

# What is Your Destiny?

There are hundreds of philosophies about life; library shelves are filled with books on what we human beings are allegedly all about; psychology, philosophy, religion, all try to inspire us-to assuage our grief and frustration-to give us hope.

But do any of them truly have the answer? As shocking as it may sound, you have never yet read the REAL purpose for human life. You will be astounded to discover how plain, how simple the answer really is. At the same time, you will be amazed at the miraculous complexity of it all-inspired as you never thought possible to learn of the awesome human potential.

*by Garner Ted Armstrong*

Did you ever cry, "Why ME?" How many millions, beset with frustrations, setbacks, heartaches, personal tragedies, cry out. "Why me, Lord?"

To what degree is everything that happens to you mere happenstance?

Is your life only an insignificant, little-noticed existence-a few fleeting years of sensory perceptions, moods, attitudes, emotions-the never-ending struggle for survival? Are you and your life, only an random accident?

Or do you really "fit" somewhere, in the scheme of things?

What is the PURPOSE of human life?

Why are you here? Where are you going? What happens when you die?

Of course, there are literally hundreds of so-called "answers" to profound questions like these.

The so-called "Christian" philosophies say man possesses a "soul" which is predetermined to go to an ever-burning hell unless we somehow "get saved" and go, instead, to "heaven."

Thus, the Christian philosophies teach that conscious life, albeit in some other form, continues after death. They see this human, physical existence as merely the first step to some greater, transcendental existence in some other state.

But, alas and a lack, not one single "Christian" audience has ever heard a sermon telling them what they will be doing in heaven on the third day, third week, third month-or after three hundred and ninety-seven years, or throughout eternity. That's because there are no such scriptures.

Many believe they were "here" before. Some believe they will go on to some other "phase" of life after death; speaking of what they hope they will be able to do "in their next lives". Some are convinced, probably due to the drab, monotonous boredom of their present existence, that they must have had a far more interesting "previous life," or they would not be so bored, today.

Atheists and evolutionists, of course, believe that man is not unlike an animal. The "hairless ape" is here today, gone tomorrow. Thus, the atheistic denial of God also relegates moral responsibility into the comparatively unthreatening area of transitory societal mores-certainly not of the stature of divine law.

But notwithstanding these and other philosophies-what is the truth?

And, how can you know?

The answer begins with the most fundamental question of all-is there a God? Does God exist? If so, can you prove it?

Millions say disease, poverty, squalor, crime and war prove God does not exist.

### **"Cannon Fodder, or Soul Farm?"**

Is it any wonder a German soldier, cowering in a frozen trench outside Stalingrad during World War II, wrote a bitter letter to his priest back in Germany that God could not exist? Was this embittered German soldier any different from literally millions of other human beings who have had similar experiences? How many plaintive cries have echoed through the corridors of time, complaining that, "If there is a God, why does He ALLOW WAR?"

All right, why?

Why accidents, sickness and disease, crime, suffering, poverty and privation; why murder-why WAR?

With the advent of the nuclear age, military and political leaders gradually began to realize that science had endowed them with the means to exterminate human life from the face of the earth.

Now, as the great powers remain deadlocked in an ideological struggle; as more and more nations join the "nuclear club," developing nuclear weapons of their own, it becomes increasingly clear to the more negative among historians and philosophers that mankind may not escape the nightmare of a nuclear war prior to the close of the present century.

By now, you have seen and heard enough about nuclear armageddon to make you thoroughly sick of the whole thing.

The theme has been exploited by motion pictures, television specials, magazines and books; how many pamphlets have you seen with the familiar mushroom-shaped cloud?

But, sick of it or not, the reality still remains. The fact is, the combined nuclear arsenals of the big powers contain enough explosive force to more than obliterate several times the population of this good green earth.

Now, there is talk of "avoiding nuclear war by accident."

Various scenarios are portrayed, like those in books such as Countdown to Armageddon, and The Late, Great Planet Earth.

Many so-called "Christian" organizations, assumedly believing nuclear holocaust is surely coming, confidently predict to their members that some form of escape is going to be provided. Either they will; (a) be "raptured" away to be with Jesus while billions die during the great tribulation, or, (b) be taken to a secret "place of safety" where they will wait out the holocaust in a desert cave or, (c) they will be miraculously protected right where they are, witnessing the violent collapse of all civilization in a global nuclear World War III.

Down through history, men have pronounced each new weapon the development that would virtually outlaw war. When shields and metal armor were developed against the longbow, some enterprising soul promptly invented the crossbow, which could shoot a metal arrow completely through armor.

The crossbow was (and is) a deadly weapon.

But then came the rifle; a method to propel a lump of metal at incredible velocity from a metal tube, hurling it with such force over such distances that it could penetrate human flesh and bone, smashing into vessels and arteries, delivering a powerful, shocking blow to the vitals, and killing, instantly.

Rifles did away with crossbows, for no crossbowman could ever get close enough to a man armed with a rifle.

Then came the machine gun.

In the battle of the Somme, approximately one million men died. Time and time again the allied generals urged their brave soldiers "over the top," out of the trenches, up the slopes of the battle-scarred hills, directly into German machine gun nests, which busily mowed them down like so much scythed hay.

Some began to wonder if the machine gun was not the "ultimate weapon"; began to wonder if men would not now sit down and "outlaw" war.

At first, aircraft were used merely as observation planes. Then someone thought of dropping a wrench out of his airplane onto an enemy airplane below. Some enterprising soul thought of taking a pistol along, and took a few potshots at an enemy airplane. Then, came fowling pieces and rifles. Finally, someone thought of mounting a machine gun on the fuselage and, presto, the modern fighter plane was invented.

From dropping projectiles by hand in World War I, the nations of the world developed bombers which through evolution of military invention and design, resulted in such bombers today being supersonic, capable of carrying in their bomb bays more explosive force in just one bomb than all of the force unleashed by all participants in all wars fought by all mankind to the present.

With the explosion of the first "low-yield" crude atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, some once again thought war would be outlawed.

The United Nations was formed as "man's last chance." Yet, the world has fought approximately 65 wars from that time to this, albeit avoiding the use of nuclear weapons to date; and in all of those wars usually at least one or both of the participants have been members of the United Nations, which was billed, in 1946, as man's last hope for peace.

The historical record is not reassuring.

If one is to merely look at history as a guide-then ask the question "Will mankind survive into the twenty-first century without a major nuclear war?" one is not encouraged to answer in the affirmative.

And then what? What will be the outcome of such a nuclear bomb world war?

At best, those who attempt to assess such mind-boggling occurrences agree that civilization, as we know it, would surely perish. They paint the ugly scenario of comparatively few areas of the earth "untouched" by direct bomb blasts, radiation, and radioactive debris in the stratosphere.

However, they are quick to point out that such total destruction would bring about massive upheavals in many other directions; dramatic changes in the temperature of the earth and the jet streams, incredible pollution of the upper atmosphere and the resultant cooling of the earth's surface which would bring about bizarre and disastrous weather changes; pollution of rivers, bays, lakes, estuaries and the oceans themselves; with even the remote potential of triggering shocks along the tectonic plates of the earth, inducing man-made volcanic activity, earthquakes, and tidal waves.

The very darkest possible scenario is, of course, total extinction of all life, and the supposition on the part of a handful of atheistic scientists that the "whole evolutionary process would begin anew," with perhaps some form of surviving bacteria.

