

MANY ARE CALLED



BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

About the Cover: James writes, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (1:18). Yet, God also, "...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Are you among those being called for salvation at this time?

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Contents

Introduction Chapter 1	3
What Does It Mean to Be Called by God?	3
Abraham Was Called.....	3
Jeremiah Was Called	4
Jesus Christ Was Called.....	4
Your Responsibility	5
The Future of Those Who Are Called.....	5
Only Few Are Called Today	6
How to Prove Your Calling	7
Grow in Your Calling	7
Chapter 2 Some Are Called and Chosen in This Day and Age	9
Called and Chosen Before Birth	9
Not Because of Works.....	10
Called <u>and</u> Chosen.....	11
Chosen to Be Called	13
What Does “Chosen” Mean?	13
Called, Chosen and Faithful	14
Why This Confusion?	16
Many and Few in the Parable in Matthew 22 About the Wedding.....	17
The Parable in Matthew 21 About the Wicked Vinedressers.....	19
Guests.....	20
Many and Few in Matthew 20 About the Landowner and His Laborers.....	24
The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.....	27
Only One in Four Is Called	28
Chapter 3 How Do I Make My Calling and Election Sure?	31
Again: The Parable of the Sower.....	32
Lack of Diligence.....	32
Lack of Endurance.....	33
Putting It Into Practice.....	34
Those Who Are Called.....	35
Chapter 4 Only Few Can Understand	37
Why in Parables?.....	37
God Must Reveal.....	38
Rejecting Your Calling	38
Bearing Fruit	39
Fulfilling Your Calling	40
Chapter 5 How Are We to Understand 2 Thessalonians 2?.....	43
A Falling Away From the Truth.....	43
The Coming of the Lawless One.....	44
A Third Temple Before Christ’s Return	45
The False Prophet	46

Many Will Be Offended.....	48
Biblical Examples of Falling Away	49
Are They Lost?	50
Chapter 6 Will Only Few Be Saved?	53
Many Will Not Be Able.....	53
Many WILL Come...	54
“Many” in Context.....	55
Most Will Be Called Later	57
Many Are Mistaken Today	57
Chapter 7 Does God Know Unconverted People Prior to Their Birth?	59
King Cyrus.....	59
Jacob and Esau.....	60
Judas Iscariot	60
The Beast	61
Israel and Judah	62
Adam and Eve	63
Noah and His Family	63
Jews Under Queen Esther	63
Conclusion.....	65

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Introduction

Some time ago, we published a booklet about predestination, addressing the question, among many others, whether YOU have been predestined to be called in this day and age for salvation... and if so, how long ago that decision was made.

But there are still many additional questions which deserve to be answered... questions like: What does it mean to be "called" for salvation?; Is there a distinction between being called and being chosen, and if so, what is that distinction?; and why does it say that "many" are called," but "few" are "chosen"? Could "calling" also refer to a selection which is not for the purpose of salvation?

In addition, how can we make our calling and election sure? Will only few be saved? Can everyone today understand the Truth? Did God preordain someone to be called for condemnation? And finally, are only those predestined and known by God prior to their birth to be called for salvation today?

This booklet will attempt to answer these puzzling questions, and many more.

Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!
Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen
Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy
Obeying God Rather than Men
Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—*How to Understand It*
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The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days
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The Mysteries of the Bible
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The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness
The Ten Commandments
The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire
The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?
Tithing—Today?
When and How Will Christ Return?
Why This Confusion About Life After Death?

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are Jews and Christians at Odds with Jesus Christ?
Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?
Are You Already Born Again?
Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?
Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever
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Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?
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God's *Commanded* Holy Days
God's Law...or God's Grace?
God's Teachings on Sexual Relationships
Heavens and Earth...Before and After the First Man!
Hidden Secrets in the Bible
How Can We Know that Christ's Return Is Near?
How Can Young People... Cope with Life?
How to Find the True Church of God
How to Keep the Sabbath
Human Suffering—Why...and How Much Longer?
Is God a Trinity?
Is That In the Bible?—Man's Holidays and God's Holy Days
Is That In the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation

Chapter 1

What Does It Mean to Be Called by God?

People claim, oftentimes falsely, that they have received God's call—especially to preach or witness for Jesus. Indeed, the Bible does speak of God calling people, but what does that really mean and how can you know that God has called you?

On the Day of Pentecost, when God's Holy Spirit was given to His Church, we find this:

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'" (Acts 2:38–39).

Here, Peter addresses the fact that God is calling specific people, and later he writes to those who have been called; those who are now part of the Church of God:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9–10).

In this chapter, we are addressing those who are called for salvation, unless we specifically say otherwise.

Abraham Was Called

Throughout history, God has called people for His unique purposes, and we have the extraordinary example of Abraham:

"Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless

you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran" (Genesis 12:1–4).

It is also important to note how willingly Abraham responded to God's call:

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8).

Jeremiah Was Called

Of the prophet Jeremiah, God said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). In other words, Jeremiah was predestined before he was even conceived to be called during his lifetime! That also happened in a sense to Cyrus, king of Persia, for God named him and appointed him to return the Jews from Babylonian captivity and to cause them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem—this was written in the Book of Isaiah about one-hundred-fifty years before the birth of Cyrus (compare Isaiah 44:28–45:1–7).

Unlike Jeremiah, Cyrus was not called for salvation during his lifetime.

Jesus Christ Was Called

Of course, the greatest example of God's predestination and calling is that of Jesus Christ. Consider the overwhelming number of prophecies about Him and the very explicit details which were written long before His birth (compare, for example, chapters 49 and 53 in the Book of Isaiah).

With God's calling comes great responsibility! The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Savior of the world (compare John 12:47; 1 John 4:14). If you are called by God, it is to do His Will, and that involves a role in the Church of God. The Church of God is composed of those whom God has called out of the world, as Jesus said about His disciples, and, by extension, all who will have come afterward:

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

Conclusion

What we have described and what you have learned in this booklet should prove the magnificent aspect of God's incredible and awesome master plan for ALL of mankind. But it is YOU whom God might have predestined before time began to be called for salvation in this day and age.

If you understand and act upon the information contained in this booklet, as revealed in the Bible, there is every reason to conclude that YOU are one of the few—the firstfruits—who are called today with the potential to inherit eternal life and enter the Kingdom and Family of God when Christ returns.

This means, then, that you would have a responsibility, because today would be YOUR day of salvation. It is up to you, with God's help, to make your calling and election sure, and not to neglect such a great salvation offered to you. God is confident and convinced that you, whom He knew and predestined long before your birth to be called now, will make it into His Kingdom. Please, share His conviction in you, and act accordingly.

that they would survive. Also, God gave David a promise. David had been predestined and chosen before time began to be called for salvation during his lifetime. God's promise was that there would always be one of his descendants sitting on his throne until the return of Christ (compare Jeremiah 33:17). So, God had to know them and protect and preserve them to make sure that they would fulfill His promise to David, even though the vast majority of kings and rulers sitting on that throne had not been predestined to be called for salvation during their lifetime.

There are certainly many more examples which we could give and our above-quoted booklet contains additional information. But what has been written here should suffice to show the incredible foreknowledge of God and His awesome plan for mankind. How great God is, and how small we are in comparison. As Paul says in Romans 11:33–36:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

And it is this awesome and all-powerful God who has predestined and chosen you before time began to be called for salvation in this day and age. He wants to share His Kingdom with you. He wants YOU to be in His Family. Think about it.

Your Responsibility

In praying to His Father, Jesus spoke of those who are called as being separate from the world (compare John 17:14–17). Why? Because being in the world and embracing this society, its customs and practices, is not living according to the spiritual laws of God—it is in fact, “enmity against God” (Romans 8:6–7). Those who are called are to live lives which are unmistakably different from those who are not called, and the Apostle Paul clearly explains what it means to be called by God:

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:17–24).

To be called by God for salvation includes great potential for those who finish their calling:

“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life” (1 John 2:24–25).

Paul wrote to the brethren in Thessalonica encouraging them to “... walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). He, as he did so often in his epistles, reminded them of the tremendous goal ahead for those whom God calls.

The Future of Those Who Are Called

We find more details about the future in God's calling:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 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 3:1–3).

Only Few Are Called Today

However, today is not the time when God is calling everybody to salvation! Now is the time God is calling a select few to be, what the Bible calls, "firstfruits" (James 1:18), and to be in the First Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 20:4–6). This fact is shown in the Holy Days of God—specifically in the meaning of the Feast of Pentecost. Leviticus 23:15–22; Exodus 23:16; 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:9–12 all describe this annual Holy Day of God as depicting the firstfruits of harvesting in the spring—while the fall feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day, represent a much greater harvest and period of judgment.

A fuller explanation is available in our booklets *"God's Commanded Holy Days"*; *"The Meaning of God's Spring Holy Days"* and *"The Meaning of God's Fall Holy Days."*

Jesus called His disciples a "little flock" (Luke 12:32), and history has certainly proven that very few people have ever been a part of the Church of God. Paul explained to the brethren in Corinth about whom God has chosen to call:

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

Very few people have been called by God at this point in time! In fact, Jesus said that not all could even understand His teachings—only those to whom it was given (Mark 4:10–12). Being called by God means that He has initiated contact; otherwise, we would not even have access to the Father or to Jesus Christ, and this is what Jesus explained:

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws

nevertheless were "called" to fulfill an important role, function and task.

There are many more aspects to consider which should motivate us to stand in awe when realizing God's incredible plan, and all that is involved for its fulfillment.

Adam and Eve

For example, we read that Jesus Christ was slain from the foundation of the world (compare Revelation 13:8). We even read that He was foreordained to give His blood for mankind as a lamb without blemish and without spot BEFORE the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). This means He must have known BEFORE creating Adam and Eve that mankind would sin and that He would have to die for man in order to bring about forgiveness with the potential of inheriting eternal life. This implies that God knew Adam and Eve before they were created. They were, in a sense, predestined and chosen to be called for salvation in their lifetime, but they rejected that call.

