a false gospel-a false salvation, believe it or not!

2. Were there already many antichrists in the days of the Apostle John ( about A.D.90 )?

I John 2:18.

3. Did the Apostle Paul lament the fact that there were already many false apostles, teaching a counterfeit gospel in his day? Gal. 1:6-8.

COMMENT: About 20 years after Christ's death, Paul pronounced a curse upon anyone who would dare to preach any gospel other than the one true gospel that Jesus preached, and that the Apostle Paul continued to preach to the Galatians. Yet, another "gospel" had been preached to the Galatians by false ministers claiming to represent Christ.

The true gospel was suppressed not long after Christ completed His ministry. After about A.D. 70 it was no longer proclaimed publicly to the world. The true Church of God was forced by persecution to "go underground," holding services secretly, communicating the truth of God privately.

4. Did Paul repeat the curse that would fall upon anyone who would pervert the true gospel and preach a spurious gospel? Verse 9.

COMMENT: A false gospel continued to be preached publicly until today dozens of different, perverted gospels are being taught as if they were the true gospel. Not knowing anything about the true gospel, the vast majority therefore reject it when they do hear it proclaimed anew today by God's Church!

5. What did Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian Church (written before A.D. 60), warn about those who preached "another Jesus," received "another spirit" and accepted "another gospel"? 2 Cor. 11:3-4.

COMMENT: The Jesus these false ministers preached about, the spirit they proffered, the "gospel" they taught, were all spurious-totally foreign to the Apostle Paul and the other true apostles of Christ!

Paul, therefore, gave this solemn warning to the Corinthian brethren (and to us today): "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness;

Whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

6. What did Paul say is in store for those who through their wickedness suppress the truth of God? Rom. 1:18. (The Revised Standard Version plainly translates "hold the truth" as "suppress the truth.")

COMMENT: Before the end of the first century A.D. the message of the true gospel taught by Christ and His apostles was suppressed and false "gospels" substituted. Christ's message would not be proclaimed worldwide again until the latter half of the 20th century!

7. Did Jesus Christ say it is necessary to believe the gospel to be saved?

Mark 16:15-16.

COMMENT: Notice Jesus said, "He that believeth." But believe what? That which He preached - the gospel! Not a gospel. Not ANY gospel. THE gospel !

On the authority of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to believe that precise identical gospel in order to be saved! But in order to believe the true gospel, we must first come to know what gospel Jesus preached!

Before Jesus Christ began preaching the one and only true gospel nineteen and one half centuries ago, God first sent a special messenger to prepare the way before Him.

## **GOD'S MESSENGERS AND THEIR MESSAGES**

The prophet Malachi lived among the Jewish colony that had been sent to Jerusalem from their captivity in the ancient lands of Babylon and Medo-Persia to build the second Temple. Malachi wrote approximately one generation after Ezra and Nehemiah.

This is important to know because his writings then reached only a small portion of Judah and none of the House of Israel, which some refer to as the "lost" ten tribes. Yet Malachi's prophecy is addressed to Israel (Mal. 1:1), not just the small Jewish colony in Jerusalem. But his message never reached the House of Israel, which long since had been taken into Assyrian captivity and scattered. Malachi's message is a prophecy for all of Israel today!

1. Did Malachi prophesy that God would send His "messenger" to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ? Mal. 3:1; Mark 1:2-3.

COMMENT: The prophecy in Malachi applies to preparing the way for both Jesus' First Coming nearly 2,000 years ago and to preparing the way before His Second Coming in power and glory as World Ruler. Verses 2-6 of Malachi 3 specifically refer to His yet-future Second Coming. (More about this later in the lesson.)

In verse 1 of chapter 3, Malachi clearly referred also to Christ's First Coming, because this prophecy is referred to in Mark 1: 1 -2: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ ... I [will] send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

2. Who was the messenger sent by God to prepare the way for Christ's First Coming? Luke 1:13-17; Mark 1:4, 7-8.

COMMENT: It was prophesied that John would

1) come in the spirit and power of Elijah;

2) turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; and

3) "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins to prepare numbers of people to accept Christ when He began His ministry.

3. After John prepared the way for Christ's First Coming, did Jesus then fulfill His prophesied mission as the Messenger of the New Covenant? Mal. 3:1; Mark 1:14-15.

COMMENT- God had promised to send a Messenger into this world from heaven, bearing the message of the New Covenant from Him. Jesus Christ was the Messenger of that New Covenant, as we learned in the previous lesson. And recall that the New Covenant message is the "gospel" Jesus preached!

