

The Last
Shall be First
and
the First Last

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THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD. The information provided is for the benefit of former members of the congregations of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), and of current and prospective members of God's Church.

In the Bible we find many enigmatic sayings and one of them is the following: "The last shall be first and the first last." What Christ meant when He spoke those words has given rise to many interpretations but can we really get to know what He really meant? If we can, it will be by the Bible itself, the sure Word of God, giving us the answer. Let's together examine what information is made available to us in the Bible that would clarify the meaning of this mysterious saying.

Preamble

Please Note: All comments in brackets [] or in parentheses () as well as highlighted text (bolded and/or in blue) are from the author of this study. Bible quotations are in maroon.

I think it is essential to clarify the question of the “Holy Spirit” before we begin this study. If we say that who or what is the “Holy Spirit” is the question that needs to be answered, we are starting from the assumption that there exists such a being as the Holy Spirit and that it is a separate and distinct being from God and the Word. The question which should be asked is who are the beings the Bible tell us are holy, whose composition is spirit and who have existed eternally? Either the Bible plainly tells us who are the separate and distinct beings that existed from all eternity who created all things (spirit beings and the material universe) or we have no way of getting an answer to our question.

The Holy Spirits of the God Family

The Bible tells us in Gen 1:1 that:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word translated “God” is “Eloheem” which is the plural form of “Eloah which means “God”. The word “Eloheem” refers to “gods.” It is a uniplural noun like family, group, team, etc. In the beginning, there was therefore more than one God being in existence but how many were there?

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was God and there was another being with God who was also God, the Word. How can these two beings both be God; isn't that impossible?

The word God indicates the kind of existence of these 2 beings: their nature is to be God in the same way that all human beings have the same human nature. However, having the same nature does not mean that all human beings constitute a single being; indeed, they are all separate and distinct beings with their own personalities. God and the Word have in common the same nature or, level and type of existence, but they are separate and distinct beings just like all human beings who have the same human nature are separate and distinct beings.

God the Father

We read in the Bible that God became a father when the Word became flesh (Php 2:5-8) by being born of woman after having been conceived in the virgin Mary by the holy spirit being called God (Luke 1:35). God from that point on became God the Father and the Word, who was born as the flesh-and-blood Jesus of Nazareth became God's Son or the Son of God. He was both fully God (his father was God and fully human (his mother was the virgin Mary).

Jesus was God the Father's only begotten son at the time when He was conceived in Mary's womb but He was not to be the only one begotten of the Father. God the Father is the holy spirit being in the Godhead that calls men to salvation.

Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Joh 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou [God the Father] gavest me have I lost none.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God the Word and Spokesman

The Bible term for being called is to be spiritually begotten by God the Father (1Pe 1:3). When we are begotten, we become a spiritual embryo that can be born again as a glorified spirit being with eternal life. Those begotten of the holy spirit God the Father who follow their calling are then able to come to the holy spirit being called the Word and Spokesman (John 6:44; 65; 18:9) who then teaches them. The glorified Jesus-Christ as God the Father's Word and Spokesman is the holy spirit being that works in the minds of God the Father's called and chosen ones.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Jesus had to first be glorified for it to be possible for Christians to have access to the holy spirit called the Word and Spokesman because the glorified Christ is the holy spirit being who works in the minds of God's saints (John 14:17) in the same way that Satan is the evil spirit that works in the minds of the children of disobedience (Eph2:2).

Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he [Christ] dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [On the day of Pentecost, it would be in them and in all true Christians.]

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [Satan] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The holy spirit God the Father calls men and those who follow their calling are then taught by the holy spirit called the Word and God the Father's Spokesman.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Ghost

The expression "Holy Ghost" used in the Bible is in error as there are no ghosts in the Godhead but rather 2 beings that are holy (John 17:11; Isa 6:3) and spirit (John 4:24).

Joh 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit**: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

These 2 God beings who are holy and spirit are the holy spirit beings of the God family who existed in the beginning at the creation of all things.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

And, the Word who was with God is before all things i.e., *nothing* existed before He created them whether made of spirit or matter.

Col 1:15 **[Christ]** Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him [the Word who became Jesus-Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

In the beginning before anything either physical or spiritual was created, there was God and the Word who existed before all things and no other being is mentioned as having existed with them. There is no bib-

lical evidence that there ever existed a third, separate and distinct personage in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit” who dwelt in eternity with God and the Word.

God is a Family

Throughout the Bible we can find many verses which clearly indicates the existence of family relations between God and the Word and God’s called, chosen and faithful.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but o to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

God is clearly a family in which many can be ultimately born again by a resurrection from the dead to eternal, glorified spirit life in God’s Kingdom.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [\[God’s Son\]](#) might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Col 1:18 And he [\[the glorified Christ\]](#) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ was the first to be born again by a resurrection from the dead to be followed by many brethren.

Bible Writing Convention

The practice in the Bible has been to simply use the expression “the Holy Spirit” without indicating which God personage in the Godhead the expression represents. Over time, because of this practice, just about everybody has come to believe that the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct God being in the Godhead but, there is no single verse or group of verses in the Bible that prove the existence of such a third being in the Godhead. The words “holy” and “spirit” are adjectives that describe the nature of

God the Father and of God the Word i.e., they are holy beings made of spirit.

Whenever we encounter the expressions the “Holy Spirit” or simply the “Holy Spirit” in the Bible we must look at the context to determine of which holy spirit being of the Godhead the Bible is talking about: the holy spirit, God the Father or the holy spirit, the Word and Spokesman.