Noah and His Family

Later, God decided to destroy the earth in a flood. But it was clear that some would have to survive; otherwise, God's plan for mankind and the prophecies given could not be fulfilled. And so, God "found" Noah, a righteous man who had been preordained and predestined to be called for salvation in his lifetime. He was "a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). But notice: We only read that Noah was perfect and that he walked with God. We do not read this about his wife, his sons and his daughters-in-law.

Still, in order to make sure that mankind would survive and produce offspring to replenish the earth, God had to save not just Noah, but also his wife and his three sons and daughters-in-law even though it does not say that they were righteous or called for salvation; only Noah was. Still, God did not only know Noah, but also his wife and family, long before they were born.

Jews Under Queen Esther

In addition, God had to save the Jews when, at the time of Esther, Haman was determined to kill them, as Jesus would be a descendant of the Jews. So, He had to know at least some of them to make sure

The beast—also called King Jareb of Assyria and the king of the North—will work together with the false prophet, a religious figure, to bring much evil to this world. God knows the identity of the beast and the false prophet, and He did so at least when the Book of Revelation was written. In fact, as the beast is the same as King Jareb of Assyria and the king of the North, He knew them already at the time when the books of Isaiah and Daniel were written; but in reality, He already knew them much earlier than that. They would not be called for salvation in this day and age, but they would be “called” for a particular task which had to be fulfilled prior to Christ’s return. To put it differently, Christ could NOT come back unless these events were to occur first.

Israel and Judah

Continuing with quoting from pages 23 and 24 of our booklet:

We find an additional statement of God’s foreknowledge and pre-appointment, regarding the existence of nations, in Deuteronomy 32:8: “When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, *He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel.*” This statement is highly remarkable because when God separated the sons of Adam (compare, for example, Genesis 11:8) and gave them their land, Israel, the son of Isaac, or Israel’s children, did not even exist.

The individual, called Jacob or Israel, would only be born many years later, and the nation of Israel would not emerge for many hundreds of years. Still, God says that He set the boundaries of the peoples “according to the *number* of the children of Israel,” stating that He knew that the children of Israel would exist in the future and implying that He even knew *their number*. Paul confirms this fact in Romans 11:2: “God has not cast away His people [Israel] whom He *foreknew*.”

This means, then, that God foreknew many members of the House of Israel and the House of Judah BEFORE they were born... and BEFORE those houses even came into existence. He had to preserve Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were predestined to be called for salvation during their lifetime—the ancestors of the Houses of Israel and Judah. In addition, He also preserved others in their lineage who were NOT predestined to be called for salvation in their lifetime, but who

him...” (John 6:44); and, “...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Is God calling you to salvation? Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Are you able to understand the truth found in God’s Word—and believe it? Are you acting on the truth you understand—without compromise? Have you come to believe the gospel—the good news of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus preached (Mark 1:14–15) and what the Church of God is commissioned to preach in our time (Matthew 24:14)?

How to Prove Your Calling

If you are called by God, here are some first steps by which to prove your calling:

“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:8–16).

Grow in Your Calling

Once God calls us, we must grow in our calling—as the Apostle Peter explains:

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him

who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:2–11).

When God calls you, you have a responsibility to respond to His calling and strive to live in accordance with His Word. God's true calling will be your only opportunity to inherit eternal life when Christ returns.

(John 6:70). In John 17:12, Christ prayed to the Father, "Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost *except the son of perdition*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Peter, one of Christ's original apostles, later explained that Judas "fell" from apostleship, when he stated, "Judas left it and went to his place which was *predestined for him*." (Acts 1:25; *Die Grosse Bibel*)...

Jude 4 reminds us of the following: "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who *long ago* were *marked out* for this condemnation"...

Paul asked in Romans 9:22: "What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...?" [Compare Proverbs 16:4: "The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom."].

It is implied here that God knew those individuals "marked out for condemnation" and "prepared for destruction" long before their birth. They were "called" by God to fulfill their destiny in God's plan. This does NOT mean that they lacked free will (Judas, for example, DECIDED to betray Christ) or that they were predestined to commit the unpardonable sin. Even though God uses evil men to carry out His purpose, He does not "make" them commit the unpardonable sin. It is not as if they never had a chance. They will still get their chance to qualify for God's Kingdom in the Second Resurrection. God NEVER predestines someone to end up in the lake of fire, just as He does not guarantee eternal life for those who are called to salvation.

The Beast

Continuing with quoting from page 24 of our booklet:

We have already read about an end-time political figure, called "the beast" in the prophecies of the book of Revelation. God has predetermined that this "beast" or political leader, as well as the government he will represent, will rule for "one hour" (Revelation 17:12). During this time, he will persecute God's people (compare Revelation 13:7). We are told, in Daniel 7:25, that this Biblical term ("one hour") means, in this case, 3½ years...

We also read about a future king of Assyria—none other than the "beast" in the book of Revelation—whom God will use to punish modern Israel (Isaiah 10:5–7, 12). God is using those individuals to bring about prophecy.

Chapter 2

Some Are Called and Chosen in This Day and Age

The apparent distinction between being called and being chosen has confused many people. As we will show in this booklet, these words are addressing different aspects of the same concept.

Called and Chosen Before Birth

We will first concentrate on people who are called and chosen for salvation; that is, who have been elected by God long before they were born to be given an opportunity in their lifetime to inherit salvation when Christ returns.

Quoting from our free booklet, “*Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?*”, we say this on page 52:

“The Bible teaches that in this day and age, God calls just very few to salvation. Those who respond to the call and become converted are referred to as the firstfruits (compare James 1:18; Revelation 14:4). Some try to defeat the Biblical concept of predestination, as explained in this booklet, by stating that God does not know ahead of time whom He will call and **choose**. Rather, they claim that God ‘calls’ many, based on their prior conduct in this life, and that He then decides to choose or accept those who respond to His call, while rejecting those who reject His call.

“However, those who are truly called today have been first foreknown and predestined by God (Romans 8:28)...”

Notice the wording of Romans 8:28–30:

“(28) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

God also saw to it that Cyrus would survive as a child. We are told that Cyrus was born sometime around 600 BC and was the son of Cambyses, king of the Persians, and grandson of Astyages, king of the Median Empire. Astyages was warned in a series of prophetic dreams that Cyrus would one day supplant and kill him. Astyages ordered his top general Harpagus to kill the child, but instead Harpagus had Cyrus taken away to live as a shepherd.

Jacob and Esau

Continuing with quoting from pages 11 and 12 of our booklet:

Also, Ecclesiastes 6:10 sets forth an interesting observation: “Whatever one is, he has been *named* already...” The *Revised English Bible* states: “Whatever exists has already been given a *name*”...

Paul makes a similar observation about God’s foreknowledge in Romans 9:10–13, when he discusses God’s mystery of election: “... when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God *according to election* might stand, not of works but of Him *who calls*), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*’”

Again, it is implied here that God knew the older Esau and the younger Jacob, *by name, before* they were born, and that He had *already* called Jacob and rejected Esau, *prior to their birth*. In that sense, God “loved” Jacob and “hated” Esau—that is, He loved Esau less by comparison, insofar as the *timing of God’s election* was concerned.

The point to note is that God knew Esau, not just Jacob, before their birth... even though God would not call Esau for salvation during his lifetime. As God had known and chosen Jacob for salvation before time began, He must have also known Esau, whom He rejected, before time began.

Judas Iscariot

Continuing with quoting from page 13 of our booklet:

It is also noteworthy what is stated about Christ’s knowledge about His betrayer Judas. We read in John 6:64: “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would *betray Him*”...

Christ *knew* that one of the twelve whom He chose was “a devil”

Chapter 7

Does God Know Unconverted People Prior to Their Birth?

We explained before that God, before time began, chose and knew those whom He would call for salvation in this day and age. But does the fact that God knew those “called-out ones” a long time ago exclude those who would not be called for salvation now? To put it differently, did God know individuals a long time ago whom He would NOT call for salvation prior to Christ’s Return?

Consider this:

Since God knew YOU before the foundation of the world and chose you for salvation to be called now, then God must have carefully observed—or known—your forefathers or ancestors to make sure that you would even be born in the first place. This explains the many otherwise unexplainable events of protection and survival which your forefathers might have experienced in war or in other dangerous situations.

King Cyrus

In addition, we point out the following on page 11 in our free booklet, “*Are You Predestined to Be Saved?*”:

In Ezra 1:1, we read that King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation to rebuild the temple, in fulfillment of God’s prophecies in Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1. It is interesting that these prophecies *named* Cyrus, even though they were written hundreds of years *before* Cyrus was born. However, even though God called Cyrus for a certain task, He did not call him to salvation...”

Please note carefully that God knew Cyrus, by name, long before he was born. He had not been predestined to be called for salvation at that time, but he was preordained to fulfill an important task in the line of prophetic events. Having said this, it means that God must have known Cyrus’ ancestry too to make sure Cyrus would be born and live to fulfill his prophecy.

Paul says here that God foreknew and predestined those whom He called. The next step in the process would be justification—upon repentance and belief in Christ’s sacrifice, they would obtain forgiveness and would thereby become justified in God’s eyes—their former sins were blotted out—and if they remain faithful to God and His Way of Life, they would be glorified—obtain glorification—being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. In God’s eyes, those who were foreknown and predestined to be called would make it into His Kingdom—only they could prevent this from happening.

Continuing with our quote from the above-stated booklet:

“They were singled out BEFORE they did right or wrong—that is, they were NOT called because of their works (compare Romans 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:8–9).”

Let us focus on the exact wording of Romans 9:10–12:

“(10) And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (11) (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), (12) it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.”

We read here that God’s purpose according to election must stand regarding those whom God calls.

Also notice the wording in 2 Timothy 1:8–9:

“(8) Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, (9) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began...”

Not Because of Works

According to this passage, those who are called with a holy calling were not called because of their works, but according to God’s purpose and grace which was given to them “before time began.”

In Romans 8:28, the Greek word for “called” is “*kletos*.” In Romans 8:30, the word is “*kaleo*.”