So this is what it's all about? This mind-boggling, hideous and macabre spectacle of the lemming-like extinction of humanity, is the "final outcome" of man's frantic search for the "good life"? Is nuclear oblivion what awaits all of us?

Are we merely here, this generation of human beings looking over into the beginning of the twenty-first century, to become "cannon fodder" for man's ultimate weapon; the hydrogen bomb?

Or, is there a God "up there" somewhere-"someone, in the great somewhere," as the song goes, who is busily "soul

farming"?

### **Are You a "Soul"?**

Are you-that is the real you, your personality, deepest psyche and character really a "soul" held imprisoned inside a wasting body? And if so, where did you get your soul? Did it come into you at birth?

Can you take it out and look at it? Have you ever seen it, touched it, tasted it, smelled it, or otherwise "experienced" the idea that you have a "soul" by physical or pragmatic means?

No, you haven't.

But millions are confident they have an "immortal soul." For twenty-nine years, I have been offering a certified cashier's check in the amount of ten thousand dollars (which I recently upped to twenty thousand dollars) to anyone who can find the words "immortal soul" or "immortality of the soul," in the King James Bible. And for twenty-nine years, people have sent me various vague scriptures which they say infer the "immortality of the soul," but in all those nearly thirty years, not one single human being has ever been able to claim the money.

The Bible plainly says that man "became a living soul..." at the creation of Adam. Read Ezekiel 18:4 and verse 20:

"The soul that sinneth it shall die." But don't just take my word for it, look it up in your own Bible, and you will see the absolute PROOF that we are not possessed of an "immortal soul" at all, but that there is, in fact, a "spirit in man" of which the Bible speaks; that spiritual quality of the mind of we human beings which lifts us far above the animal plane; makes us human, made in the image and similitude of God, possessed of a conscience, able to build character, and creatures of free moral agency and volition.

The Bible plainly shows that, at death, there is no further consciousness. Solomon said, plainly, that he did not know whether the spirit returned to God, or went back down into the earth-but one thing he knew, as did David his father, there is no further consciousness in death.

What would God want with all of those "souls," anyway? Have you ever heard a sermon wherein the pastor tried to tell you what you will be doing the third year you are "up in heaven"? How about your thirtieth year, three hundredth year, or the end of your third millennium? Life on this earth can be fairly interesting-especially if it involves a good deal of education, travel, and a wide range of experience. As Solomon said, our eyes are never satisfied; our ears are never filled, our thirst and taste never truly sated. Just because we have seen one gorgeous sunset does not mean we want it to be our last, we are not yet tired of hearing the beautiful sounds of nature, of beautiful music, the voice of loved ones, the happy laughter of our own babies-in short, we human beings are never really through living so long as we can still enjoy life.

What if the Bible promises you, not "heaven" in some wraith-like condition of a "soul" wafting around shuffling through harp music for billions of years, but promises you, instead, the first one-thousand years of co-rulership with Jesus Christ busily straightening out the incredible evils that grip this planet?

What if the Bible issued to you such challenges as becoming a mayor, president, king or ruler over small or great countries? What if, once given the great wisdom, patience, understanding, vast knowledge and experience, you are also equipped with the spiritual POWER to carry out your edicts? What would you do? Would you see to it there was no more crime? Would you eradicate poverty? Would you do away with sickness and disease? Would you outlaw war? Would such an opportunity be desirable?

Believe it or not, Almighty God DOES offer you an opportunity to help straighten out this world in the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. And, believe it or not, God is going to outlaw war, yet, human nature will remain pretty much the same during the first one-thousand years of the rulership of God's kingdom on this earth.

No, the world is not a "soul farm" with thousands dying daily and going either to "heaven or to hell."

## **What is Man?**

To truly understand what we are, we must decide, based upon the facts, in favor of only one or two great alternatives. They are evolution, or creation.

There are no other possibilities. We're here, we know that. We got here by the process of birth, and, so far as we can discern through any physical or scientific evidence, so did our ancestors, as far back in history as fossil remains indicate there was life on this earth.

Evolutionists say, "In the beginning was the hydrogen atom..." God says, "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1).

Which is correct?

Evolutionists propose an extremely wide variety of possible origins for the earth, our solar system and the universe.

The "big bang" theory is most in vogue. It presupposes that in the far distant past, there was one "giant hydrogen atom" (which boggles the mind), which for some reason or other, exploded.

Science knows the "basic building block" of the entire universe is the hydrogen atom. The "big bang" theory helps them account for an "expanding" universe, apparently rushing in all directions outward from the supposed "center" of the universe (if, indeed, something so fathomless as interstellar space has a "center").

Another less popular theory is the "oscillating" universe; supposing that, eventually, all of the billions upon billions of stars will come back together in one gigantic super-cataclysmic explosion, and start the whole process all over again. Then, there is the "steady-state" theory.

So far as the origin of life is concerned, evolutionists promote a wide variety of completely contradictory theories.

Some say life began by a chance spark, perhaps touched off by a lightning bolt in a primordial methane and ammonia soup.

Another theory claims life began in "cracks in rocks." Still another claims life began from "brown scum." Then there are the believers that life began in "green slime," or on "polka-dotted air bubbles in the sea."

There are the advocates of life beginning under conditions of extreme cold, and their opposite numbers, who believe life began under conditions of extreme heat.

Hydrogen atoms, amino acids, proteins, cells, living forms-evolutionists are thoroughly universal in their adoption of the theory that all life, as incredibly complex as we know it to be, began with something which they call "simple."

There is insufficient space in this booklet to completely expose and destroy the theory of evolution, for such would require several volumes. However, I would urge you to obtain a few books for your own personal library, and study them. Excellent reading on creation versus evolution can be found in *The Deluge Story in Stone* by Nelson; *The Story of the Fossils* by George McCrady Price (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California); *The Genesis Flood* (Whitcomb and Morris); *Evolutionary Geology and New Catastrophism* (George McCrady Price).

There are many, many others, including a very recent book entitled *The First Genesis* by William Dankenbring which I would recommend as a collegiate-grade textbook on the subject, for it pulls together information from dozens of quarters and leaves no stone unturned.

Here are a few facts for you to consider:

First the concept that one always finds fossil forms of life from "simple" to "complex" is utterly false. There is nothing "simple" about any life forms; and certainly nothing simple about the trilobites found in the so-called cambrian strata.

Secondly, there is no such thing as a uniform geologic succession of strata. The strata are found in every conceivable condition of disarray. Evolutionists, in order to twist the facts to suit their theories, have claimed that whole mountain ranges have moved scores of miles to explain why certain so-called "older" strata are resting "conformably" atop so-called "younger" strata. They refuse to believe what their own minds and eyes ought to tell them; that when the fossil record appears to be in jumbled disarray, it is not the fossil record in disarray, but their theories. Clinging to their theory, they seek to explain away dozens of instances in global geologic phenomena where "older" fossil forms are found high above so-called "younger" fossil forms; and where, according to their theories, literally millions upon millions of years separated the different forms. So how did the "older" fossils end up on top of the "younger"?

They refer to such puzzles as "deceptive conformity," saying that even though the layers of stone appear to your human eye as being undisturbed-leading you to believe they were laid down exactly as you see them-they say your eyes are deceiving you, and this is merely deceptive conformity.

Note this well. There is no place on earth where even a major portion of the so-called geologic succession of strata is in evidence. It is in evidence only in textbooks, in such books as North American Index of Fossils or various collegiate-grade books on geology and paleontology, but is nowhere visible in nature.