4. Where did Jesus first preach the gospel? Mark 1:14; Acts 10:36-37. When did Jesus begin preaching the gospel? Same verses.

COMMENT: Galilee is the place where Jesus first preached the gospel, not Jerusalem. And He began preaching "after the baptism which John preached." The true gospel of the New Covenant, then, did not begin with John the Baptist. It began after John had completed his baptismal ministry and was put in prison.

5. To whom did God send Jesus to preach the gospel? Matt. 15:24.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ was the divine Messenger sent by God to preach to the descendants of ancient Israel. Since Malachi called Him the Messenger of the Covenant (Mal. 3:1), His message is the proclamation of the New Covenant. This message is the New Testament gospel!

6. Did God later send the Apostle Peter to preach the same gospel to Gentiles?

Acts 10:34-48, especially verses 36-37; 11:18.

COMMENT: The same gospel Christ preached to the children of Israel now began to go to all nations. But the gospel did not originate with Jesus Christ, nor with Peter, nor the Apostle Paul. It was sent from God the Father by Jesus Christ!

## **THE "GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD"**

1. What was the "gospel" Jesus preached? Mark 1: 1 4.

COMMENT: The message God sent by Jesus Christ was the "gospel of the Kingdom of God" ' The Kingdom of God is the government of God, which shall rule all nations. But it is also the Family of God into which we may be born-the divine Family which will become a spirit-nation, ruling all nations on earth as a world-ruling government!

Jesus was sent merely to announce that message-not force men to accept it, believe it, and act upon it. Never did Jesus plead with a single one to be converted. He just announced the good news of the Kingdom of God, and then left it to the Father to call, through that announcement and His Spirit, those whom He would select (John 6:44). Christ did not come then to convert the world! He did not start a "soul-saving" crusade. He came to announce the gospel-the good news-of His coming Kingdom on earth!

2. Nevertheless, did Jesus say it was necessary to repent and believe the gospel He preached? Mark 1:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice Jesus said, "Believe the gospel." What gospel? The one He was proclaiming. Jesus said we must believe the gospel-the good news of the coming Kingdom of God-to become a Christian! It was then and is today an advance news announcement. It is tremendous, wonderful news-the most important news ever announced to mankind!

But, one may ask, don't we need to believe on Jesus? Of course. Other scriptures teach that. But at this particular time Jesus said we must believe Him -believe what He said-believe the gospel message of the Kingdom of God that He proclaimed!

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not man's gospel about the person of Christ. It is Christ's gospel-the gospel Jesus preached-the gospel God sent by Him, and therefore it is also called, in Scripture, "the gospel of God." The gospel of God is God's gospel-His message-His good news that He sent by Jesus.

3. Who did Jesus plainly say sent Him and told Him what to say? John 12:49-50.

COMMENT: The Father sent Jesus bearing a special message, which is the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is God's Spokesman-the Word who was made flesh and lived, and taught, on this earth!

4. Did Jesus restate for emphasis that the words He spoke were NOT His, but the Father's? John 14:24.

5. What did Jesus say is the gospel of the New Testament? Luke 16:16.

COMMENT: "The law and the prophets"-referring to Old Testament Scriptures were preached until John the Baptist began his special ministry. After John's mission was over, Jesus began proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Christ's gospel is the prophetic proclamation of a coming world government that will rule all nations and bring today's confused, chaotic, war-weary earth peace and joy! It is the vital, dynamic, powerful, living message of God's government, first over individuals in God's Church who have voluntarily come under that government, then later over all nations in the world tomorrow!

Of course the message from God includes the knowledge about our Savior, High Priest and coming King! Of course it includes the true way of salvation, which the churches of this world do not understand! It also includes knowledge of the location of the territory to be ruled over by the King of the coming Kingdom of God-the fact it will be on this earth, NOT in heaven!

But there can be no government without laws, and so the true gospel also must proclaim the law of God, which will bring peace and everything good to those living in the world tomorrow, and success, happiness and joy to the individual who keeps it now.

The true gospel has to do with the nations of today's world, world conditions today, and Christ's reign over all nations in the world tomorrow! It is a "full," complete, dynamic and powerful gospel that had been kept from the world for 19 centuries by the god of this world-Satan the devil! (Rev. 12:9).

Let's be sure we understand the full meaning of the Kingdom of God.

### **WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD REALLY IS**

The Bible speaks of successive world-ruling kingdoms. The first was the Chaldean Empire (often called "Babylon"). God inspired the prophet Daniel to say to Nebuchadnezzar, its king, "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (Dan. 2:37).