In Romans 9:11, the Greek word is also “*kaleo*,” So is the word for “calls” in 2 Timothy 1:9, whereas the word for calling, in “holy calling,” is “*klesis*.”

demons in His name, but in reality, they are not doing anything of the kind. Their “miracles” might have been “lying wonders,” as they were receiving help from the “god of this world,” Satan the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4), without knowing or realizing it. Demons were not cast out at all, but they might have left voluntarily for a while to deceive the people. In any event, Christ will declare to them that they were not acting for Him because they were guilty of committing lawlessness—the transgression of the law.

But this does not mean that they—the “many”—will be thrown into the lake of fire. Rather, once they come to their senses and realize that they had lived in sin (falsely believing and teaching that Christ had come to do away with the law); that they had not represented Christ; and that they had not prophesied or done anything in His name—that is, with His authority; then they will receive their opportunity for salvation and qualification for the Kingdom of God.

God is not unfair. He will give everyone his or her opportunity, in His due time, to respond to His call for salvation. Those few who are called today have a great responsibility to make their calling and election sure because they will NOT get “a second chance.” Paul admonishes and cautions them:

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away... how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?” (Hebrews 2:1–3).

Rather, this is the confidence and attitude God’s chosen people must have: “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39).

Regarding the meaning of the verb “*kaleo*,” W.E. Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* writes:

“*Kaleo* is used... with a personal object, to call anyone, invite, summon...; it is used particularly of the Divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption... of vocation... Thus it suggests either vocation or destination; the context determines which...”

Vine’s defines the adjective “*kletos*” and the noun “*klesis*” as a calling and is used “especially of God’s invitation to man to accept the benefits of salvation.”

We see, then, that God has called some for salvation before they were born; in fact, before time began. He foreknew them, predestined them, called them.

We continue with quoting from our before-mentioned booklet:

“Those who are *truly* called are also chosen and faithful (compare Revelation 17:14). The Bible does not teach that God calls many today to salvation, but that most reject their calling and that only a few will respond and become chosen and faithful. If that were true, then those who have rejected their spiritual calling to eternal salvation would have committed the unpardonable sin—and this is decisively not correct. Today, God only *calls and chooses* the few (compare 1 Corinthians 1:26–29), and when He brings them to true conversion, they, for the most part, will stay loyal to Him (although it is possible, that some, who are *truly* called to salvation, will commit the unpardonable sin).”

Called and Chosen

Many have stumbled over the fact that those who were predestined to be called were also predestined to be chosen—and that, long before they were born. If we wanted to draw a distinction between being called and being chosen by saying that some would be called first, and only later, after having proven themselves to be worthy, they would become chosen, then we would also have to say that God, even though He foreknew and predestined some to be called in this day and age, engaged in a big gamble as to who would also advance to become chosen, and that most of those whom God predestined to be called would not make it, and would fall away, and that God knew this ahead of time; in fact, before time began. This is truly a preposterous concept. Why would God call those whom He had foreknown and

predestined, knowing that they would not make it, but fall away? After all, we read Paul's words in Philippians 1:6: "... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..."

God did not call the firstfruits so that most would fail; rather, He called them "before time began" so that they would succeed. God calls [*"kaleo"*] us into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12). We are also told: "He who calls [*"kaleo"*] you is faithful, who also WILL DO it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). We are "the called [*"kletos"*] of Jesus Christ"—the "saints" (Romans 1:6, 7; 8:28). Jude 1 refers to us as "those who are called [*"kletos"*], sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ." In Hebrews 3:1, we are referred to as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling [*"klesis"*]." And 2 Peter 1:10 admonishes God's true disciples "to make your call [*"klesis"*] and election sure."

In focusing now on the fact that those who are called were chosen by God, we continue with quoting from pages 52 and 53 of our before-mentioned booklet:

"Those who are called by God and whose names are written in God's Book of Life are God's 'chosen' generation or people (1 Peter 2:9; Acts 9:15; James 2:5). They are 'the elect' or 'chosen ones' (Matthew 24:24, 31). We read in Ephesians 1:3–5 that 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... chose us in Him before the foundation of the world... having predestined us... as sons [the rendering "*adoption* as sons" is incorrect] by Jesus Christ to Himself'

"We also read in 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14: 'But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God *from the beginning* chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ'...

"Christ says in John 15:16, 19: 'You did not choose Me, but *I chose you* and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain... *I chose you* out of the world, therefore the world hates you'...

"When the Bible talks about the *predestination* of those truly 'called' to salvation in this day and age, it *includes* the concept that they are also 'chosen' to be numbered among the 'elect'...

who had temporarily "given up," will become zealous and worthy of God's calling (compare Revelation 7:1–17).

Most Will Be Called Later

The vast majority of mankind will be called during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment (the second resurrection). It is then when "all" Israel shall be saved. The word "all" can mean, the vast majority. It does not exclude exceptions. Those who were not called in this life will be called in the next. Some will commit the unpardonable sin and end up in the lake of fire, to be burned and destroyed. (For more information on the destruction of the wicked, please read our free booklet, "*Do We Have an Immortal Soul?*", especially pages 22–40). That is why we read that Christ died for the sins of MANY—not for the sins of everyone, because some will refuse to repent and reject Christ's Sacrifice for the remission and forgiveness of their sins. Those who commit the unpardonable sin and face their ultimate fate in the third resurrection will weep and gnash their teeth in anger and hate, as we read in Luke 13:28, but that passage does not say that "many" will be in that last and final resurrection, to be destroyed in the lake of fire.

Rather, we read that "many" will be in the Kingdom, together with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but that the sons of the Kingdom will be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Again, it does not say here that "many" sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness. But a few undoubtedly will be—these "sons of the kingdom" were the physical Israelites and Jews, to whom the promises had been given (compare Romans 9:3–4). Some of them had also been offered salvation but they had rejected it. Christ warned some of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes at His time that they were walking on thin ice and that they were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin, because they rejected Christ, knowing that He had come from God, but they taught instead that He was demon-possessed (Mark 3:28–30).

Many Are Mistaken Today

Many may think that they are called today, and might even believe that they act on behalf of Christ, working miracles or casting out

discern Christ's Sacrifice, when they partook of the symbols of bread and wine] MANY are weak and sick among you, and MANY sleep [having died prematurely]."

We also read that at the time of Jesus' death, "the graves were opened; and MANY bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:52–53). Verses 55–56 point out that "MANY women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James [the Less] and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons."

In addition, Mark 14:56 informs us that at the time of Christ's illegal "trial," "MANY bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree."

So, we need to look at the use of the word "many" in context. For instance, when we read that many brethren in Corinth had partaken of the Passover symbols in an unworthy manner, we are informed that a sizeable group had done so; this passage does not have to mean that the majority had acted in that way.

In addition, we must realize that the Bible speaks of different times, when referring to the calling and salvation of men. In this day and age, only very few are called—they are referred to as the firstfruits.

Therefore, it is correct that TODAY, many will in some way try to "get" eternal life, but they will not succeed, because their day of salvation has not come yet. Only the few—because they are called to salvation in this day and age—will "find" the way to eternal life. The "many" will continue to go the way that leads to destruction... but this does not mean that it will be eternal destruction with no chance for change. Rather, once their eyes are opened, many will respond and turn from the way to destruction to the way of life.

But today, only the few, in comparison, will find it, as they are called and drawn by the Father. From those, few are chosen for very specific positions, or those "many" who were "called" were never called for salvation. But even from these comparatively few, many might very well depart from the faith just prior to and during the beginning of the Great Tribulation, at least for a while, but we also read that just prior to the Day of the Lord, many, including perhaps many of those

"At the same time, we read in Mark 13:20 about the coming Great Tribulation: 'And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.'"

Chosen to Be Called

The teaching that some are called first, and if they overcome and don't fall away, then they are also chosen, is not biblical. In fact, the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Remember, we read that those whom God foreknew and predestined, He also called them before time began. We also just read above, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, that God from the beginning chose us for salvation to which He called us. *So, if anything, the order would be reversed.* But the Truth is that some were preordained or elected or chosen to be called in this day and age. And that, before the foundation of the world (compare again Ephesians 1:3–5).

1 Corinthians 1:26–29 uses the words "calling" and "chosen" interchangeably:

(26) For you see your calling [Greek: "klesis"], brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called* [Note that the words "are called" are not in the Greek and were added by the translator]. (27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; (28) and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, (29) that no flesh should glory in His presence."

What Does "Chosen" Mean?

We need to review the different Greek words, all being translated as "chosen," to get a clearer picture of their meaning.

In 1 Corinthians 1:27–28, the Greek word for "chosen" is "*eklego*." It is also used in John 15:16, 19 (see above), and in Ephesians 1:4 (see above). It is also used in James 2:5: "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom...?". According to *Vine's*, it means "to pick out," "select", "to choose for oneself."

The Greek word "*eklego*" is also used in Mark 13:20, where the

words “elect” and “chosen” are used interchangeably: “... for the elect’s sake, whom He chose...”

The Greek word for “chosen,” “*eklektos*”, is used, for example, in 1 Peter 2:9 (“you are a chosen generation”). It means “chosen out, select.” It is rendered as “elect” in Matthew 24:22, 31. The *New King James Bible* includes an annotation to Matthew 24:31 (“they will gather together His elect,” “chosen ones”).

Vine’s says:

“*eklektos*, lit. signified picked out, chosen (*ek*, from, *lego*, to gather, pick out) and is used of... believers... Believers were ‘chosen’ before the foundation of the world... The source of their election is God’s grace, not human will... They are given by God the Father to Christ as the fruit of His Death, all being foreknown and foreseen by God.”

The Greek word “*ekloge*” in Acts 9:15 (“a chosen vessel”) has a similar meaning; it refers to choice and selection. It is sometimes rendered “election.” It is used in Romans 9:11 in reference to the election of Jacob, which can also be rendered, according to *Vine’s*, as “that which is chosen.”

So, the firstfruits were selected or picked out, before the foundation of the world, to be called in this age. To put it differently, if we belong to the firstfruits, we were called before time began; that is, God had already decided before He created anything physical, that He would call us in our lifetime for salvation.

