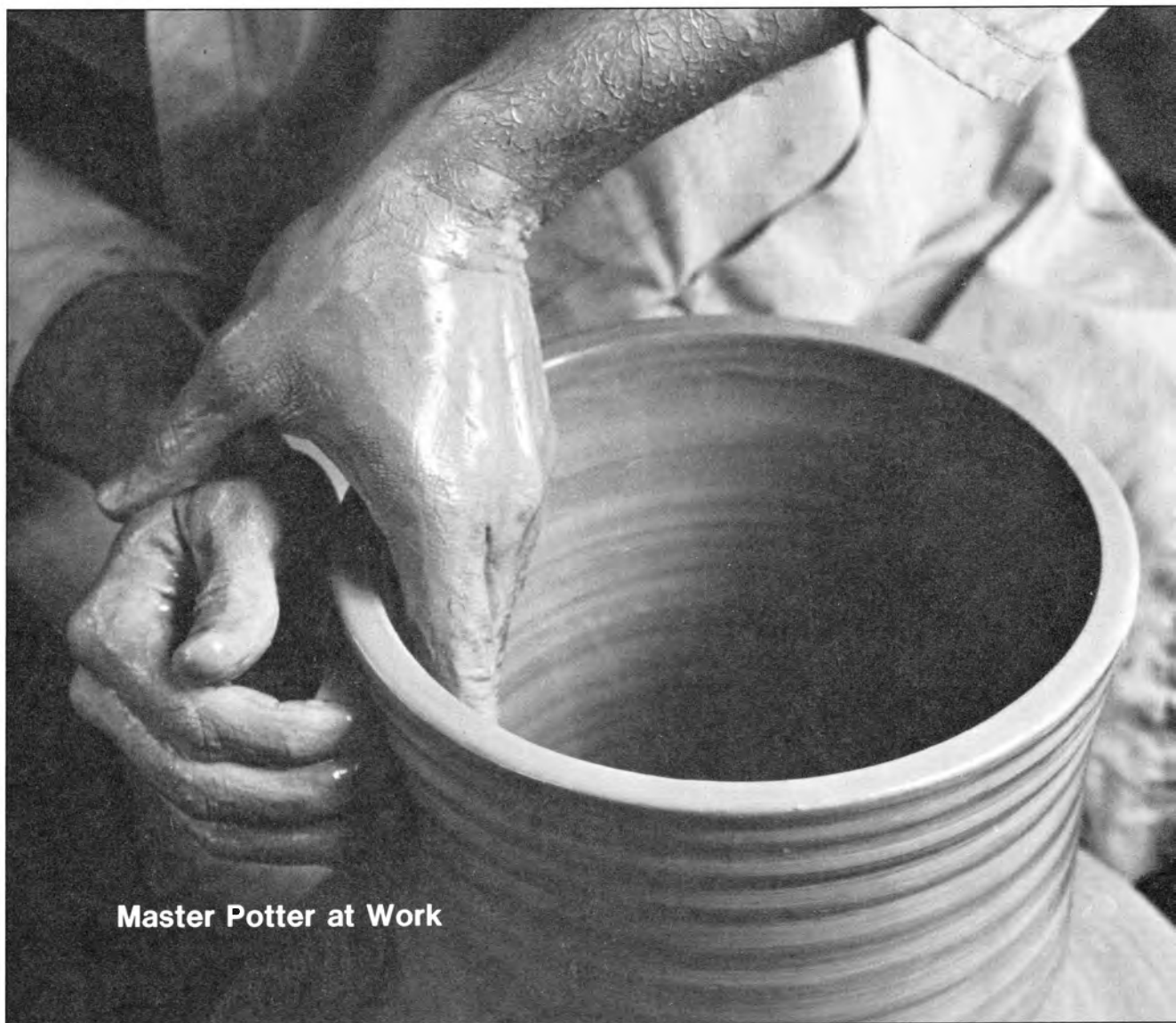




THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
Bible
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



Master Potter at Work

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THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE Bible CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 22

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About Our Cover . . .

Just as a human potter works with pliable clay to form a beautiful and useful vessel, so God, the Master Potter, is in the process of forming His supreme creative masterpiece out of human beings—His "clay" (Isa. 64:8). Though created physically in the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), we are *incomplete spiritually*. God's spiritual character must be built within us to complete our creation and fulfill our purpose in life. This lesson reveals our awesome potential—the glorious purpose God is working out on earth!

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What Is God's Purpose for Mankind?

God created human beings for an awe-inspiring purpose. But few have ever understood that purpose! The Bible reveals man's incredible potential. It shows how God is working out His glorious purpose on earth!

LET'S suppose you have just won an all-expense-paid trip. Wouldn't you want to know *where* you are going, *how* you'll get there, and as much as possible about the trip itself?

Our present mortal life can be compared to a journey. Yet, how many know—or ever thought about the possibility—that God has something to say about our journey?

God, in fact, reveals through His inspired Word the incredible destination of our journey! He gives us the itinerary for the trip, and tells us the marvelous things we'll do when we get there. But to successfully complete our journey, we must carefully follow the travel plans He has laid out for us.

Exactly what is the exciting destination, or desti-

ny, of mankind—the tremendous future God has planned for *you*?

Man to Have Dominion

King David of ancient Israel mused about God's purpose for man. He observed the starry heavens, and was inspired to write: "O LORD . . . when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:1, 3-4.)

From several thousand feet up, men look like tiny insignificant ants! Yes, why should God be concerned about puny man?