The Word is the holy spirit being in the Godhead who carries out the instructions and wishes of the holy spirit, God. He is the faithful son who seeks to do his father’s will in all things. He is the member of the God family that did the work of creating the heaven and the earth, who ruled over ancient Israel through Moses and his human successors, He is the one who became a man who suffered and died to be God the Father’s perfect sacrifice for sin and make the salvation of mankind possible, etc. and He came to reveal the Father to those who follow the Father’s calling.

Making Things Clearer

In this study, when referring to God’s spirit who, depending on the circumstances can be the holy spirit personage called God the Father or the holy spirit personage called God the Word and Spokesman, I will not capitalize either of the adjectives “holy” and “spirit”. This is in order to not perpetuate the false impression in the minds of readers that there is a 3rd being in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit.” Instead, I will refer to either of the holy spirits in the God family as being God’s spirit without capitalizing the word “spirit” to make it plain that we are not referring to a third God being in the God family called the “Holy Spirit” but to one of the 2 God beings in the Godhead.

God’s family is presently made up of 2 holy spirit beings to which are to be added thousands and possibly millions of other holy spirit beings when God’s plan of salvation for mankind has reached its end. The saints that endure in the faith until the end of their natural human life, will be resurrected as individual holy spirit beings in God’s Kingdom when it is established.

There are two studies which you can read regarding what is the “Holy Spirit” and decide for yourself in light of the Bible-based evidence offered if such a being exists in the Godhead. These studies are: [What is the Holy Spirit? Cliff Notes Version](#) and [Who or What is the Holy Spirit?](#)

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The Bible is a book containing information given by God to mankind which reveals His existence, His creation of the universe and mankind and His purpose for having created mankind.

The knowledge contained in the Bible is God level spiritual information and it cannot be understood without God making it possible for us to do so as we study His Holy Bible. Time must be found to do regular, careful and detailed studies of our Bible so as to have growth in both knowledge and understanding. For a truly converted Christian not to have growth in knowledge and understanding results in loss of salvation (Mat 25: 26-30).

There are many difficult-to-understand Scriptures in the Bible and they constitute a challenge for the enquiring mind. One such Scripture is the following:

Mat 20:16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

In the parable of the "Laborers in the Vineyard" (Mat 20: 1-16) people were hired at different times of the day to labor in the vineyard and at the end of the day they all got the same wage. Obviously, the ones hired in the morning worked longer than those hired at mid-day and those hired in the afternoon spent even less time working but they were all paid the same.

In this parable, the meaning of the “**first shall be last and; the last shall be first**” clearly means that the all workers irrespective of how long they worked in the field were paid the same. With this understanding in mind, a slight reformulation of what Christ said will make clearer what was the intended meaning: the first shall be **as** the last and the last shall be **as** the first. All workers will receive the same amount of money.

The wages for working in God’s vineyard and enduring until the end of the day i.e., the end of our natural lives, is eternal life in God’s Kingdom whether we were called in our youth, while middle aged or as an elderly individual.

In Mat 19:30, we again find Christ saying that the first shall be last and the last shall be first but the context here is different from that of the parable of Mat 20.

Mat 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, **Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Mat 19:29 And **every one** that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, **shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.**

Mat 19:30 **But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.**

The first to have been called and chosen, the disciples, will not receive their reward until Christ’s 2nd Coming when all those called, chosen and faithful from the days of Adam and Eve will be resurrected to glorified, eternal, spirit being existence. For those whose conversion occurred at the beginning of God’s Church, there will be a long delay between the time of their death in the faith and the time they inherit everlasting life.

Essentially, these are the ones whose conversion will have occurred hundreds and thousands of years before Christ’s 2nd Coming. However, not all converted before Christ’s 2nd Coming will be last, for some, they will be first i.e., there will not be a long wait time between the time of their conversion and their glorification. This will be the situation

for those converted during the Great Tribulation. Christ's 2nd Coming and the resurrection of God's saint is then to occur in their immediate future. The Great Tribulation lasts but a short time (3 1/2 years).

There will be another time period where many of the first shall be last and many of the last shall be first and that is during the Millennium and the Last Great Day. All those converted during the Millennium will not be resurrected until the Great White Throne Judgment. All those resurrected to flesh-and-blood existence at the beginning of the Last Great Day will get their reward at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment after all of them having lived 100 years.

Isa65:20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

They will have been the last to be called and the first in time order to receive salvation as compared to those called during the Millennium who have been sleeping in the dust of the ground for hundreds of years.

Conclusion

As we have seen, although we find almost exactly the same words being used by Christ in 2 different places in the Bible, the context in which they are used changes somewhat the meaning of what is being said.

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Christ is simply saying that all workers in the vineyard regardless of when hired in the day, will receive the same wage. Spiritually speaking, the parable means that no matter how young or old we might be when called, *all that remain faithful and die in the faith will receive eternal life.*

And in Mat 19:30 Christ's words to His disciples enquiring what will be their reward for having forsaken all and having followed Him, He uses a slightly different version of what He said at the end of the parable of the laborers in the field. He adds the word "many." So here, it's not "all" but "many" that are first shall be last.

Many of the first shall be last and these are the ones first called, chosen and faithful from Adam and Eve and during the early years of God's Church, but not all shall be last, some will be first. These are the ones called and chosen shortly before Christ's 2nd Coming. They're all part of the first group of faithful before Christ's 2nd Coming. The many first called and chosen will be last to receive their reward as they will be-

come glorified only at Christ's 2nd Coming. Those called later and closer to Christ's 2nd Coming though being among the last to be called will be among the first to inherit salvation. They will not have had to wait as long as those first called and chosen.

The same process repeats itself for those called, chosen and faithful during the Millennium as opposed to those called, chosen and faithful during the Last Great Day.