The books I have mentioned cover such points, as well as dozens of others including such interesting questions as why fossils are found on the tops of the highest mountains on earth; why dozens of varieties appear to have died suddenly, and were buried alive; why mammoths were found in the frozen tundra (like one specimen in the Smithsonian with greenery still in its mouth) "quick frozen" and preserved for our inspection today; what carbon-fourteen dating is all about; why there are no "intermediate species"; the proof of creation illustrated by symbiosis-wherein animal and plant mutually support and preserve one another (for example, the helpful bacteria in our own digestive systems without which we could not survive); and many, many other interesting aspects of the proofs of God's creation.

There are seven basic proofs God exists. Properly, they belong in a separate book all by themselves, but I will cover them briefly here.

(1) That there is a great CREATION is obvious. The very fact of the existence of THINGS; the universe, the solar system, the earth and all myriad forms of life upon it, demands a CREATOR.

(2) The existence of great, immutable, powerful LAWS (and I speak of the "laws" governing the physical universe; the laws of science and chemistry; laws governing the action of water in its three states; the cleavage and fracturing properties of minerals; gravity, inertia, isostasy, etc., etc.). The existence of these great laws demands a lawgiver.

(3) The intricacy of complex design; whether the feathers on the wing of a bird; the eye of a fly; the breathing apparatus of a dolphin; billions of intricately-designed snowflakes; your own muscular, skeletal, digestive and circulatory systems-etc., etc., requires a great DESIGNER.

(4) LIFE exists. Life in myriad forms. You and I both know that life only comes from preexisting life. This is called the "law of biogenesis." Life demands a great LIFE GIVER.

(5) Life only comes from preexisting life of the same kind. Thus, there is procreation, and the sustaining of life on our planet; the constant recycling of falling trees, rotting vegetation; the bacteria which break it down to become food for the insects which are food for dozens of other creatures, which are in turn food for larger creatures, which are in turn food for man; the cyclical character of our symbiotic environment which, like a gigantic machine was once "wound up," and is gradually running down, requires a sustaining force. Inherent within this proof are the laws governing the "conservation" of energy" and the laws of thermodynamics. It is obvious our universe has a great sustaining force-a GREAT SUSTAINER.

(6) Fulfilled prophecies, of which there are dozens, with dozens more yet to be fulfilled, constitute a great proof of Almighty God. Even simple high school or beginning college-level Bible handbooks such as Halley's, or the Angus

Bible Handbook contain fascinating proofs from the spade of archeologists corroborating the prophecies of men who foretold the collapse of great empires and the emergence of others centuries and centuries beyond their own lifetime. Now, we are able to look back at such men as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and others, and see what they foretold actually HAPPENED exactly as they foretold it.

Many of the biblical prophecies are in process of being fulfilled. The serious student of biblical archeology knows that it is axiomatic that, wherever archeology reveals information about ancient civilizations, it always corroborates the biblical record, never refutes it.

(7) The final proof--one which dyed-in-the-wool disbelievers will doubtlessly scoff at--is answered prayer. Of course, God does not answer the prayers of skeptics and disbelievers. However, those individuals who have experienced the answer to PRAYER; those who have been healed of their sicknesses and diseases, who have actually seen miracles performed, are no longer doubting, but believing. Answered prayer is definitely a proof that there is a God who can hear, and answer.

### **We Are Mortal-Temporal-Subject to Death**

Each one of these proofs of God deserves a whole book. For twenty-nine years, I have been offering proof that Almighty God exists; I have done so in thousands of radio and television broadcasts, in hundreds and hundreds of hours in college classrooms, and in dozens of articles and booklets on the creation; exposing the fallacies of evolution.

You can prove Almighty God exists.

Think about it. Do explosions in print shops result in encyclopedias? Does randomness and happenstance bring about intricate design and beautiful order?

Everywhere around you, you see intricacy, interdependency, harmony, beauty, and flawless design. Place the feather of a bird, the wing of a fly, the petal of a rose, or a human hair under a powerful microscope. The closer you look at those things in the natural creation, the more you become overawed by the marvelous creation of God.

Go to any high school level encyclopedia (like the World Book) and read a few of the articles on such subjects as water, air, the sun, the human eye, the articles on electricity, magnetism, gravity, or the cleavage properties of minerals.

How long has it been since you pondered the fathomless mysteries of this beautiful creation of which you are a part?

When we ask, "What is man?" we can only answer that he is a created being, given limited CREATIVE powers.

We are a physical, chemical, air breathing, food-eating, water-drinking temporal existence-absolutely dependent upon our surrounding biosphere for our survival.

Study the marvels of reproduction. Ask yourself about the miracle of heredity and environment; how we pass on to our children the genes and the chromosomes that determine general height, shape, weight, texture of skin, color of hair and eyes; that oftentimes determine even certain special proclivities, talents, and abilities, as well as striking similarities to grandparents, maternal or paternal.

The cycle of birth is a true cycle. It is interrupted at death, or by abortion. However, there is no other method by which human beings can be brought into existence than by conception; introducing a male sperm cell into a female ovum, or female egg. The beginning for this cycle was at creation.

Is there anything so approaching the miraculous in our environment as is our ability to reproduce after our own kind?

As human beings, we look about and see no greater living creature in all of God's creation than ourselves. Man stands at the top of the "food chain." We have been endowed with a mind. With that mind we can assimilate knowledge and information: think, reason and PLAN. We can then, with the marvelous skills of the human hand and body, form,

shape, construct and bring about the production of things according to the plan formed and shaped in our minds.

Man has been endowed with inventiveness, creativity, ingenuity; a thirst for knowledge, and a desire to produce and achieve.

God inspired the apostle Paul to write "But one in a certain place testified, saying, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedest him with glory and honor. And didst set him over the works of thy hands:

"Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet" (Hebrews 2:6-8).

Read that again. Notice that God says He created man only a little lower than the angels. At the physical creation, God said "Let us [the word for 'God' is Elohim, which means MORE than one] make man in our image." (Genesis 1:26).

The Bible says, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; man and female created He them.

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28).

Almighty God used the physical materials of this earth in His creation. "And the Eternal God formed man of the dust [physical, chemical elements of the earth] of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

How is your physical, chemical life sustained? It matters not whether you sit down to dine in the most fabulous restaurant in Paris, France; eat from a tray on your lap at thirty-nine thousand feet high above the Atlantic Ocean in a jet airplane; eat at your the favorite restaurant near your own home, or simply sit on a log over a campfire, eating out of doors with your own hands. Foods do not come from kitchens. Milk does not come from a carton. Foods come from the ground; milk comes from cows.

Not only are we human beings composed of the very "dust" (meaning chemical elements of the earth) of the ground. but our lives are supported by eating those things which grow in that same earth from which we came.

And what happens to us when we die? Even as the oft repeated phrase at funerals, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," so it is true that our bodies decay and become just so much fertilizer, returning to the ground from whence we came. That much, medical science affirms. Medical science, of course, cannot tell us anything about an alleged "soul" within this human flesh, and does not attempt to do so.

Did you notice, carefully, what God said? He said, when He breathed the breath of life into Adam that Adam BECAME a living "soul." The Hebrew word (the Bible was not written in English) is nephesh. This Hebrew word is used five times in the first chapter of the book of Genesis of lower life forms BEFORE it is ever used of man.