The connection between man and the stars began

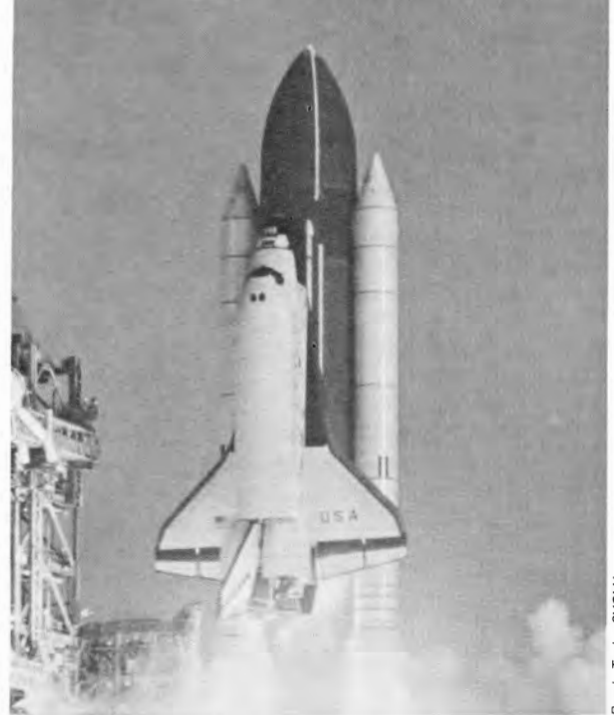
MAN'S INSIGNIFICANCE?—From an airplane, men are hardly noticeable—seemingly insignificant. Yet God has a tremendous purpose for mankind! Shown is the Ambassador College campus in Pasadena, California.



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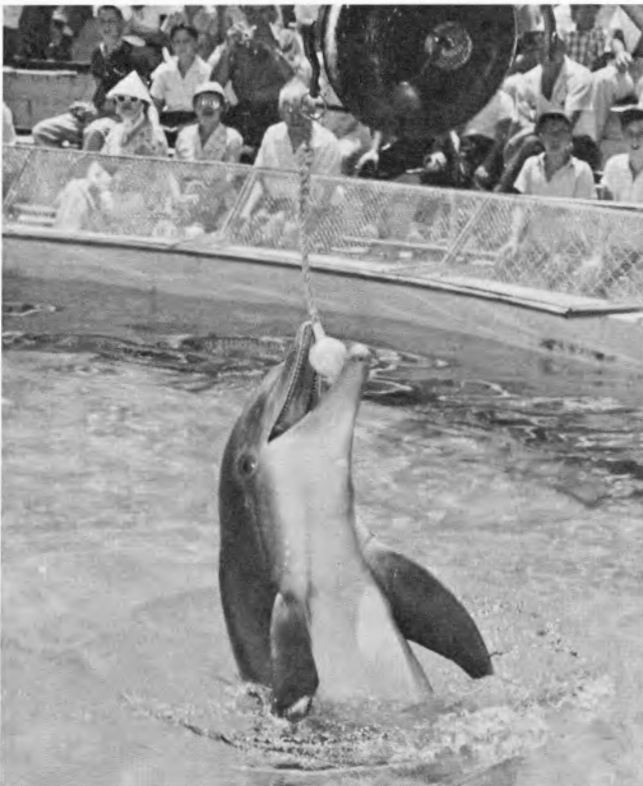
NASA



Randy Taylor-SYGMA

GOD HAS GIVEN MAN DOMINION OVER THE EARTH

King David recognized that God gave man dominion over the earth—including the animals, rivers, oceans and the atmosphere. Man has even used earth's resources to temporarily go beyond the atmosphere. But man's ultimate dominion, as revealed in the Bible, will be far greater—almost too great to believe. He will be given rulership over the entire universe!



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to be revealed to David, for he continues: “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” How did God do this? “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas” (verses 5-8).

David here refers to man’s “dominion” or rule as that over which God gave mankind authority when Adam was created. This includes the solid earth, the atmosphere, the sea and all the creatures God created (Gen. 1:26-28). These are, in part or in whole, under man’s jurisdiction at the present time.

But in the New Testament scriptures, written much later, a *far greater* destiny and dominion for man is revealed!

The Incredible Human Potential

In the book of Hebrews, we read: “For unto the angels hath he [God] *not* put in subjection *the world to come*, whereof we speak” (Heb. 2:5). The theme of the first half of this chapter is “the world to come”—the Millennium and thereafter!

Then, beginning with verse 6, is a quotation from verses 4-6 of the eighth Psalm. Again, the writer of the book of Hebrews shows that God has *now* placed

the solid earth, the earth’s atmosphere, the sea and all living things under man. But the writer is inspired to see something infinitely more profound that is to happen to man in the world to come.

This revealed knowledge of God’s purpose for mankind—of man’s incredible, awesome potential—staggeres the imagination! Science knows nothing of it. Higher education is in utter ignorance of it. And certainly no religion of this world knows it.

Continuing in this passage in Hebrews, beginning as it leaves off quoting the eighth Psalm, the awesome human potential is revealed: “Thou hast put *all things* in subjection under his [man’s] feet. For in that he [God] put all in subjection under him [man], he [God] left *nothing* that is not put under him” (Heb. 2:8).

NOTHING is excluded here!

The Greek word translated “all things” also appears in chapter 1, verses 2 and 3, and is there translated “the universe” in the Moffatt translation. That is the intended meaning in Hebrews 2:8.

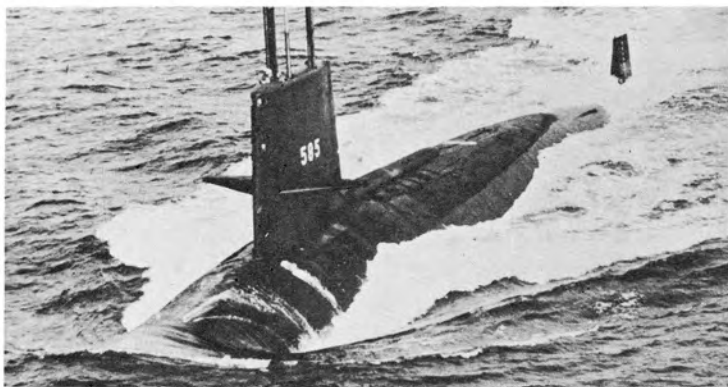
In other words, God is revealing to us that the endless universe, with all its galaxies, its countless stars and planets—*everything*—will eventually be put under man’s dominion! “But now we see *not yet* all things [the universe] put under him [man]” (verse 8). Remember, this is speaking of the “world to come”—not today’s world. Man will be put over “all things” after God’s plan for man on earth is complete—after the last human has been born of God.

But what do we see today? “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour . . .” (verse 9). Man, except for Christ, is *not yet* crowned with glory and honor. But *he will be* in a new age—yet in the future.