An unusual word is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, where we read that God chose us from the beginning. The word is “*aireomai*” and means, to take or to lift up for oneself. Again, the thought is conveyed that God, for Himself and for His plan, predestined and chose certain elected ones to be called in this age, for His purpose.

Called, Chosen and Faithful

In this context, how are we to understand Revelation 17:14, which says: “These [10 nations] will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called [“*kletos*”], chosen [“*eklektos*”], and faithful.”?

Barnes Notes on the Bible gives the following explanation:

“Are called – That is, called by him to be his followers; as if he had

MANY will be made righteous.” Romans 8:29 adds that Christ “might be the firstborn among MANY brethren.” We read in Hebrews 2:10: “For it was fitting for Him [God the Father], for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing MANY sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation [Jesus Christ] perfect through suffering.”

Paul even states in Romans 11:26: “And so ALL Israel will be saved.”

We read the following description about the saints: “Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn MANY to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). We read in Daniel 12:10: “MANY shall be purified, made white, and refined...”

We also read this in Zechariah 2:11: “MANY nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people...”

Just prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord of about one year before Christ’s return, 144,000 Israelites will be sealed on their foreheads (Revelation 7:1–8; in Revelation 14:1 it is said that 144,000 are with the Lamb, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads). In addition, John sees, in a vision, a great multitude which no one can number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the Lamb; they came out of the Great Tribulation and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, serving God day and night (Revelation 7:9–15).

To summarize at this point, we quoted Scriptures indicating that many will be saved; while we also quoted other Scriptures to the effect that many will depart from the faith, or that they were never known by Christ in the first place.

How are we to explain this apparent contradiction?

“Many” in Context

First, we need to realize that the word “many” is to be understood in context. It does not necessarily have to describe the vast majority of a group of people, or of all of mankind.

We read in Acts 12:12 that Peter “came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where MANY were gathered together praying...”

In 1 Corinthians 11:30, Paul described the status of the brethren in Corinth, saying: “For this reason [because they did not properly

will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive MANY. And because lawlessness will abound, the love [Greek: agape—godly love—which had been poured out into their hearts by the Holy Spirit which had been given them, Romans 5:5] of MANY will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

2 Peter 2:1–2 adds: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And MANY will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

Finally, Christ said in Matthew 22:14: “For MANY are called, but FEW are chosen.” Compare also Matthew 20:16 and Mark 10:31. So one could jump to the conclusion that indeed only the few will be saved, while many—the majority—will end up in the lake of fire, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Many WILL Come...

On the other hand, several statements in the Bible seem to contradict this apparent conclusion.

In Matthew 8:11, Christ said this (as a parallel passage to Luke 13:28, quoted above):

“And I say to you that MANY will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The angel Gabriel told Zacharias that his son, John the Baptist, “will turn MANY of the children of Israel to the Lord their God” (Luke 1:16). Likewise, we read that Jesus’s “blood of the new covenant” “is shed for MANY for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24). Hebrews 9:28 adds: “... Christ was offered once to bear the sins of MANY...” Isaiah 53:11–12 adds: “By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify MANY, for He shall bear their iniquities... He bore the sin of MANY...”

We read in Romans 5:19: “For as by one man’s [Adam’s] disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s [Christ’s] obedience

selected them out of the world to maintain his cause...

“And chosen – ... In their steadfast adherence to the truth, they *had shown that they were truly chosen* by the Saviour...”

“And faithful – They had shown themselves faithful to him in times of persecution, and in the hour of darkness.”

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible adds:

“... are called, and chosen, and faithful; they are *chosen in Christ from all eternity*... and though their calling is here set before election, as in 2 Peter 1:10, yet *it does not precede it*; the Arabic version reads, ‘chosen, called, faithful’; first ‘chosen’ by God the Father, then ‘called’, ... being called they remain ‘faithful’...”

The *Geneva Study Bible* speaks here about “those that are elected, called, and are his faithful ones in Christ.”

Rightly understood, this passage does not convey the thought that the firstfruits are called, and only when they have proven themselves, then they become “chosen.” Rather, our calling and election (being chosen) were determined by God before the foundation of the world—before time began.

We are admonished to make our calling (“*klesis*”) and election (“*ekloge*”) sure (2 Peter 1:10) because even though we were predestined and chosen to be called in this age, we must make sure that we do not receive our calling in vain. We prove to God through our conduct that we, having been foreknown and predestined for the Kingdom of God, are fulfilling our destiny of becoming immortal God beings when Christ returns.

Until now, we discussed that few people, identified as the firstfruits, were foreknown and predestined by God, long before they were born, to be called for salvation in this age. We showed from the Bible that those who are called to salvation today were elected or chosen to be called before the foundation of the world—before time began. We debunked the idea that some would be called first, and only later, after having proven themselves to be worthy, they would become chosen. We showed that the Bible teaches the exact opposite— that God, from the beginning, chose us for salvation to which He called us; in other words, those who are called to salvation today had been chosen long ago by God to be called now.

Why This Confusion?

The reason why some erroneously teach that we must be called first and that only later, once we have proven ourselves, can we belong to those who are also chosen, is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of basically two Scriptures in the book of Matthew which state that “many are called, but few are chosen.” In misapplying these passages to God’s call to salvation, they conclude that God calls many people today, but only few qualify and become God’s chosen people, worthy of inheriting salvation. In teaching this, they would also have to say, as we pointed out before, “that God, even though He foreknew and predestined some to be called in this day and age, engaged in a big gamble as to who would also advance to becoming chosen, and that most of those whom God predestined to be called would not make it, and would fall away, and that God knew this ahead of time; in fact, before time began. This is truly a preposterous concept. Why would God call those whom He had foreknown and predestined, knowing that they would not make it, but fall away?”

Part of this false teaching is that they do not believe in the biblical concept of predestination. Rather than understanding that God has, very specifically, elected certain designated individuals, foreknown to Him, long before they were born, long before the foundation of the earth, even before time began, they teach that God only had a general plan of calling at random an unidentified group of unspecified and undesigned people, and that out of that group, many would fail, but some would succeed. This is clearly NOT the biblical teaching, as we have proven already from the Bible.

We also say in our free booklet, “*Are You Predestined to Be Saved?*”, in chapter 1, on pages 15–18:

“So then, did God know from, or even before, the foundation of the world—before time began—that He would call certain ones to salvation? Based on the testimony of Scripture, the answer is, Yes!... Predestination does not mean that we whom God has called to salvation at this time are guaranteed to attain eternal life. But it DOES mean that we were preordained—‘predestined’—by God to be *called* to salvation in this life, so that we CAN attain eternal life at the time of the resurrection. We can also fail, however.

“Predestination, then, has to do with the *time of our calling to salvation*.

Chapter 6

Will Only Few Be Saved?

At one time, the disciples asked Jesus Christ whether it would be just the FEW who would be saved and inherit eternal life (Luke 13:23).

Many Will Not Be Able...

Christ’s answer was illuminating and perplexing at the same time, when He responded: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for MANY, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (verse 24).

At first glance, this might seem to indicate that most will not end up in the Kingdom of God; especially in light of His further statement in verse 28 that there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.”

In addition, this conclusion might even find further support in Christ’s statement in Matthew 7:13–14: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are MANY who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are FEW who find it.”

He added in Matthew 7:21–22: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. MANY will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

This warning is compounded by Christ’s sober end-time prediction in Matthew 24:4–5, 9–13:

“... Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive MANY... Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then MANY will be offended,

It also has to do with the fact that our names—the names of those who are called in this life—are written in the Book of Life, and that they have been written in it since the foundation of the world—before time began—and that our names will remain in that Book, as long as we do not commit the unpardonable sin.

“Note the following quote from Herbert W. Armstrong’s booklet, *‘Predestination... Does the Bible teach it?’*, copyrighted 1957, pages 14 and 15: ‘... predestination has... only to do with the TIME of your calling—whether you are called NOW, in this age, or later! Notice it in the passage in Romans 8:28–30: ‘For whom He did foreknow.’ How GREAT is God! If you are now called, God ‘foreknew’ you—**Knew you thousands of years before you were born!**... Those now being called, in this age, were foreknown, and PRE-destined to be called now—to be the FIRST to put their hope in Christ... God... DID decide far in advance which ones He would call in this FIRST calling, to be a priest or a king in His Kingdom—to have part in the saving of OTHERS!...’

“If YOU are called today to salvation—if YOU have been preordained and *predestined* to be called in this life—God KNOWS that you can make it and He is confident that you WILL make it...”

Many and Few in the Parable in Matthew 22 About the Wedding

We will now discuss in detail what Christ meant when He said twice in the book of Matthew that many are called, but few are chosen (compare Matthew 22:14; Matthew 20:16). To state right from the outset, *neither passage describes our call to salvation.*

We start with Christ’s saying in Matthew 22:14, by quoting the passage in context, beginning with verse 1:

“(1) And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:

(2) ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,

(3) and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

(4) Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’”

(5) But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.

(6) And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

(7) But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

(8) Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

(9) Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding."

(10) So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

(11) But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

(12) So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless.

(13) Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(14) For many are called, but few are chosen."

Notice, first of all, that in this parable, the Kingdom of heaven or the Kingdom of God is compared or likened to a king who arranged a marriage for his son. This is obviously referring to God the Father, the Highest in the Godhead and the Kingdom, who is arranging a marriage for His Son, Jesus Christ. It is Christ, the Bridegroom, who will marry His bride—the church—when He returns, as we clearly read in Revelation 19:7–8:

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, 'Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'..."

Next, note that the king sends out his servants to invite guests to the wedding. The servants have been rightly understood as God's disciples who, through the ages, have labored in God's Work to help proclaim the gospel and the need for repentance. But the guests were unwilling to attend the wedding ceremony. They are obviously different from the servants. Please also note that the "servants", mentioned in this

the Master, prepared for every good work."