Man is mortal. We are temporal, of this earth. As a fleshly, chemical, transitory human being, we are subject to aging, senility, and death.

Of these fleeting lives, the Bible says, "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

"Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor. That appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:12-14). God says. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field:

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Eternal bloweth upon it: Surely the people is grass.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8).

Of this physical, chemical existence, the apostle Paul said,

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

"For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:19-26).

Notice. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

"Behold. I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:47-52).

What fabulous information is contained in these few verses. Here, we see that the fate of physical, carnal man is nothing more than death. Adam is said to be "of the earth, earthy." We then see revealed that, unless there is a resurrection from the state of death, we have no future life. It is in the "hope of the resurrection" that true Christians die. God says when we die "our thoughts perish," and says there is "no consciousness" in the grave.

He says that "God only hath immortality." and says "The soul that sinneth it-that soul-shall die."

Notice that Jesus Christ is called the "first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29) and "the first fruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

## **Who Was Jesus Christ?**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. And the Word was made FLESH and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:9-12, 14).

The Greek for "word" is logos. This word means "spokesman," indicating the executive member of the Godhead who did the commanding; who did the creating.

Read, with your own eyes in your own Bible what this scripture plainly tells you. You need no interpreter to understand the meaning of these plain scriptures. It is telling us that the very individual who MADE THE UNIVERSE: the individual who was in the very beginning with "God" and who "WAS GOD," was that individual who became Jesus Christ. born of the flesh, of the virgin Mary, and who became a human being (the "Word was made flesh".) and lived here on this earth. Now turn to and read Hebrews, the first chapter.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, BY WHOM also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. But unto the Son He saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. And, Thou, Lord. in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1:1-3, 8-12).

Here is absolute corroborating proof that the individual who "made the worlds" is that same individual who "by Himself purged our sins" and who is Jesus Christ.

Notice verse 10 again. "Thou, Lord [speaking of Jesus Christ] in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." And who was Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ was the very Son of God.

By the miracle-working power of God, He was changed from divine life-from VERY GOD life-into a tiny, human embryo. He developed in the womb of His mother in exactly the same fashion as did you and I. He was born of the flesh and He was flesh.

He was God-IN THE FLESH..

And when He was human-He was just as human as you and I are human; subject to the same emotions, longings, desires, temptations-subject to cold, heat, hunger, fatigue, pain.

Notice. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are

tempted" (Hebrews 2:9,10; 2:14-18).

Christ took part of flesh and blood.

Now, notice what the Bible says about His visage; His form and shape:

"Who [Christ] being the brightness of His [God, the Father] glory, and the EXPRESS IMAGE of HIS PERSON, and upholding all things by the word of His power..." (Hebrews 1:3).

The words "express image" are clear. Christ was made in the exact image of God, the Father. The Greek word for the expression "express image" is *karakter*, which means, "the figure stamped" (as, a certain letter is a "character," etc.), or the "engraving," or "exact copy," or "representation."

As the "only begotten of the Father," Jesus Christ was absolutely preeminent as the Author; Captain, Originator; the Guarantor of our salvation. He was the PIONEERING member of the God family who took upon Himself the incredible challenge of becoming human; subjecting Himself to the pulls and tugs of human nature, overcoming sin in the flesh; living perfectly, according to the spiritual intent of God's perfect law-then dying for our sins.

God said. "... when He bringeth the first begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6)

Do you know why the angels of God literally worship Christ? Why He is called the "captain" of our salvation?

Because Christ is the greatest HERO of ALL TIME. He is the CHAMPION of ALL CONTESTS-the CONQUEROR of the greatest challenge of all-that of overcoming HUMAN NATURE. He conquered SATAN. He conquered DEATH.

### **Christ Had A Choice**

Now, you need to understand one of the most profound truths of the plan of God.

By its very definition, character, believe it or not, is something which cannot be instantaneously produced by divine fiat. Almighty God, in His infinite wisdom, is the greatest, supreme Character in the universe.

One very good definition of character is as follows:

Character consists of the wisdom and discernment to define the difference between right and wrong-then consists of having the will power to force the self to choose the right.

Character is the purest form of self-rule; of self-government.

As such, it is something that must be acquired through education, testing, and experience. God has so decreed it.

Many fail to see what a great Savior they have-they fail to realize Christ faced daily CHOICES during His human, physical life-that He oftentimes wrestled with HIMSELF-forcing Himself to make the right CHOICE every time.

Many are so ignorant of the great purpose and plan of God it would be blasphemous to them to admit CHRIST COULD HAVE FAILED. To many, there was no "real" risk involved. Christ, to some, is like the world-champion weight lifter, who is accustomed to picking up many hundreds and hundreds of pounds. His trials in the human flesh are viewed as a little twenty-pound weight, which he tossed off with consummate ease.

But no. Your Bible shows Christ made daily decisions; that He faced many temptations.

Read it. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared:

"Though He were a Son, yet LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS WHICH HE SUFFERED" (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Jesus Christ made supplication to God the Father with "strong crying and tears." He put His heart into it. He meant it. One does not pray with loud, choking sobs; with brokenhearted cries of anguish-unless one REALLY MEANS it.

Time and again, the disciples said Jesus would rise up early, while it was yet dark, and go to a mountain alone, to pray. He prayed all night long before making the decision to choose His disciples. He struggled with Himself-DRIVING Himself to His knees--forcing Himself to pray--working, laboring in prayer before God.

On the night He was betrayed, three times He flung Himself down on the ground, imploring His Father to "to work it out some other way." He FASTED and prayed for forty days and nights before meeting Satan in a terrible battle of wills-His great temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4).

Jesus Christ did not just "toss off" these great trials; He did not treat great events casually; carelessly ignore the need for prayer. No, He wrestled with Himself; He fought the pulls and tugs of human appetites and carnal nature-He battled temptations, and HE WON.

Yes, He had God's Holy Spirit. But, He knew the Holy Spirit could wane-that He could grow lukewarm if He did not continually drink in of the mind, will and love of God through prayer. He described the Spirit of God as LIVING waters; like a flowing, rippling, happy brook-moving, flowing IN from God, and out in love, and good works toward God and fellow man.

Do you see?

Christ COULD HAVE FAILED. It was POSSIBLE. If not, you HAVE NO SAVIOR. If there was NO RISK involved; if Christ did not RISK IT ALL-then there was NO SUFFERING involved; no BATTLING; no WRESTLING with human nature; no STRUGGLING with the temptations that came along.

But what does the Bible say? "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience BY THE THINGS WHICH HE SUFFERED; and being MADE perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Christ SUFFERED in His trials. He suffered greatly-suffering mental anguish on the night He was betrayed. Then, He suffered, and bled, and died-suffering physically as well as mentally, on the stake. He WON a GREAT victory.

BUT HE HAD TO CONTINUALLY CHOOSE.

Always, looming just ahead-every single day, was the possibility of making JUST ONE MISTAKE.

Jesus Christ was a free moral agent. He was not an automaton; not "automatic" in His resistance to the pulls of the human flesh. No, He had to resist those pulls by conscious effort. He had to choose.

How could Jesus, who was a PERFECT baby; a perfect child of twelve; a perfect man- "be made perfect?"

Does Paul imply Jesus was imperfect in some way?

Not at all, Jesus, as a child of two or three, did not sin. He was perfect. But a child of two or three is nowhere near so well developed, or knowledgeable, as a child of twelve. Nor is a boy of twelve so knowledgeable and mature as a young man of twenty-one.