The living Christ already sustains the entire universe by His limitless divine power (Heb. 1:3). The passage in Hebrews 2 continues to show His superiority over the angels as the begotten and born Son of God.

Angels are individually created spirit beings. Invisible to human eyes, they are servants of God, ministering to those who are now on a lower level than angels, but who are *heirs* of salvation. The Bible reveals that these heirs shall become the *Spirit-born* Sons of God’s ruling Family as Christ now is! (Heb. 1:4-14.)

What a stupendous, magnificent heritage God has in store for His Spirit-begotten children. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ to inherit the universe! (Rom. 8:14-17.)



H. Armstrong Roberts



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Original Purpose for Angels

What God creates He maintains. What He creates He creates for a *purpose*. He intends it to be put to use—a right use that preserves and improves. This use, maintenance and improvement is controlled by the government of God.

This earth was originally intended to be the training ground for a third of God's angels. The angels, at the creation of the earth, found it so beautiful they shouted spontaneously for joy! (Job 38:4-7.) The earth was to provide a glorious opportunity for them to work it, produce from it, and preserve and increase its beauty.

God's original creation was like the unfinished furniture sold in some stores. This furniture is complete, except for the final sanding, staining and varnishing. Such furniture may be of superb quality—yet lacking the final beautifying touches.

So it is with God's creation. The universe, with its countless galaxies and solar systems containing planets such as our earth, was created perfect, but subject to a beautifying finish, which God intended the angels to accomplish.

The original "unfinished" creation was produced by God. It was perfect and orderly. But God intended the angels to finish this part of His creation by adding the final beautifying touches and utilitarian phases of what was to become the final

completed creation! God wanted to share the joy of creative accomplishment with all the angels!

And whether or not it had been revealed to the angels, it was a *supreme trial and test* to see whether they would continue to obey God's government in accomplishing the task of beautifying and finishing the earth. As they continued to follow God's instructions, they would have been entrusted with the responsibility of finishing the thousands of millions of other planets in the vast, limitless universe!

This was the potential God originally had in mind for His created angelic beings.

Man's Potential Far Greater!

Instead of proceeding with God's plan for them, a third of the angels rebelled against administering the government of God. They finally attempted to replace God and take over the control of the universe. The account of this sin is revealed in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

God then fully realized that He and the Word, who later became Jesus Christ, were the only beings who would *never* sin. Only members of the God Family have that kind of holy, righteous character. So how could the final beautification and completion of the limitless universe be accomplished? Only by the addition of many more mem-

FINISHING A CREATION—This chair, of high quality in material and construction when originally made, was unfinished when purchased. After sanding and varnishing, it became complete. Similarly, God's original creation was perfect, yet still needing the final beautifying touches.



Ambassador College Photos

bers to the God Family who would also have the same holy, righteous character of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

So God created mankind for the purpose of reproducing more members of the God Family. They would help to restore the government of God on earth after their training program in the flesh was complete and they were born into His Family. Then they would go on to finish God's creation, carrying God's government to the uttermost parts of the universe!

Adam had the opportunity to obey God but failed. Had he obeyed, his obedience would have qualified him to replace Satan, who was then and still is ruler of the earth. In failing to replace Satan, Adam also failed to maintain and beautify the Garden of Eden into which God had placed him.

Earth Our Training Ground

God has given this earth to us as a training ground, and this mortal life as the time for our training. As we learned in previous lessons, Adam would have received God's Holy Spirit had he eaten of the fruit of the tree of life. He would have thus begun the process of spiritual character growth, and ultimately would have been born into God's Family. He would have been given the opportunity to finish the creation of the earth and the rest of the universe. But Adam never began his training program.

So Christ, the second Adam (I Cor. 15:45, 47), came to earth about 4,000 years later to qualify to replace Satan and was *successful!* He qualified to restore God's government on earth, and to be entrusted with the responsibility of being in charge of finishing the creation of the universe.

Christ also became the captain or leader of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). He is now at God's throne in heaven as our High Priest. He is helping Spirit-begotten Christians qualify to become His eternal assistants. With Christ's help through His Spirit, the members of God's Church are growing in godly character through obedience to God's Law during this mortal life, which is their training period.

Our incredible potential is to become holy, sinless, powerful, Spirit-born members in God's divine ruling Family! Our spiritual birth into His Family will make us GOD BEINGS just like the Father and Jesus Christ!

Yes, God created man with a far greater potential than the angels, for no angel can ever become a born Son of God. God is now in the process of reproducing Himself through mankind. He is now producing Sons of God who can be trusted to never sin—who will never rebel against God's government as Lucifer did, but will always obey their spiritual Father.

Let's begin our study of God's Word with this lesson and learn more of the details of God's glorious purpose for mankind.

LESSON 22

God Is a Family

The Bible reveals that we were born for a tremendous, awe-inspiring purpose. But few really understand what that purpose is. To fully understand God's glorious purpose for mankind, let's begin this study in the first chapter of Genesis.

1. What do the very first words of the Bible tell us about God? Gen. 1:1. Does the Bible clearly indicate that there is more than one God Being? Verse 26. (Notice the plural pronouns "us" and "our" referring to God in Genesis 1:26.)

COMMENT: As we have learned in previous lessons, the original Hebrew word translated "God" in Genesis 1:1 and throughout the account of creation is *Elohim*. It is a noun, plural in form, meaning more than one—like the words church, family, or kingdom. Just as there is the animal kingdom

and the human kingdom or family, Genesis 1 shows that there is also a GOD Kingdom or Family!

There is *one* God, but God is a Family composed of more than one member. *Elohim*, which means "Mighty Ones," is the name of the God Family.

2. How many divine beings presently compose the God Family? John 1:1-2. Was it the "Word" who created all things? Verse 3. What did the Word later become? Verse 14. Who, then, is the Word? Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2. And who is the other divine member of the God Family? I Cor. 8:6.

COMMENT: John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 take us back to the same time in prehistory—to the original creation of the universe. Both verses reveal that the two supreme beings composing the God Family created all things.

The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John 1:1 is *Logos*. It means "spokes-

man” or “one who speaks.” It was actually the *Logos*—the Spokesman, the Word of the God Family—who “spake, and it [the creation] was done” by the power of the Spirit of God (Ps. 33:6-9; 104:30). And so everything was created and made by the divine being of the God Family who later became the human Jesus Christ.