In time, it will become manifest who are vessels of gold and silver—who are God's—and who are vessels of wood and clay who had never been called for salvation in this day and age. The same thought is expressed in Matthew 13:24–30, 47–50.

In conclusion, 2 Thessalonians and other passages addressing the "falling away" of potentially many, do not teach that God called many to salvation, and only very few will make it into the Kingdom, while most of those who were "called" were never "chosen." As we have explained before, those who are called in this day and age were predestined and chosen by God long before they were born to be called now, and God did not call them knowing that most would not succeed.

Still, the decision is ours and the warning that the love of many will grow cold is most certainly to be taken quite seriously. Many might come to repentance and to the receipt or the renewal of the Holy Spirit (which had been somewhat dormant in their lives) during the time of the Great Tribulation or just before or even during the Day of the Lord. Others, sadly, will not accept God's gift of repentance and may end up in the lake of fire. God calls us by giving us the opportunity to respond to the calling and to overcome and fulfill our potential to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Let us hope that those who fell or will fall away from the Truth which they had understood will come to their senses before it is too late.

Are They Lost?

We can therefore say that in the end time, there will be a falling away, because God's love in many will grow cold. But this does not have to mean that they lost the Holy Spirit and committed the unpardonable sin, unable and unwilling to ever repent again. As is the case of many who forsook the Truth after Herbert Armstrong's death, it is our hope that they were either not converted (even though they understood certain aspects of the Truth, as the Holy Spirit might have worked with them), while others did not lose the Holy Spirit, but allowed God's love in them to grow cold (not, to become thoroughly extinguished). For instance, the five foolish virgins do not have enough of God's Holy Spirit when Christ returns, but we do not read that they lost God's Holy Spirit completely, having committed the unpardonable sin. We do not read that they will be thrown into the lake of fire.

On the other hand, some might have committed the unpardonable sin, or will do so, in allowing themselves to fall for Satan's deception, so the warning is clearly there.

But as we have seen, the Bible also refers to those who fall away from the Truth without having been converted. They might have attended services of God's true Church for a while—sometimes for a long time—and might have adopted and accepted some of the Truth, but they were never truly convicted. They never received the Holy Spirit. They might have become baptized—many were—but God did not accept that baptism as He looked into their hearts. In short, they were never predestined to be called to salvation in this day and age. Still, they “attended” and were “part of” and were referred to as “members” of the Church.

We read in 2 Timothy 2:17–21:

“And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for

parable, do not describe God's angels, as the servants being sent out to invite the guests to the wedding, are mentioned twice, at different times, and seem to refer to different groups of individuals. First, in verse 3, “servants” are mentioned, and in verse 4, “other servants” are mentioned. If the reference was to angels, why would God send out different kinds of angels the second time, as if the first group had been incapable of fulfilling their job? Rather, a time sequence is described, when God sends out His disciples, at different times, throughout the ages, to invite people to have a relationship with Him. Emphasis is placed, after the first group of servants had been sent out, on the events occurring during the last days.

The guests, however, refuse steadfastly to come. They do NOT describe converted Christians or those having been invited and called to salvation. Rather, they are clearly identified, in verses 6 and 7, as murderers who killed the king's servants (proving that the servants could not have been angels who cannot die), and the king sent out his armies, killed them and burned their cities—apparently referring especially to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The *Benson Commentary* stated in regard to Matthew 22:7:

“This branch of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called God's armies, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance upon that once favourite, but now rebellious people.”

Barnes' Notes on the Bible states:

“This doubtless refers to the Jews and to Jerusalem. They were murderers, having slain the prophets; and God was about to send forth the armies of the Romans under his providential direction, and to burn up their city.”

The Jews at the time of Christ were never called to salvation. Neither were the houses of ancient Israel and Judah in the Old Testament, let alone the Gentile nations. Only very few are CALLED to salvation in this age.

The Parable in Matthew 21 About the Wicked Vinedressers

Christ's statement in Matthew 22 mirrors and echoes what He said in the parable of the wicked vinedressers, in Matthew 21:34–41:

“(34) Now when vintage-time drew near, he [the owner of the

vineyard] sent his servants to the vinedressers [to whom he had leased the vineyard], that they might receive its fruit.

(35) And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.

(36) Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

(37) Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son."

(38) But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance."

(39) So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

(40) Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

(41) They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.'

When we read that people are called, this does not *have* to mean, called to salvation. Even though the Greek word for "called" in Matthew 22:14 is "*kletos*" (see previous discussion), it and related words such as "*klesis*" and "*kaleo*", can refer to other aspects of "calling." We read, for example, that Paul was "called" ("*kletos*") an apostle (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1), and there are examples where the word "*kalero*" ("called") does not refer to a call to salvation at all (compare Matthew 2:7; 22:45; 23:9; Acts 4:18). *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* states that the word "*kaleo*," while "particularly" used for the "Divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption," can also be used "to call anyone, invite, summon."

Guests

In the parable of Matthew 22:1–14, the word for "called" is used in this more general sense.

We read in this parable (in verses 8 and 9) that the king sent out his servants to find others to invite as guests to the wedding, until the hall was filled with guests (verse 10). Again, the distinction between guests and servants is important and is being maintained. The fact that one of the guests does not have a wedding garment on, does not mean

Biblical Examples of Falling Away

Let us review a few more examples where the concept of falling away is described in the Bible.

In 1 Timothy 4:1–2, we read: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron..." The NASV, the *English Revised Version* and *Young's Literal Translation* say "fall away" for "depart." So, this Scripture says that "some" will fall away.

In addition, in Luke 8:13 we read: "But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." As we explained before, this category of people mentioned in Luke 8:13 addresses people who were never called; they never received the Holy Spirit, but they could understand and receive the word with joy and even believed for a while. But in times of temptation, they fell away by forgetting or rejecting that part of the Truth which they did understand and believe.

In Hebrews 3:12, Paul cautions the brethren by comparing them with the ancient Israelites of old who could not enter the Promised Land, by saying: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." The RSV and the *ESV* say here: "in falling away." But the Israelites of old did not have the Holy Spirit.

In Isaiah 1:2–4, the unconverted modern House of Israel is addressed by God as follows: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.' Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward." The *Coverdale Bible* states "fell away" instead of "rebelled." In fact, the word for "falling away" in 2 Thessalonians 2, "*apostasia*," means defection from the Truth, and related concepts are to remove, to depart, to forsake and to withdraw, and it can also relate to rebellion.

please read our free booklets, *“The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord”*; *“The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People”*; and *“The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire.”*

Now we are ready to answer the question as posed in this chapter more fully. When speaking of the coming “falling away,” it clearly addresses people who will be falling away from the Truth which they once understood. This passage does not describe the growth of a religious power, falsely claiming to be “Christian,” which never understood the Truth to begin with. Rather, it does describe the falling away of those who were “in” or “part of” the true Church of God. That would include *true converted Christians* who will fall away from the Truth. As we will point out below, even though we might *hope* for the better, their departure might very well be a *final decision*, leading to the unpardonable sin. Hebrews 6:4–6 is a sober reminder of that possibility.

It is true that the Bible does not use the term “GREAT” or “GREATER” falling away in 2 Thessalonians 2. However, it is also correct that it has been commonly understood that Paul had a GREAT apostasy in mind, which—relatively speaking—will be, in some way, greater than prior apostasies. For instance, the headline of the *New King James Bible* for 2 Thessalonians 2 reads, “The Great Apostasy.” The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments about the coming apostasy: “An aggressive and climactic revolt against God.”

Many Will Be Offended

For instance, we read the following in Matthew 24:10, 12 about the end time: “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another... And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” The “love” which grows cold is the *agape* love—the love of God given to us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). The reference here is to converted Christians. The word “offended” in Verse 10 is rendered “fall away” in the *English Standard Version (ESV)*; the *New American Standard Version (NASV)*; the *Amplified Bible*; and the *International Standard Version (ISV)*.

So, are those correct then who teach that even though many are called to the Truth, only the few are chosen to stay faithful, while the many become “offended” and “fall away” by rejecting eternal life?

that the guest suddenly had become a servant unworthy of salvation. In passing, the word “guest” (“*anakeimai*” in Greek) is used in Mark 5:40, describing the dead girl lying on the bed. The word normally describes a guest reclining, lying or sitting at a table.

We read the following explanation about the guest without proper apparel in the *Benson Commentary*:

“To explain this, it must be observed, it was usual in the eastern countries to present the guests at marriages, and other solemnities, with garments wherein they were to appear, and the number of them was esteemed an evidence of the wealth and magnificence of the giver. This king, therefore, having invited so many from the lanes, and hedges, and highways, who could never have provided themselves with proper raiment in which to make their appearance at this marriage-feast, according to the custom of the country, must be supposed to have ordered each, on his applying to the ruler of the feast, to be presented with a proper garment, that they might all be clothed in a manner becoming the magnificence of the solemnity. But this man either neglected to apply, or refused to accept and put on, the garment offered him, which was the circumstance that rendered his conduct inexcusable.”

The *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* comes to the same conclusion, stating:

“The language here is drawn from the following remarkable passage in [Zephaniah] 1:7, 8:—‘Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.’ The custom in the East of presenting festival garments (see [Genesis] 45:22; [2 Kings] 5:22), even though [not] clearly proved, is certainly presupposed here.”

We explain the following in our before-mentioned booklet, on pages 53–54:

“The guests, mentioned in verses 3 to 8, seem to describe Old Testament Israel—the physical descendants of Abraham—as well as the religious leadership at the time of Christ’s First Coming. We need to understand that Old Testament Israel was never offered eternal salvation. Still, the Bible says that they were all called to the wedding (compare Luke 13:34); but not in the sense that they were ‘called’ to

eternal salvation—just as ‘guests.’ They were called, on a physical level, to have a relationship with God, but they even rejected that kind of a relationship (compare Matthew 21:33–46, especially verses 43 and 45, clarifying that Christ was speaking of the Pharisees and chief priests). Luke 13:34 reveals that Christ wanted often to gather the children of Jerusalem together, but they were unwilling, rather choosing to kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to them.