There also were other kingdoms in the course of history occupying lesser territories. One was the Kingdom of Israel-the family of the patriarch Israel grown into a nation and later ruled by kings. The Kingdom of Israel was actually a type or forerunner of the coming Kingdom of God, which will be composed of Spirit-born children of God-the Family of God organized into a governing kingdom.

The Kingdom of God will be dual:

1) A KINGDOM. As a kingdom it will be composed of four things: a) a king ruling over b) subjects within c) a definite territory with d) laws and an organized system of administering them.

2) A FAMILY. The Family of God, into which humans may be born, is a governing or ruling family. It will have jurisdiction over all nations of the earth!

The prophet Daniel, who lived nearly 600 years before Christ, knew that the Kingdom of God was to be an actual government ruling over literal people on the earth because God revealed this knowledge to him. Daniel was one of four extraordinarily intelligent and brilliant Jewish lads in the Judean captivity. These four young men were stationed in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldean Empire, and were in training for special responsibilities in the Babylonian government.

1. Did God give Daniel special understanding in visions and dreams? Dan. 1: 17.

COMMENT: King Nebuchadnezzar was the first world ruler. He had conquered much of the known world, including the Kingdom of Judah. This lofty king had a dream so impressive it troubled him, moving him to have tremendous concern (Dan. 2:1). He demanded that his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers tell him both what he had dreamed and what it meant. Of course they could not. They were baffled. Then Daniel was brought before the king.

2. Even though Daniel disclaimed any more human ability to interpret dreams than the Chaldean magicians, did he tell Nebuchadnezzar that there is a God who reveals secrets and would make known to the king what would come to pass in the latter days?

Dan. 2:28-30.

COMMENT: Through this dream God was revealing to this world-ruling human king that there is a God in heaven-that God is Supreme Ruler over all nations, governments and kings-that God rules the universe! Although during the past 6,000 years God has left the nations generally to their own devices, God was giving Nebuchadnezzar a special opportunity to accept His rule.

The main purpose of this dream, as we shall see, was to reveal God's government the fact that God rules and the truth of the coming Kingdom of God-the one and only true gospel of Jesus Christ. And, secondly, to reveal-preserved in writing for us today what is to happen "in the latter days" or end time.

This is no dry, dull, dead writing for a people of 2,500 years ago. This is living, tremendous, big news for OUR DAY! It is advance news for us NOW. News, before it happens, of the most colossal event of all earth's history certain to occur in our lifetimes-during the next few years! And it all has to do with the very gospel Christ preached. It is vital that we understand!

3. What did King Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream? Verses 31-33.

COMMENT: Nebuchadnezzar saw a stupendous statue larger than any ever built by man. Its appearance was terrifying! Its head was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, legs of solid iron, feet and toes a mixture of iron and clay.

4. As Nebuchadnezzar viewed this statue in his dream, what smashed the statue on its feet? Verse 34. What happened to the image? Verse 35.

COMMENT: There is a time element involved in this dream. Nebuchadnezzar viewed the statue until a supernatural STONE shot from heaven like a meteor, smashing the statue on its feet! Then the whole of the statue broke into small fragments and was blown away by the wind-it completely disappeared. Then this "stone" expanded miraculously and quickly became a "mountain" so great it filled the whole earth.

Unlike ordinary dreams, this one was caused by God to convey the message of God's sovereignty to Nebuchadnezzar. This message is part of the written Word of God and it reveals to us today important facts about the true gospel of Jesus Christ,

Let's notice the interpretation of the dream as revealed to Daniel by God.

5. Was Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom the first world-ruling empire? Verses 37-38. Who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, power and glory? Verse 37.

COMMENT: God revealed Himself to this world dictator as the Most High Ruler over all-the Head of a universe-ruling government. The Eternal was revealing Himself through Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, and through the Bible to us today, as the all-powerful Supreme Ruler who is to be obeyed!

6. Was Nebuchadnezzar and his world-ruling kingdom represented by the golden head of the great image? Verse 38.

7. Was a kingdom (pictured by the chest and arms of silver) to arise after Nebuchadnezzar that would be inferior to his kingdom? Verse 39.

8. Was yet a third kingdom (pictured by the belly and thighs of brass) to gain power and rule over all the earth? Same verse.

COMMENT: Notice that these passages are speaking of kingdoms that would bear rule over people on earth. The prophecy is speaking of GOVERNMENTS! It is not speaking of ethereal sentiments "set up in the hearts of men". It is not speaking of churches. It is speaking of governments that bear rule and authority over nations of people here on earth. It is literal It is specific. There is no misunderstanding here as to what is meant by the word "kingdom."