3. Is God the Father of Jesus Christ? John 1:14, 18, 34.

COMMENT: Nearly 2,000 years ago, the same divine Personage who created all things was begotten in the virgin Mary’s womb by God, who, as a result of this miraculous begetting, became His Father. Yet, at that prehistoric time of John 1:1, the Word was not yet the Son of God. He was “made” God’s Son later, through being begotten by God and born of Mary as a human being, then later born of *God* as a divine God Being.

Thus Jesus became the Son of God. He called the great Supreme Personage who is head of the God Family “Father.” Father is a family title—that of the head of the family! A father-and-son relationship is a *family* relationship.

God to Expand His Family

There are only two members in the God Family or Kingdom at the present time—God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. But your Bible reveals that God is going to *expand* His universe-ruling Family. And *you* can become a member of that eternal spirit-composed Family! See how this marvelous truth unfolds in your Bible.

1. After whose “image” and “likeness” was man created? Gen. 1:26-27; Jas. 3:9, last part.

COMMENT: In God’s pattern for all life, kind reproduces like kind. Just as each plant or animal reproduces after its own kind, so humans reproduce humans. But unlike any of the animals, man was created in God’s own “image” and “likeness.” God made man like Himself—same form and shape. The astounding truth is that God’s purpose is to create mankind after the *God* kind!

Simply stated, God is reproducing Himself. All human beings have the awesome potential of becoming God’s literal children—*members* of God’s own divine Family!

2. Does God plainly state that it is His purpose to increase His divine Family by bringing many Sons into it? Heb. 2:9-11; Rev. 21:7.

COMMENT: Most scriptures dealing with the spiritual children of God refer to them in the *masculine* gender. This is because God is referred to in the Bible in the masculine gender. However, we are all *one* in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28), and shall

be neither male nor female when born of God (Matt. 22:30).

3. Are those who are Spirit-begotten—true Christians—already the children of God and heirs of the God Family? I John 3:1-2; Rom. 8:16-17.

COMMENT: As we learned in our previous studies, converted Christians are now the begotten but not yet born children of God. They will be born into God’s Family at the return of Jesus Christ. For this reason, God ordained the family relationship for human beings as a part of their training prior to their spiritual birth into God’s Family. No other beings—whether angel or animal—have this relationship.

God instituted the human family to be a physical *type* of His own divine Family. He wanted humans to learn certain vital lessons that this relationship teaches (read Ephesians 5:21-33).

4. Are Spirit-begotten Christians also the affianced Bride of Christ? Eph. 5:25-27; II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-9.

COMMENT: The family relationship demands the husband-and-wife relationship. And that demands marriage, mutual love, and faithfulness to the matrimonial bond. The Church of God is composed of the begotten children of God. And the Church, as a body, is the affianced Bride of Christ—to marry Christ at the time of His Second Coming, when the first resurrection occurs.

The Church’s coming marriage to Christ is additional evidence that the Kingdom of God is a *Family*—with Father, Son and Wife—and that God is to *expand* His divine Family! Notice further:

5. Will the humans still alive at Christ’s coming be ruled and taught by Christ and the saints then already made immortal—those who will have become the collective wife of Christ? Dan. 7:18, 27; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:6.

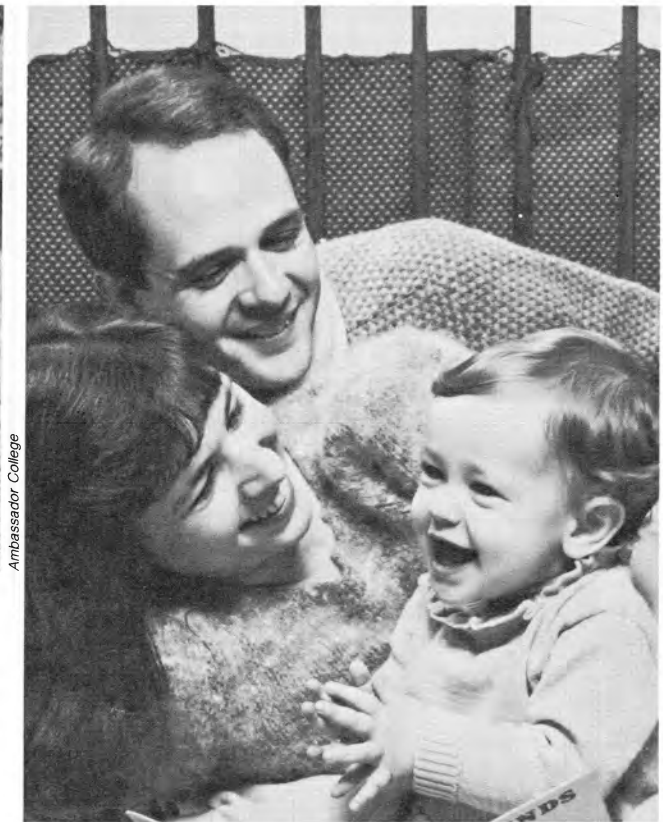
COMMENT: The mortals on earth will be taught and ruled by immortals. Those who seek salvation through Christ will then receive God’s gift of His Holy Spirit. And, after a life of growing in God’s character, as Spirit-begotten children of God must do today, they shall be born into the Family of God.

Thus the marriage of the Church to Christ will result in the begetting and birth of additional divine children—untold millions of Spirit-born members of God’s Family—during the thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints!

Man, and man only, of all life forms God has created, can be born into the God Family—the Kingdom of God. Since humans were put on earth for the very purpose of being begotten, and then born into God’s Family, the Eternal has endowed this God-plane family relationship for humans—and for humans only.



H. Armstrong Roberts



Ambassador College

EACH AFTER ITS OWN KIND

God created animals to reproduce their own kind. Man likewise reproduces after his own kind, yet God tells us that we were made after the *God* kind—after His “image and likeness.” God is in the process of reproducing Himself through mankind!

What a wonderful privilege to be given the marriage and family relationship—that we may be prepared for the spiritual marriage to Christ and divine Family status in the Kingdom of God for eternity!