“Please also note Matthew 8:11–12: ‘And I say to you that many will come from east to west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Christ is addressing here the Pharisees and chief priests, calling them the ‘sons of the kingdom.’ But they were never called to salvation. The fact that they will be cast into outer darkness does not mean that they have committed the unpardonable sin. It means, however, that they will not enter the kingdom of God at Christ’s First Coming (compare the parallel passage in Luke 13:28–30, showing that they, who thought that they would be ‘first’ in the kingdom, will actually be ‘last.’) They will still get their chance to qualify at a later time..”

“In that sense, many, including the modern houses of Israel and Judah, are ‘called’ to a physical relationship with God, but few are chosen today to have a spiritual relationship with God that leads to eternal life.”

We do not deny the fact that this parable also has spiritual applications and can be seen as describing a “member” or better a “guest” attending Church services who refuses to repent, which would be shown by his blatant refusal to be dressed with a white garment of righteousness. In that case, his being cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, would indicate the final fate of this person who refused to repent and who showed this by his rebellious attitude, having committed the unpardonable sin.

But in focusing on the obvious meaning of the parable, it tells us that many are called for certain tasks and even for a physical relationship with God, but only few (the firstfruits) had been chosen before time began to be called today for eternal life. To put it differently, out of the many called for a physical relationship with God, only few were called and chosen (“*eklektos*” in the Greek) to have a spiritual relationship with Him.

the false prophet, and saying that these are spirits of demons which perform signs and go out to the kings of the earth and the whole world to gather them at Armageddon. Notice, technically, it is the demons who perform signs and go out to the kings and the world; we do not read here that it is the beast himself who does so (in fact, he won’t go out to the kings of the world to assemble them at Armageddon). But when speaking of the false prophet, we find the repeated expression that HE will perform those signs, of course due to Satan’s help and influence (as the two witnesses will perform signs and wonders due to God’s help and influence, note Revelation 11:5–6).

The false prophet is also described in Ezekiel 28:1–7. Some have questioned that the person in Ezekiel 28:1, referred to as the prince of Tyre, is in fact the false prophet, and claim that it is the beast. They are wrong. The parallels to 2 Thessalonians, referring to the false prophet, are obvious. In both passages, the personage claims to be God (or a god). We would also like to point out that Herbert Armstrong clearly taught as well that the prince of Tyre describes a religious leader in our time (compare “Mysteries of the Ages,” page 82, hard cover version).

The beast is nowhere described as claiming to be God (or a god). In fact, it is the beast who considers the false prophet as his god (Daniel 11:36–39; Habakkuk 1:11, *Authorized Version*).

Some claim that the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2 is the beast, as the beast will be worshipped. That is a false association. First of all, it says that the beast and the image of the beast will be worshipped (Revelation 13:4, 8,15; 14:9, 11; 19:20). The image of the beast describes a religious power, but could also include the end-time representative of that power, as well as a “speaking” statue placed at or in the temple of God (such as a statute of the “Virgin Mary” or of “Christ Himself”). But the concept of being worshipped does not have to mean at all that people consider the person or object being worshipped as “God” (or a god). For instance, in Revelation 13:4, the beast which is “worshipped” is the Roman Empire—not the individual representing the last revival of the Roman Empire in the end time. In addition, who can doubt that many Germans “worshipped” Adolf Hitler—but they did not consider him to be God or a god.

So, we find that the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God, is none other than the false prophet. For further information and proof,

will be suppressed, and the man of sin will occupy the temple—the inner sanctuary (2 Thessalonians 2:4, as the word “temple” should be translated). In fact, Christ warned His disciples not to believe that He would be in the “inner rooms” (Matthew 24:26), as it would be the man of sin who would sit there. As the temple will be built for the honor of God, the Bible does refer to it as the temple of God, even though it would be polluted. The second temple, which had been expanded by Herod, and which also had been polluted by the money changers and others, was still referred to as the house of God the Father (cp. Mark 11:15–17; John 2:14–17).

We would also like to point out that the Church, under Mr. Armstrong, clearly taught the existence of a literal physical temple of God prior to Christ’s return. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote the following about the man of sin, in the *Plain Truth* of June 1967:

“This European power, resurrecting for a VERY short while the Roman Empire, will take over the city of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2.) They will take the *Temple*, and plant the palace of their headquarters there. With this coming military leader, pictured in Revelation 17 as the symbolic ‘beast,’ will be a supreme religious leader, called ‘the False Prophet’ [Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10] and the ‘man of sin.’ So will you turn next to II Thessalonians 2:3–4: ‘Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day’ — the Day of the Lord, verse 2 — ‘shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and THAT MAN OF SIN be revealed, the SON OF PERDITION; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’ So there will *have to be the Temple there!*” (Also compare our free booklet, “*How Can We Know That Christ’s Return Is Near?*”)

The False Prophet

As we see from the quote above, Mr. Armstrong also clearly taught that the man of sin is the false prophet, not the beast. This is correct. The false prophet will be able to deceive the people through satanic signs and wonders (compare Revelation 19:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). There is only one vague reference in the Bible to the beast and demonic signs, in Revelation 16:13–14, speaking of demons or unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of Satan the Dragon, the beast, and

To stick with the obvious meaning of the parable, the emphasis is not on members of the Church of God, but on guests—unconverted people who are not called for salvation, but who are called to have a physical relationship with God—specifically, but not exclusively, referring to the modern descendants of the houses of Israel and Judah, who, like the Pharisees of old, should have known better.

God expects the modern descendants of the houses of Israel and Judah to keep His commandments—at least by following the letter of the Law. There is no excuse for breaking the Law of the Ten Commandments. Even though most are not yet called to salvation, they ARE called to have a special physical relationship with God, as was also the case with Old Testament Israel. Their refusal to keep the Law and to even appear before God as “guests” to the wedding, with dignity and respect for Him, His Son and His servants, is inexcusable. And as God destroyed ancient Jerusalem by the ancient Romans as a consequence, so He will destroy modern Jerusalem and the modern cities of the USA, the UK, Canada and other English-speaking nations through the modern Romans—the last European revival of the ancient Roman Empire.

We have shown so far that those who are called to salvation today were elected or chosen to be called before the foundation of the world—before time began. We debunked the idea that some would be called first, and only later, after having proven themselves to be worthy, they would become chosen. Rather, those who are called to salvation today had been chosen long ago by God to be called in this age.

We also said before that the “Bible does not teach that God calls many today to salvation, but that most reject their calling and that only a few will respond and become chosen and faithful. If that were true, then those who have rejected their spiritual calling to eternal salvation would have committed the unpardonable sin—and this is decisively not correct. Today, God only *calls and chooses* the few (compare 1 Corinthians 1:26–29), and when He brings them to true conversion, they, for the most part, will stay loyal to Him (although it is possible, that some, who are *truly* called to salvation, will commit the unpardonable sin).”

We discussed the parable in Matthew 22:1–14 and explained that the guests who had been invited to the wedding were never called or

chosen to salvation at that time; they were unconverted people who were simply “called” to have a physical relationship with God—specifically, but not exclusively, referring to the modern descendants of the houses of Israel and Judah, who, like the Pharisees of old, should have known better.

Many and Few in Matthew 20 About the Landowner and His Laborers

What, then, is the meaning of Christ’s statement in Matthew 20:16, where He ended His parable by saying: “For many are called, but few are chosen”? This phrase is only used in Matthew 22:14 and in Matthew 20:16. The Greek words for “called” and “chosen” are “*kletos*” and “*eklektos*.”

Let us read the entire parable, in context, beginning with Matthew 19:27–30:

“(27) Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’

(28) So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

(29) And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

(30) But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Continuing with Matthew 20:1–16:

“(1) For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

(2) Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

(3) And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

(4) and said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.” So they went.

(5) Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

(6) And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?”

lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish...”

So we see, both events—the falling away and the coming of the lawless one—appear at approximately the same time. In passing, the rendition of verses 6 and 7 in the *New King James Bible* is unfortunate. It states there: “And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He [or “he,” note the Margin] who now restrains will do so until He [or “he”] is taken out of the way.”

The correct rendering of verses 3–8 should be: “... that Day [of Christ’s return] will not come unless... the man of sin is revealed... And now you know what is holding it [the Day] down [or back] that he [the man of sin, or He, Jesus Christ] may be revealed in his [or His, i.e. God’s] own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains (holds it back) [will do so] *until he comes from the midst [of the apostasy]*. And then the lawless one will be revealed...”

It is *the man of sin who restrains until he is manifested*. The Day of Christ’s return can only happen after God has allowed the man of sin to manifest himself as the human religious *leader of the apostasy*—working *openly* and *no longer in secret*. What is being held back is the *full mystery of lawlessness*, which is restrained today.

Before addressing the coming falling away in detail, we need to show from the Bible who the man of sin is... as there is tremendous confusion on this issue. Many claim that there won’t be a temple in which the man of sin sits; others claim that the man of sin (wherever he sits) is the beast (calling him Antichrist). They are wrong on all counts.

A Third Temple Before Christ’s Return

First of all, there will HAVE to be a literal temple in Jerusalem, prior to Christ’s return. Passages like Revelation 11:1–2 and Zechariah 6:15 (in the *Authorized Version*) reveal that a temple will be built. Passages such as Psalm 79:1 and Jeremiah 51:11; 50:28 show that the temple will be defiled, desecrated and polluted. Ezekiel 8:5–6, 14–16 describes this desecration even further, and so does Daniel 8:11–14; 11:31; 12:11. The Jews will bring animal sacrifices at the temple, but they

in verse 3 and verses 10–12, referring to a falling away from the Truth in the end time? We read:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [of Christ’s return] will not come unless the falling away comes first... [regarding] those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned [or judged, compare *Neue Lutherbibel 2009*] who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

When Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong died in 1986, the human leader of the [now defunct] Worldwide Church of God, a new administration took over and slowly, but surely, began to change all fundamental doctrines of the Church. They began doing so clandestinely, so that many, at first, did not even recognize that “changes” were made. But then, the changes were introduced full-speed and with tremendous force, but by then, many had already given in and had blinded themselves to the Truth, unwilling to reject, based on the Bible, the falsity of what was being introduced, and instead followed the new administration blindly to perish together with it. The point is, at that time, a tremendous falling away from the Truth had taken place, and many had become victims of that Satanic deception.