God revealed through the prophet Daniel that the great metallic image represented a succession of world-ruling governments. First was the head of gold. That represented Nebuchadnezzar and his

kingdom, the Chaldean Empire. After him was to come a second, then a third kingdom "which shall bear rule over all the earth." The prophecy is referring to world-ruling kingdoms or empires.

9. What do the legs of iron of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream image represent? Verse 40.

COMMENT: The legs of iron represent a fourth world empire. It was to be exceedingly strong, even as iron is very strong, thus signifying that it was to be stronger militarily than its predecessors. Yet, silver is less valuable than gold, brass less than silver, and iron less than brass. Though each succeeding metal was harder and stronger, the decreasing value of the metals shows the succession would deteriorate morally and spiritually. And the two legs meant the fourth empire would be divided.

After the Chaldean Empire came the still larger Persian Empire, then the GrecoMacedonian Empire and fourth, the Roman Empire. The final empire was divided, with capitals at Rome and Constantinople (now called Istanbul).

10. Will ten kings or kingdoms, represented by the ten toes, be in existence just before the Kingdom of God (the great "stone") is set up? Verses 41-44. What will God's Kingdom do to these ten kingdoms? Verse 44.

COMMENT: By connecting this prophecy with Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 17, we can know it is referring to the new United States of Europe that is now forming, out of the European Common Market, before our very eyes! Revelation 17:12 makes plain that it will be a union of ten kings or kingdoms-ten nations or groups of nations. This will in reality be the final resurrection of the medieval "Holy Roman Empire."

After the fall of the ancient Roman Empire in A.D. 476, there were to be seven revivals that would be ruled over by a gentile church called the "daughter" of ancient Babylon (Isa. 47:1). It is a church claiming to be Christian, but actually named by God "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT" -or, more plainly, BABYLONIAN MYSTERIES (Rev. 17:1-5).

Six of those revivals have come and gone. The seventh is now in the process of emerging. It is to be the final, brief resurrection of the Roman Empire, this time composed of ten European nations or groups of nations. These are the ten toes comprising a mixture of iron and clay (Dan. 2:41-43).

At the end of their days, which will last no more than three and one-half years, Christ will return to earth to set up the Kingdom of God with headquarters in Jerusalem. He is going to set up an eternal Kingdom that shall break in pieces and utterly consume these end-time kingdoms!

11. When Christ comes, will He come as Supreme King to rule the whole earth? Rev. 19:11-16. Whose possession will the nations of this world become? Rev. 11: 15.

COMMENT: The plain truth of the Bible reveals that the "Kingdom of God" is to be a literal government composed of spirit rulers who shall rule over all nations on earth. It is to take over the governments of the nations at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Christ will become the "King of kings," and He will rule by the law of God. This is the very good news or "gospel of the Kingdom of God" that Jesus preached !

### **TO BE "BORN" INTO GOD'S KINGDOM!**

Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees occupying an office of authority over the Jews during Jesus' day, came under the cloak of darkness to see Jesus. He admitted that he and the other religious leaders knew Jesus was a teacher sent from God (John 3:1-2).

Jesus proceeded to reveal to Nicodemus a vital truth we need to understand about the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

1. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus must happen to an individual before he can "see" the Kingdom of God? John 3:3.

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God is something those not born again simply cannot see. Therefore a church on earth could not be the Kingdom of God as some have erroneously assumed, because you can see a church!

2. Must a person be born of the Spirit before he can enter into the Kingdom of God?

Verse 5. What will he be composed of when "born again"-born of the Spirit of God? Verse 6. Is God a spirit? John 4:24.

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God is something that can be entered into. But only those who are "born again" can enter it. We who are born of the flesh are flesh-just mortal flesh and blood. We are born that way. But it is possible for us to be born again this time not as a mortal, flesh-and-blood baby, but born of the very Spirit of God. Then we shall be spirit-wholly composed of spirit as God is! As we learned in previous lessons of the Church of God Bible Course (specifically Lesson 8 and 13), God is not a single Personage. The Hebrew word for God, Elohim, denotes more than one person. It shows God is a single family, or "kingdom," but composed of more than one person.

We have the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom. The Bible reveals an angel kingdom, created by God and composed of spirit. And then, high above all is the very creating kingdom - the God kingdom. In other words, the "Kingdom of God"! God the Father, and Christ the Son) presently compose the Kingdom or Family of God.