Christ the Firstborn Son

1. Is Jesus Christ actually the *firstborn* of MANY Sons of God? Rom. 8:29; Acts 26:23; Col. 1:18. When will the other Sons of God be born into His Family? I Cor. 15:22-23.

COMMENT: Christ is the only Son of God who has already been born again, by a resurrection from the dead. Other Sons are now only Spirit-begotten, not yet born. They will be born again (John 3:3-8)—born of God—in the first resurrection at Christ’s coming to rule the earth.

2. Is Christ, as the firstborn Son of God, actually the “captain” or forerunner—the leader—of our salvation through His suffering, death and subsequent resurrection to glory? Heb. 2:9-10. Has He already inherited all power and glory in God’s ruling Family? Verse 9.

3. What made it possible for Christ to be resurrected as the firstborn Son of God? Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:19-20. Will we become Spirit-born members of God’s Family if we have God’s Spirit dwelling in us at the time of Christ’s return or

when we die? Same verses. Also read I Corinthians 15:49-53.

COMMENT: Clearly, it was by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit that God the Father raised Christ from death to glorious immortality, authority and power—just as He will also raise Christ’s Spirit-begotten brothers and sisters to the same glorious immortality and power, but of lesser authority.

As we learned in Lesson 20, Spirit-begotten children of God are now “in training” for the time when they will be born into God’s Family. They will then be given their positions of rulership on earth under their elder brother, Jesus Christ.

Eventually, God wants thousands of millions of perfect and righteous children to be born into His Family, governed by His government, to *complete* in beauty, majesty and glory not only the other planets of our solar system, but of our own Milky Way galaxy and the countless other galaxies of the vast, limitless universe! (More about this exciting future later in this lesson.)

God’s Begotten Children Now Growing Spiritually

Now is *not yet* the time for the birth of the children of God. They are now only in the “begot-

ten” state prior to birth. Now is the time of *spiritual growth* prior to becoming born-again members of the God Family. And the earth is the place of their spiritual growth—the “training ground” for entering the Kingdom of God.

The universe is not the area of training to become like God—it is the *reward* given to us only after we have successfully completed our training here on earth!

1. Does the Bible show that God is in the process of forming and molding His begotten sons as a potter works with clay? Isa. 64:8. During his time of training on earth, did Job realize that God was working with him in a special way? Job 14:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice the latter part of verse 15: “Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” The “work” was Job. Job knew he was a piece of divine workmanship in the hands of the Master Potter. Job was in the process of developing the very character of God during his mortal lifetime of spiritual training.

2. What did God say before creating Adam that further reveals what He intends to accomplish in man? Gen. 1:26.

COMMENT: Notice again the wording in Genesis 1:26: “Let us make man in our *image*.” The original Hebrew indicates far more than merely the outward appearance of God. “Image” also refers to *mind* and *character*. God intends for man, to whom He gave the gift of a thinking, reasoning mind, to be developing the mind and character of God!

The attributes of human mind and character truly make man God’s unique physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with human beings and He intends that we develop His character during this mortal life.

3. Did the Apostle Paul know that Spirit-begotten children of God are being fashioned by God for a specific purpose? Eph. 2:10.

COMMENT: Paul is not speaking of Adam’s creation nearly 6,000 years ago. He is speaking of true Christians, who are now being created unto *good works*. We are God’s “workmanship”—the Creator is still creating us. He is molding, fashioning, changing and transforming us into His own noble, righteous, holy, *spiritual character*!

This process begins in the mind. Repentance is the first step. It is a *change* of mind. The receiving of the Holy Spirit is a renewing of the *mind*. Gradually, through Bible study, learning to live by “every word of God,” being continually corrected by His Word, keeping close to God in daily prayer, and being led and empowered by the Spirit of God, the **NEW MAN**—with holy, spiritual charac-

ter—is being created in God’s spiritual “image.”

If, during this life of spiritual training, our thinking and our ways are changed until we become, in godly character, new creatures in Christ Jesus, conformed to His will, then that clay model, worked over, fashioned and shaped as God would have it, can finally be turned into the finished spiritual creation when born of God.

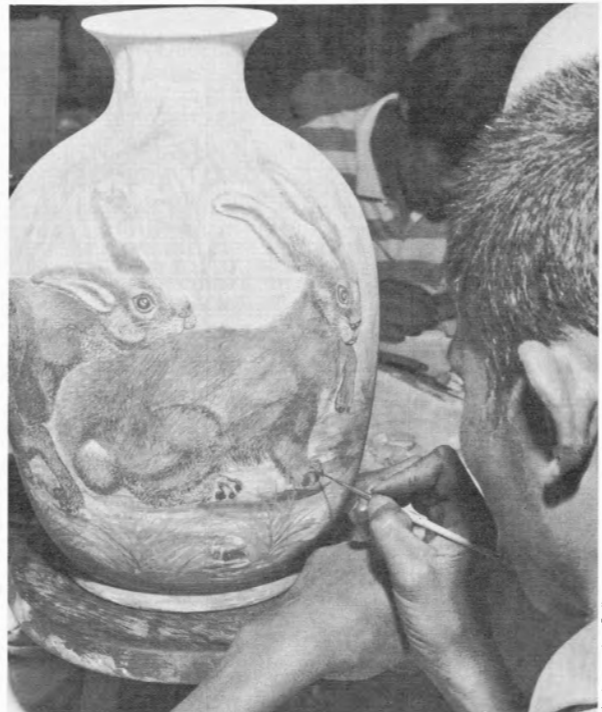
4. Did Paul refer to the completion of his training? II Tim. 4:7.

COMMENT: Paul successfully finished his spiritual training preparatory to his birth into the Family of God. Today, the first 6,000 years of human history are about over. Soon the time will come when Paul and other human beings who have “finished the course” during their time of training will no longer be earth-bound. They will be born into the eternal, spiritual God Family as very Sons of God!

5. After completing “the course” of our training, what happens next? I Cor. 15:47-53. When will our change into spirit composition occur? Verse 52; I Thess. 4:16-17.

COMMENT: Those who are ready to be born of God at Christ’s return will triumphantly and suddenly enter the Family of God. No longer will they be bound to this earth for sustenance, for they will have eternal life *inherent* as a gift from God!