But 2 Thessalonians does not speak about THAT event, even though it was clearly a forerunner of what is going to happen. The end-time falling away, just prior to Christ’s return, will be accompanied by the appearance of the “man of sin” or the “lawless one”; in fact, it is largely through the man of sin who will bring about, under Satan’s influence, the final falling away or apostasy.

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 in context:

“... that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

The Coming of the Lawless One

Continuing in verses 8–10: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the

(7) They said to him, “Because no one hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.”

(8) So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, “Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.”

(9) And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

(10) But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.

(11) And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,

(12) saying, “These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.”

(13) But he answered one of them and said, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?”

(14) Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

(15) Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?”

(16) So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

In this parable, the landowner is describing God the Father who, through Christ, hires laborers to work in His vineyard. The laborers describe, for the most part, true Christians (compare Matthew 9:37–38). They all receive a reward at the end.

Many commentaries feel that the statement in Matthew 20:16, “For many are called, but few chosen,” was added by the translator. Some claim that it is genuine. Regardless, the statement cannot be used to show that many are called by God for salvation in this age, and that only few are chosen, while the “many” fall away from the Truth. In fact, none of them is described in this parable as falling away.

The context of Christ’s words, that the last will be first and the first last, and that many are called, but few are chosen, is one of timing (when someone is called in this life) and of different functions and offices in the Church and potentially in God’s Kingdom. While all converted Christians have been called by God to salvation, not everyone

in the Church has the same office or function. Some are chosen to have different functions. Some are chosen to be apostles, evangelists, pastors, elders or deacons, while others have not been chosen for such functions. Also, insofar as the future is concerned, some who were only called and chosen a few years prior to their death, might have a higher position in the Kingdom of God than some who “grew up in the Church” and stayed in the Church throughout their lives.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers even suggests regarding “But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first” (in Matthew 19:30):

“... unless their spirit should become other than it was in its self-seeking and its self-complacence, there might be an unexpected change of position, and the first might become the last.”

The *Pulpit Commentary* wrote: “The Lord may have had in view the case of... Paul, who was called late, and yet laboured more abundantly than all that were before him.”

Regarding Matthew 20:1–16, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* writes: “It has reference to rewards, and the meaning may be thus expressed: ‘Rewards shall be bestowed in my kingdom, or on my followers, in the same manner as they were by a certain householder – in such a way that the last shall be equal to the first, and the first last.’”

Jamieson Fausset and Brown agree, stating:

“This parable [in Matthew 20], recorded only by Matthew, is closely connected with the end of the nineteenth chapter, being spoken with reference to Peter’s question as to how it should fare with those who, like himself, had left all for Christ. It is designed to show that while they would be richly rewarded, a certain equity would still be observed towards later converts and workmen in His service.”

Addressing the further statement by Christ in Matthew 20:16 (if genuine), that many are called but few are chosen, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains Christ’s words as follows:

“Many are called into my kingdom; they come and labor as I command them; many of them are comparatively unknown and obscure; yet they are real Christians, and shall all receive the proper reward. A few I have chosen for higher stations in the church. I have endowed them with apostolic gifts or with superior talents, and suited them for wider usefulness. They may not be as long in the vineyard as others;

Chapter 5

How Are We to Understand 2 Thessalonians 2?

We pointed out previously that those who are called to salvation today were elected or chosen to be called before the foundation of the world—before time began. We debunked the idea that some would be called first, and only later, after having proven themselves to be worthy, they would become chosen. Rather, those who are called to salvation today had been chosen long ago by God to be called in this age. We also showed that the statement “many are called, but few are chosen” does NOT refer to a calling of many to salvation, but that only the few (“the chosen”) would make it into the Kingdom, while the many will fall away.

When God foreknew, predestined and elected or chose someone, before time began, to be called to eternal salvation in this life, He expected that person to remain faithful. Many, though, who may think that they are called to salvation by God, are not truly called at all (Matthew 7:21–23; Matthew 15:13). God does not call many to salvation today; He just calls the few or the firstfruits. The calling of the vast majority of mankind will occur later, during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment. God did not call the few in this age, knowing that out of “the few,” “the many” would fail and depart from the Truth and leave the Church, and that only the ‘chosen ones’ would stay and make it into the Kingdom. Those who come to the Church and then leave the Church were, in all likelihood, never called to salvation in this age, even though we must say that, sadly, some might have been called to salvation and in departing from the faith, after having received the Holy Spirit, they lost it again and have committed the unpardonable sin.

A Falling Away From the Truth

How then do we explain the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2, especially

their race may be sooner run; but I have chosen to honor them in this manner, and I have a right to do it. I injure no one, and have a right to do what I will with my own."

None of this takes away from the Truth that God has foreknown and predestined those whom He truly calls to salvation in this age.

The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13

Some have tried to use the "parable of the sower" in Matthew 13 to say that many are called for salvation in this age, but only few are chosen to remain faithful, while the "many" fall away from the Truth.

Let us read the entire parable in context, beginning with Matthew 13:3:

"(3) Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: 'Behold, a sower went out to sow.

(4) And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

(5) Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

(6) But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

(7) And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

(8) But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

(9) He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

We then read that the disciples asked Christ about the meaning of the parable, who first responded by saying that the masses would not understand the meaning, but only those whose eyes would be opened. He stated that the eyes of His disciples had been opened so that they could see (verse 16), and He then continued to explain to them the meaning, beginning in verse 18:

"(18) Therefore hear the parable of the sower:

(19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

(20) But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

(21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

(22) Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

(23) But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

There are other parables which express the same Truth; that is, that some are called to salvation, while others may listen and even attend the Church for a while, but they were never called to salvation. Compare the parable of the tares and the wheat (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43) and of the dragnet with the good and bad fish (Matthew 13:47–50).

Only One in Four Is Called

In the Parable of the Sower, the seed—the “word of the kingdom”—is sown by the sower—God the Father, through Jesus Christ and His disciples. Today, God’s Church has the commission to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness. And as the parable points out, the reaction of those who hear the word is quite different. In the parable, four types of people are mentioned who all hear the Word of God.

The first person hears the word, but does not understand it. The word was sown in his heart (compare Mark 4:15), but Satan comes to take away the word out of his heart, lest he should believe and be saved (compare Luke 8:12). He might have retained the words which he had heard in his heart for a while, but did not understand and believe them. He was not called to salvation.

The second person receives the word on stony places, without any root in himself. He immediately receives it with joy and even believes for a while (compare Luke 8:13), but when tribulation comes, immediately he stumbles. When the sun is up, he withers away because he has no root (compare Mark 4:6). He reminds us of the man who built his house on sand, not on the Rock, Jesus Christ, and when the wind blows, the house crashes (Matthew 7:24–27). Christ told those

guests, but they refused to actually participate in God’s calling to a personal relationship.

This parable has much broader application than just the many who rejected or the few who followed Jesus during His ministry. The Work of God and Jesus Christ, as Head of the Body, the Church (compare Ephesians 1:22–23), has continued—and so it does in our time and will into the future of this age!

The opportunity that God is now presenting is a calling to be among the firstfruits of salvation—called “a better resurrection” in Hebrews 11:35 (compare John 5:24).

When Jesus returns to the earth to powerfully remove the rule of Satan and his many demonic followers, He will establish the government of God—God’s glorious and everlasting Kingdom! When He does this, He will not be alone; there will be a precious few with Him:

“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are CALLED, CHOSEN, and FAITHFUL” (Revelation 17:14).

thing that must occur—we must then bear the fruit of righteousness. In this process, as we continue in our calling to follow Jesus Christ, we have this assurance—as written by Paul:

“[B]eing confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

We find this additional confirmation:

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:28–30).

As an example of this promise being fulfilled, let us consider the apostles of Jesus Christ—note what Jesus taught them:

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16); Also, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19).

Judas failed in his calling as an apostle and was replaced by Matthias to become among those specially chosen to rule over the twelve Tribes of Israel once Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth (compare Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21:14).

Fulfilling Your Calling

Paul fulfilled his calling, and he knew he was chosen to receive eternal life in God’s Kingdom:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

While the many heard Jesus preach and saw His works, most are the ones who fulfilled His parable found in Matthew 22—invited

who believed in Him and even believed Him that they would only be His disciples if they were to abide in His Word (John 8:30–31). He then pointed out that they were not His disciples and not of God; that they were unable to listen to His words; and that they were of their father, the devil (compare verses 43–44, 47). Likewise, the second person in the Parable of the Sower did not abide in Christ’s words either; he was not “of God”; he was not truly Christ’s disciple. He was not called to salvation.

The third person hears the word, but he becomes unfruitful when the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of life (compare Luke 8:14) choke the word. While we read in Mark 4:7 that he yields no crop or fruit, Luke 8:14 says that he brings “no fruit to maturity.” He does not bring the right kind of fruit which God desires. He does not bring fruit worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8) and fruit for eternal life (John 4:36). He is not one of Christ’s disciples because he does not bear “much fruit” (John 15:8). He was not called to salvation either.

Only the fourth person is the one who was predestined and chosen before time began to be called to salvation in this life. He receives the word on good ground (he built his house on the Rock); he hears the word with a noble and good heart and keeps it (compare Luke 8:15). He understands the word; and bears fruit with patience (compare Luke 8:15). The word fell on good ground and it yields a crop that springs up, increases and produces (compare Mark 4:8). Even then, some of the persons in the fourth category produce more fruit than others; their reward will be in accordance with their works.

Only the fourth person was predestined to be called and chosen to salvation in this life, as all the conditions were present to guarantee that he or she could make it into the Kingdom of God. God was not caught by surprise when the first three persons “fell away,” although He had allegedly, as some say, predestined them to be called in this age. Or, worse yet, that He knew that they would fall away although He had predestined them before time began to be called in this age—before all others. This is truly a preposterous idea.