The astounding truth of the Bible is that, God is reproducing Himself. God created mortal man in His own image so that we may become impregnated-begotten-by the Spirit of God. Then, by a resurrection, we may be born of God-"born again"-as immortal, spirit-composed persons in the Kingdom or Family of God! Notice how the Apostle Paul explains it.

3. Can a flesh-and-blood person inherit the Kingdom of God? I Cor. 15:50. How, then, can one enter God's Kingdom or Family? Verses 51-53.

COMMENT: The Kingdom of God is something no human, born of flesh and blood, can enter or inherit. It is through the resurrection of those begotten by the Spirit of God during this mortal life, that this mortal will put on immortality and, like God, become immortal, incorruptible-literally BORN OF God's Spirit into the very God Family! This is how we shall enter into the Kingdom of God.

Those thus born again, which will include all the Spirit-begotten saints of God through the centuries, will be organized into the executive branch of the government of God to rule this earth's mortals under Jesus Christ! (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10).

### **CHRIST'S GOSPEL BEING PROCLAIMED WORLDWIDE TODAY**

Recall that John the Baptist was the "messenger" whom Malachi prophesied would come to prepare the way before Christ's ministry during His First Coming to earth (Mal. 3:1; Mark 1:4, 7-8; Luke 1:13-17). An angel prophesied that John would go ahead of Christ "in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1: 17).

1. After John was put in prison and Christ had begun His ministry, did Jesus prophesy that another "Elijah" was yet to come? Matt. 17:10-11. Is it clear that John the Baptist was a type of yet another Elijah? Verses 12-13. Did Malachi also prophesy of another Elijah's coming? Mal. 4:5. What would this "Elijah" do? Verse 6; Matt. 17:11.

COMMENT: These verses show that John was a type of the future 'Elijah'-one who would also be sent by God to the world in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, this time prior to Christ's coming in great power and glory as World Ruler (Mal. 3:1-6).

Before the day of the Lord, a human messenger would be commissioned by God to prepare a spiritual people for God, and turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and vice versa before the Second Coming of Christ-much the same as John did before Jesus began His ministry.

Jesus also said the Elijah to come would "restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). Restitution is restoring to a former state or condition-restoring something that had been taken away. What former state or condition needs restoring? What was taken away and when?

God's government was taken away from the earth at Lucifer's rebellion. But it was not restored at Jesus' First Coming. Christ will restore it when He returns (Acts 3:19-21). And so the heavens have received Jesus until He comes as "King of kings and Lord of lords" to restore the government of God (Rev. 19:16). At that time He shall set up the Kingdom of God-the divine, Spirit-born Family of God that shall rule the earth.

2. Did Jesus foretell that the gospel of the Kingdom of God would be preached in all the world as a witness in the end time? Matt. 24:14. Would the gospel also be published among all nations? Mark 13:10. Would this then be the "sign" of the end of this age, and Jesus' imminent return? Matt. 24:1-3.

3. By what power was the work of God done during the days of God's servant Zerubbabel, who built the physical Temple to which Jesus came? Zech. 4:6.

COMMENT: In our modern space age, as in Zerubbabel's day, the work of God's Church is ultimately done not by human power, but by the power of the Spirit of God! The Kingdom of God is being preached and published in all the world today by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Many lives are also being changed, converted, begotten of God's Spirit! God is preparing a "firstfruits" harvest for His Kingdom. And this precious harvest is the spiritual "Temple" that is presently being built by God (Eph. 2:19-22), and to which the spiritual Christ will return (Mal. 3:1).

Churches have been raised up in more than 60 nations and God has added members to His Church from more than 100 nations! The flock of God is being fed around the world by God's called and chosen ministers. The sick are being healed and demons are being cast out!

The "fruits" of the work God is doing through His human instruments today are the same fruits that the same Holy Spirit produced through the human Jesus and the collective "Body of Christ" in apostolic days! The Holy Spirit does the work, and the work is exactly the same - the fruits the same as in the days of Zerubbabel, Christ and the apostles!

4. Did Christ say that His servants would do even greater works than He had done while on earth? John 14:12. Even though Christ's end-time Church would have little strength of its own, what would He fling open for it in order to carry out His Great Commission? Rev. 3:8.

COMMENT: That "door" was opened by Jesus Christ! Right now, the divine commission to preach and publicize the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness to all nations is being fulfilled. The gospel of the Kingdom of God is truly being "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" as Jesus said it would (Matt. 24:14).

The "sign" by which we might know the end of this age of human misrule and Jesus' Second Coming is near is the fulfilling of this prophecy. It is now being fulfilled before your very eyes and ears!