Through each year, through each phase of His growth and development, Christ had to meet every challenge. He had to choose, daily. By continually struggling with human nature; by staying close to God in prayer; by allowing the

Holy Spirit to flow powerfully through Him in good works and love toward God and man. Christ BUILT HOLY, RIGHTEOUS, PERFECT CHARACTER. You see, CHARACTER REQUIRES TIME.

It is NOT Automatic.

Satan was created a PERFECT being. Perfect in beauty; in stature, in radiance, in his music, and his splendid appearance. (Read Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.) But his righteousness CORRUPTED him. He allowed vanity to creep in. He became puffed up with egotism; with pride, and self-importance. He began to think HE was alone supreme in beauty, and in power. You see, Satan did not have perfect character. He was perfect in beauty-in his radiant, magnetic appearance. God says, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom [befouled your character-your knowledge] by reason of thy brightness..." (Ezekiel 28:17).

Character must be developed.

Christ was never imperfect-but He was not as MATURE at age twelve as at age thirty. At age thirty, He had not yet experienced His turbulent, trying, exhausting, demanding three-and-a-half-year ministry. He had not yet suffered, and bled, and died. He was MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING-so says your Bible. (Hebrews 2:10).

If God could create holy, righteous, perfect CHARACTER by divine fiat-then He would have done so. But no, He created MAN, and gave man a natural, carnal, human nature-a nature that can, and must be changed.

### **The Carnal Nature of Man**

Physically, we human beings have a mere chemical existence. God says, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

Mentally, emotionally and spiritually, however, man is possessed of what we call "human nature."

And what IS "human nature"? The answer to this question contains the key to understanding the so-called fall of man, and the need for spiritual redemption.

Almighty God placed within man the senses, and an imaginative, creative, fabulously intricate mind, by which man could accumulate knowledge.

Almighty God placed clear-cut choices in front of our first parents. Read the first three chapters of Genesis. Notice how our first parents were completely "neutral" toward God-feeling neither fear nor threat from the Divine Presence. Books could be written describing the first few days of creation; how God led a procession of animals before Adam to see what names he would give them; the creation of Eve, and the presentation to Adam of his wife.

God gave the man and woman careful instructions. They could freely eat of every one of the trees in the garden-bearing every type of fruit. There was only one "forbidden fruit" of which man was not to partake. Notwithstanding the arguments which have lived through the centuries as to whether the trees were literal or figurative or both, the biblical account tells us that a bright, magnetic being (not appearing as a "snake." which the Hebrew word nachash does not demand) subtly caused Eve to make the wrong choice; to partake of the "forbidden fruit" from the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil," and to give of the fruit to her husband.

Read the account. Immediately after their sin. our first parents' very nature seemed to have become sullied, altered.

Where they were cheerfully companionable with God, neither fearing His presence nor His voice-now, suddenly, they hid from Him.

Where they were unconscious of their nudity, exactly as tiny babies are completely unabashed and unashamed (how many mothers have been shocked when their tiny toddlers of only a year and a half or so have ventured out into the yard or even down the street following their bath, wearing not a stitch?), now, they were "ashamed" of their nudity.

Why?

First, you need to understand that the popular view of what happened in the garden is sheer nonsense. The tree was not an apple. The protuberance in human necks is not an "Adam's apple," but the vocal apparatus, the "forbidden fruit" did not consist of sex. After all, had not God commanded them "Be fruitful, and replenish the earth"? Read Hebrews 13:4 God says. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled." He had explained that the very purpose for presenting Eve to Adam, was that a "man should leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife," saying they "twain" (together) "shall become one flesh."

In other words, Almighty God instituted marriage.

It is not true, no matter the philosophies of human religious organizations; the books and doctrinal arguments that have gathered dust down through the ages alleging to the contrary, that the first sin was sex.

Actually, Adam and Eve broke several of the Ten Commandments.

They disobeyed their only parent, thus breaking the fifth commandment. They coveted what they saw with their eyes, thus breaking the tenth. They stole that which was not rightfully theirs, thus breaking the eighth commandment. They allowed their desire for the "forbidden fruit" to come between them and God, thus breaking the principle of the commandment against idolatry, the second commandment. (Paul said "covetousness is idolatry") Thus, they directly broke four of the cardinal points of God's Ten Commandments, and as James said, if we break one point, we are guilty of all.

"Sin is the transgression of the law'." (1 John 3:4).

Adam did not "fall," he was pushed by Eve, who had listened to Satan, the devil.

Now, what was changed?

The change was in the ATTITUDE of man toward God. God's attitude toward man had not changed one whit. But Adam and Eve, by giving in to the pulls and tugs of their human sensory perceptions; by seeing with the eye, perhaps smelling with the nose, reaching out to investigate with the sense of touch and feel, they lusted after the very fruit which God had forbidden.

Now, guilt and shame set in.

God says, "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:6-7).

As a result of breaking God's laws, Adam was denied access to the tree, which represented eternal Life.

Think about it. Almighty God possesses all power. He is Creator. Since God has the power to create, He also has the power to DESTROY. But Almighty God is holy, righteous, PERFECT character. He is not capricious; not whimsical, not given to radical change-but sound, wise, righteous, just and GOOD.

Now, Almighty God could not allow our first parents to become immortal, spirit beings, because, in their corrupted state of sin; with their attitude of guilt, shame and resentment, they would have the power to DESTROY-they would not be perfectly SELF-governed.

Paul explains it thusly, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in

his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:19-26).

Notice it is "by man" that death reigns.

Because Adam directly rebelled against God, Adam died.

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," God said.

"...in Adam ALL DIE..." says Paul. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23).

But, "In Christ shall all be made alive."

Obviously, the first death-human, physical natural death, from whatever cause, is not the penalty for sin. Sin may cause death, as in murder. But the murderer who is put to death (very rare in today's society) is not paying the penalty for his sin. Society may exact a penalty, according to its laws, but society cannot carry out God's penalty.

No matter how "good" you are-no matter how fine a person-the day is coming when you shall die. Death is the natural end of life, because life is a physical, chemical, temporary span of time-sustained by the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Deprived of any of these three, we die.

God says. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:27-28).

God says, speaking of the great resurrection to judgment (NOT to "sentencing," there is a difference.), "But the rest of the dead [those who were not the 'dead in Christ'; not converted Christians-but those who had died in ignorance and disbelief ] lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5).

Notice. The Bible speaks of TWO DEATHS. The "first death" is what has come upon man, naturally, as a result of Adam's sin-the inevitable consequences of living; whether through old age. Or for whatever cause-death.

But the Bible speaks of a "second death"-a death in GEHENNA FIRE, which is the final result of sin which is UNREPENTED of. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power..." (Revelation 20:6).

Do you see? The wages of sin is death-the SECOND death, from which there is NO RESURRECTION. "And death and the grave [margin] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

### **The Proverbial Controversy**

The traditional view of man and his destiny goes something like this; Almighty God constructed a beautiful creation. He placed innocent, child-like, perfect human beings in the midst of a garden filled with wonderful animals and beautiful trees, shrubs and flowers. Here was an absolutely fabulously, PERFECT creation. God was completely satisfied. Apparently, while God's "back was turned" (as if that is possible with God), along comes Satan the devil, like a garter snake entwined around the branches of a small tree, and somehow entices the woman to give the man of the forbidden fruit.