REFINEMENTS—Those the Master Potter calls are being created in His spiritual character image, with refinements being made daily. Shown is a Thai craftsman with his beautiful work of art.



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6. What are those who look forward to becoming Sons of God doing now? I John 3:1-3. Notice especially verse 3.

COMMENT: At the resurrection, God will provide the proper spirit body for the galactic space travel that will be necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the universe-ruling Family of God. Meanwhile, those God is now training are allowing Him to work with them in first perfecting their character.

Prior to becoming the Spirit-born children of God, we are now in the process of “purifying” ourselves by bridling our bodies and controlling our thoughts with the help of God’s Holy Spirit.

Now is the time to be *striving to become* pure in character as God Himself is pure and without flaw (Matt. 5:48). Now is the time of our training preparatory to inheriting the entire universe with Jesus Christ our elder brother!

God’s Purpose Proceeding as Planned

In previous lessons we learned that Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden and thereby cut himself off from ongoing contact with the Creator God. As a result, his descendants were also cut off from access to the Spirit of God and eternal life. Adam could have been begotten of God and eventually born as a Son of God in His ruling Family, had he eaten of the fruit of the tree of life.

Did Adam’s sin thwart God’s plan for mankind, or is it proceeding as originally planned?

Anticipating the probability of Adam’s sin, God had designed a failsafe 7,000-year Master Plan for working out His purpose in man here on earth. During the first 6,000 years, He sentenced man to carry out what Adam had, in effect, demanded for the human race—to go its own way, cut off from God, doing its own thing, relying on the self only. The results of man’s way, as influenced by Satan the devil, have been catastrophic!

Let’s review a few basic scriptures proving that God’s plan for man is on schedule.

1. Has God allowed Satan to cunningly deceive the whole world? Rev. 12:9. Is the devil in reality the god of this world? II Cor. 4:4.

COMMENT: Satan led the first humans into sin (Gen. 3:1-6). So man began the 6,000 years of his sentence with the invisible devil ruling him by deception! From Adam until now, Satan has successfully influenced human beings into forming their own governments, religions, societies and civilization based on his way of “get” instead of God’s way of “give.”

2. During this time in which man has been cut off from God because of sin, can just anyone come to Christ? John 6:44, 65.

COMMENT: Except when God does intervene by specially calling one to repentance and salvation—to a life of training for His Kingdom—*none* can come to Christ. Jesus said so! All are still cut off through sin, except for the few God calls out of a life of sin.

After Adam sinned, it was God’s purpose to prove by 6,000 years of human experience that Satan’s “get” way, which is contrary to the way of God’s government, is the cause of untold suffering, pain, and death—just the opposite of what man really wants.

About 4,000 years after Adam sinned, God, as previously planned (Rev. 13:8), sent Jesus Christ into the world to rescue God’s called from the death penalty, which all have incurred through the breaking of His commandments.

3. Jesus also was a Messenger sent from God. What message of hope and good news did He bring to mankind? Mark 1:14-15; John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Jesus foretold the time when all mankind will *no longer* be cut off from God and ruled by Satan. He announced that the government of God would be restored on earth by the Kingdom of God, composed of the Spirit-born members of God’s Family.

Jesus proclaimed the good news that those called by God may become God’s own children, ultimately changed from material to spirit composition, becoming the members of God’s ruling Family. Of the many thousands who heard Jesus’ message, only about 120 continued as His disciples (Acts 1:15). They were chosen of the Father to be the pioneer members of His New Testament Church. Thousands more were added to the Church through the subsequent preaching of the apostles.

But before A.D. 70, the message Christ and His apostles taught was rapidly suppressed by a growing, deceived counterfeit church. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God was not again proclaimed to the world until January, 1934. It was then that God’s chosen servant and end-time apostle, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, began proclaiming the Gospel over a tiny 100-watt radio station in Eugene, Oregon in the United States of America.

4. Did God long ago prophesy today’s knowledge explosion? Dan. 12:4.

COMMENT: After almost 6,000 years of human history, and during the lifetime of God’s modern-day apostle, we find awesome material progress in the world. Nearly all modern technology and industry has been developed in the past 200 years,

and far more than half of all the world's technological, scientific and industrial development has occurred in this 20th century!

The machine age, the nuclear age and the space age have followed in rapid succession. The automobile, airplane, radio, television and many labor-saving devices have all been invented in very recent times.

Men have also designed and produced incredible computers, and even sent astronauts to the moon and back. And just a few decades ago, men developed the weapons of mass destruction that could erase all human life on this planet, were it not for the great God who has promised to intervene and prevent the annihilation of humanity!

Almost 6,000 years of human history have proved that man's mind, without God's Holy Spirit, is confined to understanding and working with the physical world. Human systems of education have become wholly materialistic, and most of man's motives stem from the attitude of "get." He does not know how to live in harmony and peace with his neighbor, but is capable of going to the moon and back! The appalling evils and problems amidst awesome scientific progress has been the result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden!

For nearly 6,000 years, God's purpose for man has proceeded just as He had *planned* from the beginning. Soon, spiritual salvation will be opened to all humanity after Christ comes to remove Satan from the throne of the earth and assumes the rulership over all nations He qualified for nearly 2,000 years ago.

We are now living in the very last generation of the 6,000-year period in which man was to be cut off from God. We are now nearing the time when God's glorious purpose for those He has called prior to Jesus' Second Coming will become *reality*. They shall then become like God, for they shall be born into His Family as very Gods!

What We'll Be Like When Born of God

Those who are called of God, who receive His Spirit and who grow and overcome spiritually, will be born of God when Christ returns. But what will it be like as a member of God's divine Family? What characteristics and abilities will we possess? Let's have a sneak preview of what it will be like to be a *God!*

1. What must take place to enter God's Family? John 3:3-8. When born of God, will we be like Him? Rom. 8:29; I John 3:1-2.

COMMENT: To be "conformed to the image" of

Christ means to become *like Him*—to be glorified as He is glorified—to become a member of the glorious FAMILY OF GOD as Christ now is! The Bible reveals that we are to become, through a spiritual birth, just like the two members of the God Family. We will possess the same abilities and characteristics of God the Father and our elder brother Jesus Christ.

