



"Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind."
—C.S. Lewis

30-Nov-12

Do We Remember Who We Are?

Back when many of us were called, it all seemed so simple. Our big tests were keeping the [Sabbath](#) and [holy days](#), attending church, and making sure that we tithed and gave offerings as best we could with a [right attitude](#).

Looking back on those times, it all seems so simple. Though we thought [the world](#) was a little rough then, we now see just how crooked things have gotten. With an economic disaster facing all of us, not to mention every type of [sin](#) available to us, this world continually wears at us. Our tests now are all the above, plus the true end of the age that is rushing at us, plus the fight to hold on to the truth and to stand for it.

To help us accomplish this, we need to stop and consider who we are and what we are part of. Notice what the apostle James writes in [James 1:18](#): "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of [firstfruits](#) of His creatures." He says that we are "*firstfruits*." We all have been first in something or other a time or two in our lives, but this "first" is truly special. We have been called to be the first ones after [Jesus Christ](#) to enter the Family of [God](#).

In explanation, commentator Albert Barnes writes: "The phrase here does not primarily denote eminence in honor or degree, but refers rather to time—the first in time; and in a secondary sense it is then used to denote honor attached to that circumstance." It is a really significant and wonderful thing that God has placed us in this category.

We need to take the time to reflect on who we are. We live in a society that laughs at us for our beliefs, among a people who have not been called and know almost nothing about the true God, in a world that without proof expects its problems to work out somehow, shutting its eyes to the coming calamity that Jesus says would annihilate itself if God did not intervene ([Matthew 24:22](#)). Yet, out of the estimated 60-plus billion humans that have lived on the face of this earth, God the Father has selected us to be part of His firstfruits.

I know that I look at the things I have done, the mistakes I have made, and the sinful nature I still fight, and say, "How could that be?" But God sees all, and evidently, He sees potential in us. This is why we struggle to overcome, to live up to this awesome calling.

[1 Corinthians 1:26-27](#) calls us, the chosen of God, the foolish, the weak, and the base of this world who will put the mighty to shame. We are nothing in this world, and that helps us understand why we were chosen. With little to commend us, we realize that we need God. He can work with that.

[Revelation 14:1-5](#), 12 is about the 144,000, who are described as "firstfruits to God" in verse 4. As far as we are concerned, there is no greater group in the history of the world to attain to be part of, yet it is the very group we have been called to. This select collection of people, redeemed from the earth and without fault before God, have a unique relationship with Him, shown symbolically in their having His name on their foreheads. Their reward is to follow the Lamb, Jesus Christ, wherever He goes, for they are His Bride.

They sing a song before the throne of God, a melody that no one else could learn. Again, this brings out the uniqueness of their experiences with God, having to overcome the world in a similar way to what Jesus had to do during His human life. They truly know and understand how much God had

done for them in giving them grace and understanding and in preparing them for His Kingdom.

John writes, "These are the ones who were not defiled with women" (verse 4). This has nothing to do with sexuality but rather with idolatry. It suggests that these firstfruits were devoted only to the true God, and they had not mixed other religious philosophies with the truth of God. As verse 12 says, ". . . here are those who keep the commandments of God and the [faith](#) of Jesus."

Later, in [Revelation 19:6-10](#), John beholds the Bride of Christ in all her glory, and an angel tells the apostle, "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" John is so overcome that he falls at the angel's feet to worship him, and the angel immediately corrects him. Notice what he says: "See that you do not do that! *I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren* who have the testimony of Jesus. [Worship God!](#)" The angel repeats this correction in [Revelation 22:9](#) on another occasion when John falls down to worship him.

The angel, of whom we would be in awe just as John was, makes it plain that he is a "fellow servant" of the brethren who have been chosen to be firstfruits. The angels have more power than we do, but we have the potential to be far greater, very sons of God. Right now, the angels are fellows with us, working toward the same goal, our salvation (see [Hebrews 1:14](#)). They want to see us succeed!

Though we are the weak in the world, in God's eyes we are precious, His jewels ([Malachi 3:17](#)). Although we are right now a little lower than the angels, we will be set over the works of His hands ([Hebrews 2:7-8](#)). What a great honor it is to be part of the firstfruits!

Yes, we are very special, and because of this, we cannot allow ourselves to let down. We have an awesome future. We will live and rule with Christ ([Revelation 20:4-6](#)). [1 Corinthians 6:1-3](#) informs us that we will judge the world, and not only that, we will judge angels! We do not know what that entails fully, but it implies great power over those who were formerly more powerful than us. It is a future that is almost incomprehensible—but if we believe God, that is what is in store for us.

Who are we? [John 15:15](#) tells us that we are friends of Jesus Christ, and as we have seen, as firstfruits, we will make up His Bride and be with Him forever. So with all this honor, what is expected of us? Jesus says in [John 14:15](#), "If you [love](#) Me, keep My commandments." He wants us to have the same kind of life that He lives, and the Ten Commandments are a broad outline of His character and conduct.

Ultimately, He wants us to reflect His own image, that is, have the same holy, righteous character that He has. His Word reveals Him, and if we apply it, we will grow and transform into that image. God tells us what He is looking for in [Micah 6:8](#): "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Keep fighting the good fight because it is worth it!

- John O. Reid

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Humanity has critical need for the Millennium and the means by which God will bring it about. The Millennium will come about because Christ is faithful to rescue mankind from its own stupidity, putting an end to sin and rebellion (Revelation 19:11). This great battle will be the entry into the Millennium, when a remnant of Israel, humbled through the Great Tribulation, will be comforted (Zephaniah 3:11-13) and accept the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31) coached by the firstfruits (Isaiah 30:20). God's way will radiate out from Zion (Micah 4:2) until it covers the whole earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). God's Spirit will be readily available (Joel 2:28). The spirit is the key to the Millennium, enabling people to live the wisdom of God and making the earth arable, bountiful, and safe (Isaiah 35:1-10; Amos 9:13).

From the Archives: Featured Article

The Ministry of Angels

by Martin G. Collins

One can hardly turn around without seeing something about angels; the subject has recently become popular in the media. Martin Collins explains angels biblically: their true purpose and function within God's plan.

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