When God foreknew, predestined and elected or chose someone, before time began, to be called to eternal salvation in this life, He expected that person to remain faithful. Many, though, who may

think that they are called to salvation by God, are not truly called at all (Matthew 7:21–23; Matthew 15:13).

God does not call many today to salvation; He just calls the few or the firstfruits. The calling of the vast majority of mankind will occur later, during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment. God did not call the few in this age, knowing that out of “the few,” “the many” would fail and depart from the Truth and leave the Church, and that only the “chosen ones” would stay and make it into the Kingdom. Those who come to the Church and then leave the Church were, in all likelihood, never called to salvation in this age, even though we must say that, sadly, some might have been called to salvation and in departing from the faith, after having received the Holy Spirit, they lost it again and have committed the unpardonable sin. Others might not have lost the Holy Spirit, but might have allowed it to grow cold (note the discussion below).

When YOU are called in this age, God has predestined YOU and elected or chosen YOU, long before you were born; long before the foundation of the world; long before any physical creation and before time began, to call YOU TODAY—not to fail, but to succeed.

“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–9; 18–23), Jesus speaks of those who hear “the word of the kingdom” (verse 19). He then explains this parable to His disciples showing how some hear and don’t understand; some readily understand but fade away when trials arise; some understand but then choose what this world offers; some (the few) hear, understand and—like Christ—bear “fruit” (compare Galatians 5:22–23).

As the Parable of the Sower reveals, being “called” is a first step in gaining entrance into the Kingdom of God. We should understand that God alone does this. Being a Christian has its beginning point with God’s calling—something that Jesus Christ emphatically taught:

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44); “And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father”” (John 6:65).

However, as we explained before, the first three types of people in the Parable of the Sower were not really “called” to salvation.

Paul teaches, “that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Again, Paul reminds us, “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Bearing Fruit

Being called into the knowledge of the Truth of God is not the only

ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matthew 13:11–17).

Jesus asked His disciples, “...Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matthew 16:13). They responded with various answers, and Jesus then asked His disciples, “...But who do you say that I am?” (verse 15).

Peter’s response was this: “...You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (verse 16).

God Must Reveal

Jesus then makes this profoundly important statement—showing that understanding of this kind came through God’s revelation:

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven’” (verse 17).

We should also note what Jesus further instructed these disciples concerning His own identity and the revelation that was given to them at that time (that would change once Jesus Christ had died and then was resurrected by God the Father):

“Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ” (verse 20).

As the record of the New Testament shows, Jesus had specifically chosen twelve disciples—along with others—to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God (compare Luke 6:12–16; 9:1–6). Through the teaching and the many miraculous things done by both Jesus and His disciples, many people both heard and saw; yet, it was only the few who continued with Jesus:

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (John 6:66–69).

Rejecting Your Calling

Others had the opportunity to follow Christ, but they, like the many, rejected it. Such an example of a person “called” is found in Matthew 19:16–22:

Chapter 3

How Do I Make My Calling and Election Sure?

The book of 2 Peter is addressed to Christians who are called out of the world and who understand the promise made to them to become glorified members of God’s Family (compare 2 Peter 1:1–4). Even though this letter was written to the early members of the Church of God, it also directly applies to Christians throughout the ages. Peter writes to encourage the readers to develop their conversion by producing spiritual fruits. He then makes a summary statement, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10–11). This raises a question that all Christians need to answer for themselves, “How can I make my calling and election sure?”

It is a privilege to be called in this age. Even though the plan of God involves bringing many to salvation, there are only a few who are called now. In our booklet, *Are You Predestined to be Saved?* we highlight the fact that only a relatively few number of people are called today.

This should help us understand how special it is to be among the called and elect today. Knowing that we have such a tremendous opportunity to understand and live by the Truth should motivate us to take advantage of the gift of the Holy Spirit with which we have been entrusted. To be in a position to “make our call and election sure” is very special. Therefore, it is vital to clearly understand what it takes to follow through with our calling and succeed in fulfilling the plan that God has in store for us individually.

The instructions that Peter writes preceding the admonition to make our call and election sure serve as a good starting point. He describes the general characteristics to develop on our Christian journey. Diligence, faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance,

godliness, brotherly kindness, and love serve as the essential building blocks of spiritual fruit (compare 2 Peter 1:5–9). The application of those efforts is also important to consider. The objects of our faith, virtue, knowledge, and so on matter! To what end should we direct our efforts to make our call and election sure?

This chapter will focus on three things to help direct our efforts towards bringing fruit to maturity. The first is about staying grounded in the Truth. The second is to maintain endurance. The third is to repent from sin by becoming and staying obedient to God’s commandments.

Again: The Parable of the Sower

The Parable of the Sower gives us valuable lessons. But first, let us recall that even though four categories of people are described in that parable, only the people of the fourth category were called for salvation.

Still, the reaction of the first three categories of people who heard God’s Word can show us how we, who *are* called for salvation, must not behave, while the reaction of the fourth category illustrates to us how we are to behave in response to God’s calling.

Lack of Diligence

In the first example, we read about a lack of diligence to develop knowledge and understanding of the Truth. “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside” (Matthew 13:19). Applying this to us who are called to salvation, when we first hear the Word of God, it might be a challenge to believe what we hear because it is so contrary to the teachings of the world! But if we don’t completely understand something at first, it should compel us to dig in and learn more about it. If we willingly neglect to learn more about the instruction of the Bible when something doesn’t make perfect sense right away, the Truth could eventually be “snatched” away from us. To prevent that from happening, we need to be dedicated to continual learning. Responding to God’s calling involves diligence in studying and learning so that we develop knowledge and understanding of the Truth.

We must have an open mind to believe what the Bible instructs. The Bereans give us a great example to follow. “Then the brethren

Chapter 4

Only Few Can Understand

Matthew 22:14 summarizes the Parable of the Wedding Feast spoken by Jesus Christ in which He teaches about the Kingdom of God and about the accountability that people have when God offers them salvation—that is, eternal life (compare Matthew 24:1–14).

Why in Parables?

Contrary to what many teach and who say that parables were used by Christ to make His teaching more clear, just the opposite is true. The Bible addresses this:

“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 13:34–35).

In a previous account, His disciples directly asked Jesus why He taught the people with parables. The answer is revealing:

“He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your

immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men" (Acts 17:10–12). In this example, the love for the Truth is clearly evident. When the Bereans received the instruction from Paul and Silas, they got busy researching to make sure they understood the Truth comprehensively. This is our job too.

Having a love for the Truth also factors into the development of our understanding. Without having a love for the Truth, we will not care enough about it to dedicate ourselves to learning. To be on guard against the evil powers of the world now and in the future, having love for the Truth is essential. We know that a time will come when deception will abound upon the earth, even more than today. The ones who do not have a love for the Truth will be deceived and fall away because the passing pleasures of sin are too compelling (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12). When we love the Truth, we care enough to develop our understanding of it, and also become compelled to live by it. The Truth forms the foundation for the correct development of the fruit of the Spirit.

Lack of Endurance

In the second example in the Parable of the Sower, we see a failure that comes from a lack of endurance. "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:20–21). Truly, the teaching of the Bible is very exciting! For some, the excitement that initially comes at the start does not develop any further. In those circumstances, the willingness to live by God's Word ceases and becomes unfruitful. This can also happen to those who are called for salvation. When trials come, they lack the endurance to continue to accept and live by the Truth with a joyful heart.

When we are called by God, it is for a grand purpose—to become

glorified members of His Family. With such an eternal end result, endurance is absolutely essential. To stop in the development of Christian character after the excitement fades leaves the opportunity of a lifetime unfulfilled. “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:35–39). In this passage, we see the contrast between Christian endurance and drawing back into the world. The warning is that when we don’t have endurance, we put ourselves in a precarious position, at risk of failing to live in accordance with our call. Working towards an eternal result requires that we continue our efforts until the time of fulfillment—a lifetime endeavor!

Putting It Into Practice

The third aspect of making our call and election sure involves applying these aspects in practical ways in our life. We must work to overcome the world and the way of sin. Returning to the Parable of the Sower, we can see the attribute of the final failure. “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). In this example, the ones who receive the word do not apply the teachings of the Bible to repent. But rather, the carnal pleasures of sin prevent these people from developing the spiritual fruit required of a Christian and draws them back into the world. To some, sin has too great of an influence, causing them to neglect the requirement to live righteously. For those who are called to salvation, they must continue to live a life of repentance even after their baptism.

Repentance from sin and overcoming the world put the love of the Truth into practice. This is how we truly develop the spiritual fruit required of us. If we love the Christian Way of Life, even at the threat of rejection from the world, we choose to actively please God with the way we live. It brings God an abundance of joy to see people repent

from sin and choose obedience when faced with the temptations of the world (compare Luke 15:10). Obedience is absolutely essential for Christians who desire to make their calling and election sure.

Answering the calling from God the Father who draws us to Jesus Christ involves continuously making tremendous changes in life (compare John 6:44–45, John 6:65, John 14:6). It takes a life-long commitment to learn the Truth and live the way of righteousness, following the example of Christ. This is not to say that Christians must live a perfect life in order to make their call and election sure. As human beings, we will slip from time to time. While we do not try to sin and make every effort not to sin, we will still stumble (compare Romans 7:15–25, 1 John 1:8). When that happens and we realize what we have done, we confess our sins and God will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). We put our endurance to work and repent because we love the Truth. To answer our calling, we demonstrate an attitude of perseverance to live in a way that pleases God, because we love Him and His commandments. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). By continually working to understand and live by the Truth, endure in our adherence to those teachings, and overcome the sin, we will receive the promise, having an entrance supplied to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of God.

Those Who Are Called

The fourth category of people mentioned in the Parable of the Sower are the only ones who ARE called for salvation in this life, who have a good ground or a willingness to accept God’s Word; who hear and understand God’s Word; and who act upon that understanding in obeying God’s Word, thereby producing fruit. But even then, some produce more fruit than others; and their reward will be in accordance with their works.