God then returns from His journey, and lo and behold, His perfect creation has been wrecked. Satan the devil has managed to somehow "sneak in," influence the man and woman, and DESTROY God's beautiful handiwork.

Now, God devises an idea. It may be makeshift; something like the chewing gum and baling wire approach the farmer might use on his broken-down tractor, but God decides He will attempt to "redeem" man; He will try to salvage His

perfect creation, by sending His own Son to die for the sins of suffering mankind-and then, those who will receive and accept Jesus Christ can once again achieve a beatific state, and someday their "souls" can go to heaven.

Every bit of this traditional fable is just that-FABLE. It is sheer nonsense.

Believe it or not, Almighty God has never allowed anything to occur over which He had no control.

If you can get this concept down deep into your mind; if you can come to UNDERSTAND what you have already read about CHARACTER-about the requirement that character must be built, and cannot be produced by divine fiat, automatically, then you will come to a level of understanding that is shared by only a minuscule percentage of the human race.

That truth is this: The creation was not COMPLETED in the garden of Eden-it was only BEGUN.

Adam and Eve did not represent a "finished" creation. They were merely a clay model-a prototype. Physically, they were made in the similitude and image of God. But spiritually, they fell far short. God's great PLAN of redemption was conceived from the far reaches of eternity-long before the construction of matter, and the creation of our universe, solar system, and this earth.

### **Man's Nature Must be CHANGED**

God's Word reveals that all of us, from the time of our childhood, have been human beings possessed of a carnal nature. That nature is defined as an almost automatic resentment against God; resenting control, direction, law and authority. Of and by ourselves, we are cunning, avaricious, greedy, egocentric, selfish, impatient, angry; we have resentment, jealousy, hatred; human nature is basically a collection of vanity, jealousy, lust, and greed. It is, above all things, egotistic. It wants to acknowledge no authority but that of SELF.

Anciently, God set down the parameters for human behavior. Get this. Understand it. Almighty God has decided HOW we are to worship Him-He has left man to decide whether.

He places before us daily choices. Read it. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:15-19).

From time immemorial, our human forebears have made the wrong choice.

Look around you in the world today, and you will see that man persists in making the wrong choice every time. The world is ravaged by despotism, dictatorships, leftist guerrillas, communist insurgents, Islamic mystics and "holy men" who drench the gulf region in blood. Brutal, egotistical, self-centered human leaders have sacrificed the lives of countless millions of human beings down through the ages to satisfy their own lusts.

Men such as Attila the Hun, Alexander the Great, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and the Ayatollah Khomeini have sacrificed countless millions on the altar of their own incredible, swelling ego.

Our society is filled with pornography, burglary, arson, rape, robbery, incest, homosexuality, child abuse, kidnapping, mass murder. We view a planet ravaged by war. Civil war, with participants from every conceivable political and religious point of view continue to fight in the turbulent, war-ridden Middle East. Guerrilla-type warfare rages in country after country from Central America to Southeast Asia. "Christians" murder each other under the symbol of the "cross" in northern Ireland.

Today, in a world armed with supersophisticated nuclear weapons; with the capacity for the destruction of the WHOLE EARTH-human leaders continue to reject the government of God; to attempt, instead, to rule through the human, carnal reasoning of selfish, egotistical human nature.

The harsh truth is, that until HUMAN NATURE is CHANGED, we shall have only WAR.

God's great plan has to do with the changing of human nature.

That change is called "repentance" in the Bible.

Following his inspired message on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

When we repent, God says He will, after we undergo baptism (study the sixth chapter of Romans.) give us of His Holy Spirit. Yet, God says He gives His Holy Spirit to those who "obey Him." (Acts 5:32).

Now, we are called a "new creature in Christ Jesus."

At this point, God begins to use the analogy of the family.

### **Kind Begets Kind**

Remember, God created man in the image of God. As stated, human reproduction is a true cycle. We can discover no beginning of the cycle short of actual creation.

Not only did God reveal that He created man "in His image," but when Adam and Eve had children, the Bible says "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image; and called his name Seth" (Genesis 5:3). Of course, Cain and Abel came along before Seth, and perhaps several daughters were born somewhere in between, but the important point is that in this first of the genealogical tables of the Bible, God's Word says Seth was "in the image" of Adam and Eve, his parents.

There is no more obvious law at work in our ecosphere than that of the law of biogenesis. Kind begets kind. Like produces like. Horses do not produce dogs; chickens do not produce cows; dolphins do not come from elephants, and, for all the obvious similarities in comparative embryology, (which should prove to questing minds the fact that the same great DESIGNER produced all forms of life.) the embryo of the egg becomes a chicken, and the human embryo becomes human.

It is a fabulous MIRACLE that a microscopic spermatozoon (male sperm cell) can unite with a virtually invisible human female egg in the womb of the mother, and that this new life which is now engendered by the uniting of male and female cells, is on its way toward becoming a separate, individual HUMAN BEING.

I have said, for many years, that birth is ABSOLUTE. There was a moment when you did not exist. Then, there was a moment when that life which became you was the result of intense competition between potentially hundreds and thousands of others, but YOU were begotten, instead.

Humorously, I have told audiences for many years that "never has a young girl come home, frightened, and said to her mother, 'Mom, I am half pregnant.'"

Begettal is a positive act. When it takes place, a separate, unique human life is being developed.

It is a fabulous miracle that height, shape, weight, texture of skin, color and texture of hair and eyes, tone of voice, abilities and proclivities, talents and aptitudes can be conveyed from parent to child.

No wonder David marveled that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made." No wonder David gave God the credit for

having "knit me together in my mother's womb," and exulted, "How marvelous art all thy works, O Lord God."

When human parents reproduce, it is as if a microcosm of the whole plan and purpose of GOD—a microcosm of ultimate human destiny.

There was a moment in time when you were begotten. For the sake of understanding one of the great "mysteries" of the plan of God—understanding your own human destiny, you need to understand the process by which YOU came to be. You need to understand the difference between begettal (conception), the gradual development of the fetus in the womb, and actual parturition, or birth.

Obviously, begettal and birth are not the same. There is difficulty with a Greek word, *gennao*, which means the entire process of begettal and birth. The Greek makes no distinction between begettal, and birth, but is used interchangeably.

It is only in the context that we can discern whether the Bible is speaking of a spiritual begettal, or spiritual BIRTH.

And there is a DIFFERENCE.

When you were begotten, your mother was probably unaware of it. She may have discovered it about a month or so later, but wasn't really sure, until after two or three months, and a visit to the doctor. Meanwhile, you were gradually developing within the womb of your mother. Now, the placenta that was forming was causing the nutrients from your mother's own bloodstream to flow into the tiny, strange-looking little shape (bearing resemblance to other types of embryos) that was to someday become YOU.

The Bible instructs us through analogies often. It speaks of God (the great God whom Jesus came to reveal, but who no man has ever seen.) as "the Father."

Jesus said we are to pray "our Father, which art in heaven..." He warned us not to call any man "father," in a spiritual sense on this earth, for "One is your Father, who is in heaven."

Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The church is depicted as a woman (see Revelation 12) and is spoken of as the "mother" of those who are the members of the church.

Within the church, converted men and women are called "brothers and sisters." The apostles spoke of "the brethren," and these family terms are found throughout the New Testament.

What have we here? We have words commonly applied to a human family being applied to God and Christ in heaven, to the church, and to members of the church.