2. When will the spiritual birth of Christians take place? I Cor. 15:52. When will the resurrection occur? I Thess. 4:15-17. Will they be changed to spirit at that time? I Cor. 15:42-49; Phil. 3:20-21.

COMMENT: When Jesus Christ returns to earth, the Spirit-begotten children of God who have died through the ages will be resurrected to spirit life by the Spirit of God, and those still alive will be instantly changed into spirit beings. At that moment, they will be "born again," this time as members of God's own Family. And God's own offspring will then have eternal life inherent within themselves like Jesus Christ their elder brother!

3. To what did Jesus compare one who is born of the Spirit? John 3:8.

COMMENT: The effects of the wind are easily discernible, but the wind itself cannot be seen. When you are born of the Spirit of God, you will be *invisible* to human eyes, unless you choose to manifest yourself.

4. After His resurrection, was Jesus, with His spirit-composed body, able to suddenly appear and disappear? Luke 24:36-37, 31. Was He able to pass through walls? John 20:19, 26. Can one composed of spirit appear as mortal flesh and bone when necessary? Luke 24:38-40. Can he even eat if he so desires? Verses 41-43.

5. Are spirit bodies capable of traveling through space at incredible speed—undoubtedly faster than light? Compare John 20:17, 19-20 with Matthew 28:9.

COMMENT: Earlier on the day after His resurrection from the dead, Christ would not let one of His disciples touch Him because He had not yet ascended to His Father's throne in heaven. But later that same day, Christ allowed His disciples to touch Him. This clearly shows that Christ traveled to heaven and returned to earth on the *same day!*

"Truth is stranger than fiction," goes the old saying. The marvelous, exciting truth about your awesome potential, as revealed in the Bible, pales into nothingness any science fiction thriller you could ever read or see!

6. Once a person has been changed into spirit, can he ever die? Luke 20:35-36. Is the God Family eternal, or ever living? Ps. 90:2; 102:25-27.

COMMENT: Both members of the God Family have always existed, though our finite human minds cannot understand how this is possible. Nevertheless, God tells us through His inspired Word that we, like God and Christ, will live forever once we are born into the universe-ruling Family of God!

7. Was Jesus “glorified” after His resurrection? John 17:5; Heb. 2:9. How did Christ’s glorified spirit body appear when manifested in a vision to the Apostle John? Rev. 1:13-16.

COMMENT: To be “glorified” means to be given great power and brightness. Before Christ became a human being, He had a glorious, resplendent, powerful spirit body like His Father’s. After His resurrection, He was restored to the same power and glory. Christ’s powerful spirit body radiates light as bright as the sun!

8. Will God also glorify all those who become members of His divine Family by giving them this same great power and glory? Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4; Matt. 13:43. Did Jesus give three of His disciples a fleeting glimpse in a vision of this future glorified condition? Matt. 17:1-2, 9. What other scripture gives us an idea of the future glorified state of those who shall be born of God at the resurrection? Dan. 12:2-3.

COMMENT: The glory that Spirit-begotten children of God are to receive at the resurrection will be so great it will make them shine as the brilliant stars of the heavens—like the sun in full strength!

But this is only a part of what God has in store for Spirit-born members of His Family. Let’s notice other wonderful characteristics they, as God’s children, will possess.

9. The most important attribute of God the Father and Christ, the firstborn Son of God and our elder brother, is their character. What are some of the aspects of God’s divine character that God’s children will possess in *full measure* when born of God? Gal. 5:22-23; II Tim. 1:7.

COMMENT: As we learned in Lesson 11, God possesses holy, righteous character. And He intends that we possess the same love, joy, patience, mercy, faith, kindness, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-restraint and right self-direction that He has. Character also involves knowledge, wisdom, purpose and ability.

It is this character that Spirit-begotten children of God will possess in full measure when born into His Family. In the meantime, God wants us to be developing, with the help of His Spirit, these aspects of His character during our mortal lives.

10. How does the Bible define the nature and

character of God? I John 4:8. What is the love of God? I John 5:2-3. Is God’s *love* (“charity” in the King James Version) the greatest single aspect of His character? I Cor. 13:1-13. Why? I John 4:16.

COMMENT: God’s character can be summed up in one word—LOVE. God’s character travels in the direction of His Law—the way of LOVE. It is the way of giving, serving, helping—of outgoing concern for others. God has that character!

God has an outgoing concern for all of humanity. He gave His only begotten Son to reconcile us to Him, and He makes the joys of everlasting life possible for us. He showers on us every good and precious gift, including the Holy Spirit, which we can receive as a begetting from Him after we repent of breaking His Law, turn from the wrong way of this world, begin to resist it, and turn to Him through faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior!

When born into the Family of God, we’ll possess the love of God perfectly. And through that love, we’ll administer God’s government on earth, and throughout the universe for all eternity.

11. Will those born of God ever sin? I John 3:9. Will they be absolutely perfect as the Father and Christ are now? Matt. 5:48. Will that perfect, holy and righteous character ever change? Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8.