Now, follow the analogy: Even as you, as a tiny embryo, had to be protected and nurtured in the womb of your mother; so newly-begotten Christians must be "fed with the milk of the word" (1 Corinthians 3:1,2), and must be nourished and protected within the church, which is a group or assembly of "called-out ones."

The nourishment is not physical, but SPIRITUAL. The food comes through sermons from the pulpit, perhaps radio broadcasts or telecasts, written literature such as articles, Bible study courses, pamphlets and booklets, through personal/social contact with other Christians, through private conversation, and, MOST importantly, through personal Bible study and PRAYER. In these ways, God's Holy Spirit flows into the mind of the newly-developing Christian, in similar fashion as nutrition flows through the mother's body into the placenta, and to the developing embryo.

At last, after approximately nine months in the womb, you were "full-term," and ready to be BORN.

Now, a shocking change occurs.

No longer are you carried about in the womb of your mother; no longer are you fed through the umbilical cord directly into your stomach from your mother's bloodstream and the placenta. Now, shockingly, you enter the world, gasp your first breath, perhaps begin to cry from the shock and surprise of it all, and are truly ON YOUR OWN. Of course, if a loving mother (or nurse) did not care for you immediately, you would die of starvation or exposure, or both.

But now, you are truly a separate human being.

Another analogy can be developed beginning at birth, relating the Christian development, but for the sake of the analogy I am drawing here, being BORN of your human parents, becoming completely SEPARATE; beginning to develop your own personality, your own peculiar talents and abilities, developing your own thoughts and mind, developing your own individuality, your own conscience and personal morality-all these things are uniquely YOU.

These analogies are not imaginary-the Bible truly uses analogous representations of the family unit as a teaching method. It is through understanding the physical creation we can come to understand Almighty God as an invisible Spirit Being.

"The invisible things about God are clearly seen by looking at what He has created-they are understood by the things He made-including His eternal power and godhead-so ungodly men are without excuse." (Romans 1:20, paraphrased).

Jesus used the physical creation; specifically, the phenomenon of wind and its actions in attempting to teach Nicodemus about spiritual rebirth.

### **"You Must Be Born Again"**

Jesus told Nicodemus "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again [gennao, Greek-meaning 'born from above'], he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

The Greek word Jesus used has already been explained. You can only discern whether He intended "begotten" or "born" in the context.

In this case, we need not wonder, for Nicodemus was responding to Jesus in the Greek language.

"Nicodemus said unto Him, how can a man be born [gennao, Greek] when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4).

Do you see? Was Nicodemus engaging in a little sarcastic humor? The point is, Nicodemus did not misunderstand the word Jesus used. He knew the word Jesus used connoted birth. Stunned, dumbfounded by Jesus' statement, Nicodemus spoke of the utter impossibility of what Christ implied.

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit IS SPIRIT.

"Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again.

"The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes from, and where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the spirit" (John 3:5-8).

Paul was inspired to write, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

"Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we [we who are alive and remain at that time] shall be CHANGED.

"For this corruptible must PUT ON incorruption, and this MORTAL must PUT ON immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

Read that again. Come to understand.

Your Bible plainly tells you that you CANNOT ENTER the "kingdom of God" as a human being.

Jesus Christ said you must be born anew-born from above. When Nicodemus assumed Jesus was referring to the impossible, Jesus told him "Marvel not." He then explained. He said you can hear the noise the wind makes in the trees, or under the eaves of the house-but that the wind, while powerful enough to uproot trees, blow down buildings, or sink ships with hurricane force, is invisible.

And what did He say? "SO IS everyone that is born of the spirit."

How is one who is born of the spirit? He is like the wind. He is invisible. He IS SPIRIT.

WHY cannot many sincere, yet deceived people see the plain, simple TRUTH of what Jesus SAID?

He said, "That which is born of the flesh [you and I-we human beings who are physical, fleshly, created 'in the image' of our physical parents.] are flesh."

So far, so good. Are you physical? Are you human? Are you FLESH?

Of course you are.

Were you born of fleshly parents? Of course.

And what are you? You are FLESH.

Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh IS FLESH."

Now then. Read the rest of John 3:6. "and that which is born of the spirit IS SPIRIT."

Have you, then, been "born" of the spirit? How to answer the question? ARE you spiritual essence? Are you composed of spirit? Can you appear or disappear at will? Can you walk through solid stone, granite, concrete block or brick? Can you zip around the heavens, visiting Mars, Venus and Jupiter?

No, you are mundane, temporal, mortal, human, FLESH.

Then you HAVE NOT been "born of the spirit" according to what your Savior, Jesus Christ, plainly tells you.

You can become "begotten" by God's Holy Spirit. You can repent, be baptized, and receive a spiritual begettal by receiving the Spirit of God. (Acts 2:38).

But you cannot, now, be "born of the spirit" UNTIL a certain moment, of which you have already read (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Go back and read that quotation from 1 Corinthians 15 again. Better yet, turn to and read the entire chapter of 1

Corinthians 15. Here is the "resurrection chapter." If you read it slowly, carefully; if you ponder what you read, drinking in meaning from each word, you will learn great and profound truths, which are not known; not taught, by the churches of this world.

No one, reading the simple and beautiful words of Almighty God concerning the coming resurrection at the return of Christ could believe in the pagan fables of the "immortality of the soul"; that people go either to heaven or an ever-burning hell when they die.

Rather, they would come to know the TRUTH of the Bible; that man is physical, fleshly, mortal. That when man dies, his very thoughts cease, and he shares the very same kind of death as do beasts.

And what did Paul say? "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

### **What is the Kingdom of God?**

You have heard of "the plant kingdom," "the animal kingdom," and "the human kingdom."

Biologically, the term "kingdom" is often used to connote flora and fauna, or humankind. A famous television series is entitled, "Wild Kingdom."

Technically, however, a "kingdom" is the government of a king.

A "kingdom" correctly includes four parts: (1) A king, (2) A territory over which that king rules; (3) Subjects, living in the territory under the rulership of that king; (4) Laws, by which that king rules over his subjects in his territory.

When we speak of "the kingdom of Great Britain," or "the kingdom of Norway," we know exactly what we mean. Even though parliamentary and democratic-type governments have supplanted monarchies, the expression "kingdom" is clearly understood.

Read Revelation 19. In this shocking chapter, you see the description of the returning, conquering CHRIST. Notice. "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:16).

The great KING of the coming kingdom of God is Jesus Christ.

His territory? THIS EARTH. Notice many Bible PROOFS. "And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: [the physical, human nations of this earth.] and He shall rule them with a rod of iron..." (Revelation 19:15).

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the EARTH." (Matthew 5:5).

"...ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven SHALL SO COME in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11).

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh. . then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.

"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.. .and the Eternal shall be King over all the EARTH: in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one." (Zechariah 14:1-9).

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10).

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations [on this physical earth.] and he shall RULE them with a rod of iron... (Revelation 2:26, 27).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne [on this EARTH.] even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." (Revelation 3:21).

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years... blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:1-6).

Study Isaiah 11, the whole book of Zephaniah, Zechariah 14, and especially the latter chapters of the book of Revelation.

Jesus Christ is the returning, conquering KING of the kingdom of God.

The territory over which His kingdom will rule is this earth. The subjects are those human, physical remnants of rebellious, war-making nations which will still be alive following the great battle of Armageddon, the outpouring of the last plagues of God, and who will be forced to submit to the government of God after the second coming of Christ.

The laws by which Jesus Christ will administer His kingdom are God's Ten Commandments as magnified by Jesus Christ; GOD 'S LAWS, mercifully and justly applied at last to a sinning, rebellious, war-mongering world.

The kingdom of God is the living, ruling, governing FAMILY of God. At this present moment, it consists only of Father and Son.

Yet, it is into this ruling family we must be BORN.

Now comes the greatest truth you could ever come to understand.

### **Christ the "Firstborn"**

Jesus Christ is called the "firstborn from the dead".

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

Do you now understand what that scripture means?

When Jesus came back to His disciples after His resurrection He said, "ALL POWER is given unto me in heaven and in earth-go ye therefore..." (Matthew 28:18-20).

Did you notice it? Jesus said He had now inherited ALL POWER. Now, He was no longer merely flesh and bone, but SPIRIT. He was once again VERY GOD.

He had risked everything, and won. He had overcome Satan the devil; dispossessing and disenfranchising him as the present world ruler. He had overcome sin in the flesh. He had qualified to become the super WORLD RULER. Now, as VERY GOD; having been BORN OF GOD by a resurrection from the DEAD, He said He had inherited "all things."

Yet, He says you and I have the opportunity to be born of God just as HE WAS.

He is the Captain and Author of our salvation-the "first born" from the dead.

Notice. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption [sonship.] whereby we cry, 'Abba,' Father.

"The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

"And if children, then HEIRS [not yet inheritors.] heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:15-17).

And what did Christ inherit?

ALL THINGS. He has been given eternal life forevermore. He now has ALL POWER. He has conquered death. He will live forever in joyous happiness; ruling, administering, carrying out the plans, policies and purposes of God the Father at His right hand. As such, Christ is the executive member of the Godhead; the KING of the coming "kingdom of God" to rule on this earth for one thousand years and throughout the UNIVERSE for all eternity.

And what did He promise you? Read again the promises of Revelation 2:26 and Revelation 3:21.

He promises you... are you ready for this? Are you willing to believe it? He promises you CO-RULERSHIP with Him in His kingdom.

Notice. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the FIRSTFRUITS of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Christ has been resurrected from the dead. He is alive. He is VERY GOD.

If you are to be BORN into the very family of God, then what will you BE?

Will you be a kind of "superhuman"? Will you be at the angel level? Will you be like a spiritual "plaything," a "pet," or some lesser being, staring up adoringly into the eyes of the Father?

What are you, now, in relationship to your human parents? Are you not, in every way their equal, except that you owe them HONOR as your parents? Are you not of their very flesh, bone and blood? Are you not a mature, adult human being, on an equal level with your fleshly, human parents? Are you not an intimate member of their family?

Of course you are.

And when you are BORN OF GOD what will you be? Will you not be a member of the very FAMILY OF GOD? Notice. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the FIRSTFRUITS; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

No one has ascended to heaven except Christ Himself. He said so. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13).

What is the order of events-WHEN can you and I be born into God's kingdom? You just read it-"AT HIS COMING." And not one second before.

Do you see, now? God is your Spirit FATHER. Christ is your Spirit OLDER BROTHER.

IF you are converted-begotten of God by His Holy Spirit, then you are ON YOUR WAY to becoming a full-BORN member of GOD'S OWN FAMILY.

Now, drink in what you are about to read-and NEVER FORGET it.

### **God is a Family**

The Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created..." is "Elohim." Elohim is a plural. The "im" ending connotes MORE than one-a duality of Persons in the Godhead.

Notice. "And 'Elohim' [God] said, 'Let us make man in our image...'" He did not say, "I will make man in my image"-

but, "Let us," MORE THAN ONE-"make man in OUR image."

You know now that Jesus Christ of the New Testament is the Person or the Godhead who DID THE CREATING. (John 1:3, 10). The member of the Family of God who wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger; who parted the Red Sea; who wrestled with Jacob; who spoke to Abraham-that Person was one of the Divine Beings called, in the Hebrew tongue, Elohim. He became HUMAN; changed from Spirit to flesh, born of a virgin, and came among us as Jesus Christ of Nazareth-a human, to become the Author of our salvation; our redeemer from sin and Satan-the firstborn from the dead.

He revealed to us that He had a FATHER in heaven.

He said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18).

Jesus said, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me..." (John 8:18). He enraged the Jews when He proclaimed, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58).

The Jews knew by heart what God had said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM; and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel; I AM hath sent me unto you." (Exodus 3:14).

To them, this was BLASPHEMY. They "took up stones to cast at Him" when He made that statement. They later accused Him of "making Himself EQUAL WITH GOD."

And WHO WAS Christ?

He WAS THE CREATOR-come in HUMAN FLESH. He was the executive member of the Elohim (GOD) who did the commanding; who "Spoke, and there was light," Truly, before Abraham was ever thought of-HE EXISTED.

He reveals to us that there is a divine FAMILY of beings; which HE chooses to call the "Father," and the "Son."

He says we can be "begotten by His Holy Spirit, and become "children" of God. We are then "brothers and sisters" in Christ.

The church, which nourishes and protects us, is likened to our "mother." When we are resurrected, or when we are instantaneously changed, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..." at the second coming of Christ, then we are BORN OF GOD. Yes BORN into our new, spiritual, divine FAMILY.

We are then "JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST."

And what did Christ "INHERIT?"

ALL THINGS.

Now do you see?

Your great human potential-your divinely-appointed human destiny-YOUR PERSONAL FUTURE is to become a MEMBER OF GOD'S OWN DIVINE, SPIRIT FAMILY.

YOU are to become a MEMBER of the FAMILY (KINGDOM) OF GOD.

Paul said, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Yes, those who are resurrected in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5) are to share RULERSHIP OF THE WORLD with Christ for the first one thousand years (Revelation 2:26, Revelation 20:4), and are to be like "pillars in the temple

of God" (Revelation 3:12) living, ruling, reigning with God the Father and with Jesus Christ His Son FOR ALL ETERNITY.

God says the time will come-after the millennium-AFTER the great judgment of the "rest of the dead" (Revelation 20:5, 11:15) that He, God the Father, will come down to THIS EARTH-and "... the throne of God and of the Lamb [Christ] shall be in it..." (Revelation 22:3), and then Christ says, God will"... MAKE ALL THINGS NEW" (Revelation 21:5).

Then is a "NEW BEGINNING" in the great plan and purpose of God.

THEN it will come clear WHY Almighty God is SO GREATLY enlarging HIS FAMILY. Then we will know perfectly what we can now know only in part.

Does your mind comprehend it? Can you really grasp it? YOU were born of your human parents as a POTENTIAL MEMBER OF GOD'S SPIRIT FAMILY. As you are a full-fledged member, an equal, in your HUMAN family, so through God's Holy Spirit-through growth, development, overcoming-and, finally, through an actual, literal CHANGE; a change from HUMAN to DIVINE; a change from FLESH TO SPIRIT-you will experience your own great personal, human destiny-YOU WILL BECOME A SPIRIT BEING-A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING KINGDOM, THE FAMILY OF GOD.

This GREAT TRUTH is somehow hidden from the eyes of the MILLIONS, today. The churches don't teach it. But you have SEEN, with your own eyes, in your own Bible, the real truth about YOUR personal DESTINY.

May God help you to surrender your will to HIM; to repent; to be baptized; to receive His Spirit-to become HIS CHILD-to finally be BORN into His great Spirit FAMILY. That is the only real reason you are living on this good, green earth.

-End-

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