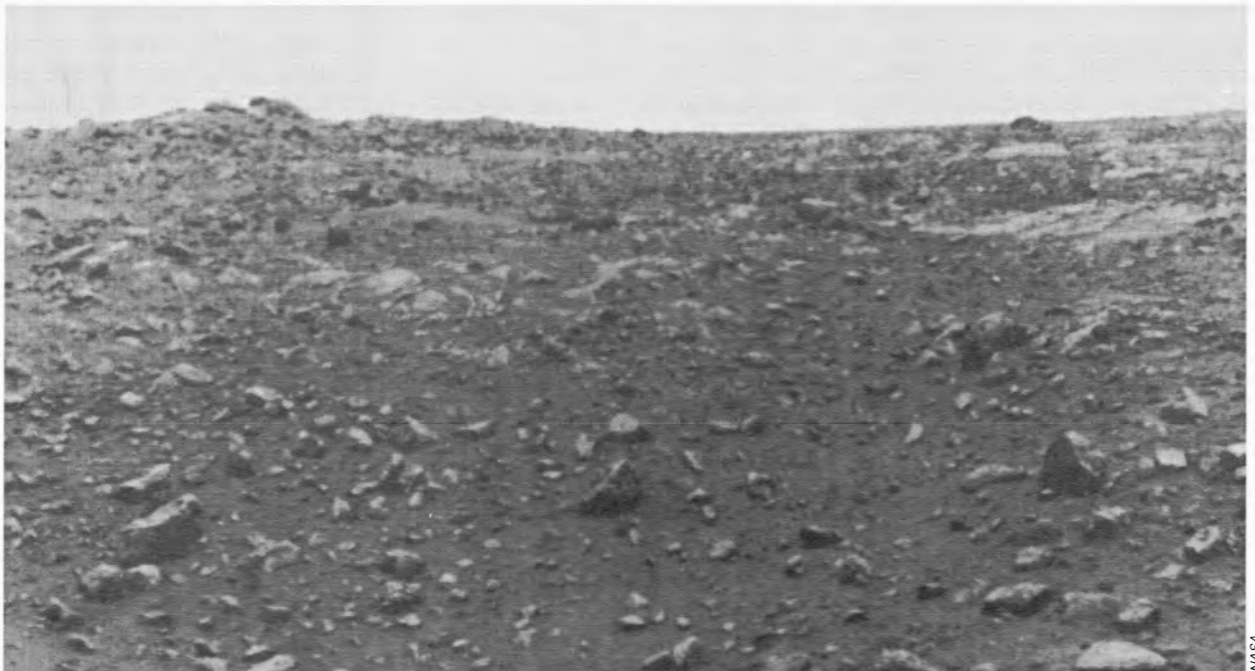
COMMENT: The character of both God the Father and Christ the Son is that of spiritual holiness, righteousness and absolute perfection. That character, as we have just seen, can be summed up in the one word “love,” defined as an outflowing, loving concern for others. It is the way of giving, serving, helping, sharing—not the way of “get.”

It is the way *devoid* of coveting, lust and greed, vanity and selfishness, competition, strife, violence and destruction, envy and jealousy, resentment and bitterness—all characteristics of Satan’s nature.

God’s inherent nature is the way of peace, justice, mercy, happiness and joy radiating outward toward those He has created. He *is* the embodiment of perfect, holy and righteous character!

Since God possesses perfect character, He has determined that He will not go contrary to the perfect, holy, spiritual Law He set in living, active, inexorable motion to cause and produce all good. God has so set His will that He *cannot* sin or transgress His Law.

The character of both God the Father and Christ the Son, which one-third of the angels *failed* to copy and develop, is the way of God’s Law. And, as we have already learned, He is now in the process of creating this same godly character in Spirit-begotten Christians as they, by their own choice



NASA

MARS' DESOLATION—The Viking space mission revealed this barren landscape on Mars—typical of the desolation found on other planets in our solar system. The Spirit-born Sons of God will renew the surface of these planets and *finish* God's entire creation in glorious beauty!

and with the help of God's Holy Spirit, live His righteous way of life!

When we are finally born of God—when we are given a spirit body, after first growing spiritually and developing God's character during our time of training—we will begin a glorious, never-ending life in the universe-ruling Family of God!

A Glorious, Never-ending Future!

The Kingdom of God is the ruling Family of God. And those who become a part of that Family are destined to rule the earth with Jesus Christ for 1,000 years. They will become kings and priests, ruling and teaching in the World Tomorrow.

Thousands of millions will learn to live God's way and be born into His ruling Family during this period. Then, after the Millennium, the billions who died since Adam and before Christ's Second Coming without having had an opportunity to know and understand God's way to salvation, will be raised in a physical resurrection. They will be given the opportunity to become Sons of God during this period of judgment (Rev. 20:11-12), as we learned in the last lesson.

These additional thousands of millions will be *added* to God's spirit Family at the conclusion of God's plan for physical mankind.

It has been estimated that 40 billion (40 thousand million) people have lived from the time of Adam until now. It would be difficult to accurately estimate the number of people who will yet be born and enter God's Kingdom during the Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment periods. There no doubt will be multiple billions.

But let's suppose that 200,000,000,000 (200 billion) are ultimately born into God's Family. Since God is busy working, creating and sustaining what He has created (John 5:17), He knows His Sons would not be happy unless they, too, are working and producing. And so what could keep this incredibly huge Family of God Beings busy for all eternity?

1. Just how great is the authority Jesus Christ has already inherited? Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 28:18; I Cor. 15:27-28. Will those who are born into God's Family *share* in that inheritance as co-owners and co-rulers with Christ? Rom. 8:16-17; Rev. 21:7. And will God's government continue to expand for all eternity? Isa. 9:6-7; Rev. 22:5.

COMMENT: The Moffatt translation correctly renders "all things" in Hebrews 1:2 as "the universe." Incredible as it may sound, your ultimate potential and the potential of every human being is co-rulership of the *universe* with Jesus Christ and God the Father!

But is there really enough "out there" for our



EARTH'S BEAUTY—God renewed the face of the earth, giving it life and beauty that man was to maintain. In the future, God's great spirit Family will be given opportunity to renew, beautify and thus complete the creation of the entire universe!

estimated number of 200 thousand million Spirit-born Sons of God to rule?

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* estimates that there are more than 10,000,000,000,000,000,000 (10 sextillion) stars in the universe. This figure is virtually impossible to comprehend. If an estimate of 200 billion Sons of God is taken as a possibility, that means *each member* of God's Family would be responsible for maintaining and developing 50 billion stars, and their attendant planets—enough to form an entire galaxy!

Our awesome potential is to be born into the ruling Family of God, receiving the very power of God! Together, all the born Sons of God will ultimately be given jurisdiction over the entire universe!

2. Is the whole creation characterized as anxiously awaiting the birth of the Sons of God? Rom. 8:19-23. ("Creature" should be translated "creation," as it is in more modern translations of the Bible.)

COMMENT: Paul here personifies the whole creation of God, including the stars and planets. He shows that the whole universe is waiting with eager longing for the actual birth and appearing of the Sons of God. That is because these billions of perfect and righteous beings, governed by God's divine government, will restore from the condition of *decay* ("corruption" in Romans 8:21 of the King

James Version) that resulted from Lucifer's rebellion, and *complete* the creation of, in all their beauty, majesty and glory, not only the other planets of our solar system (now in utter waste and decay), but also the rest of our galaxy and countless other galaxies in the universe.

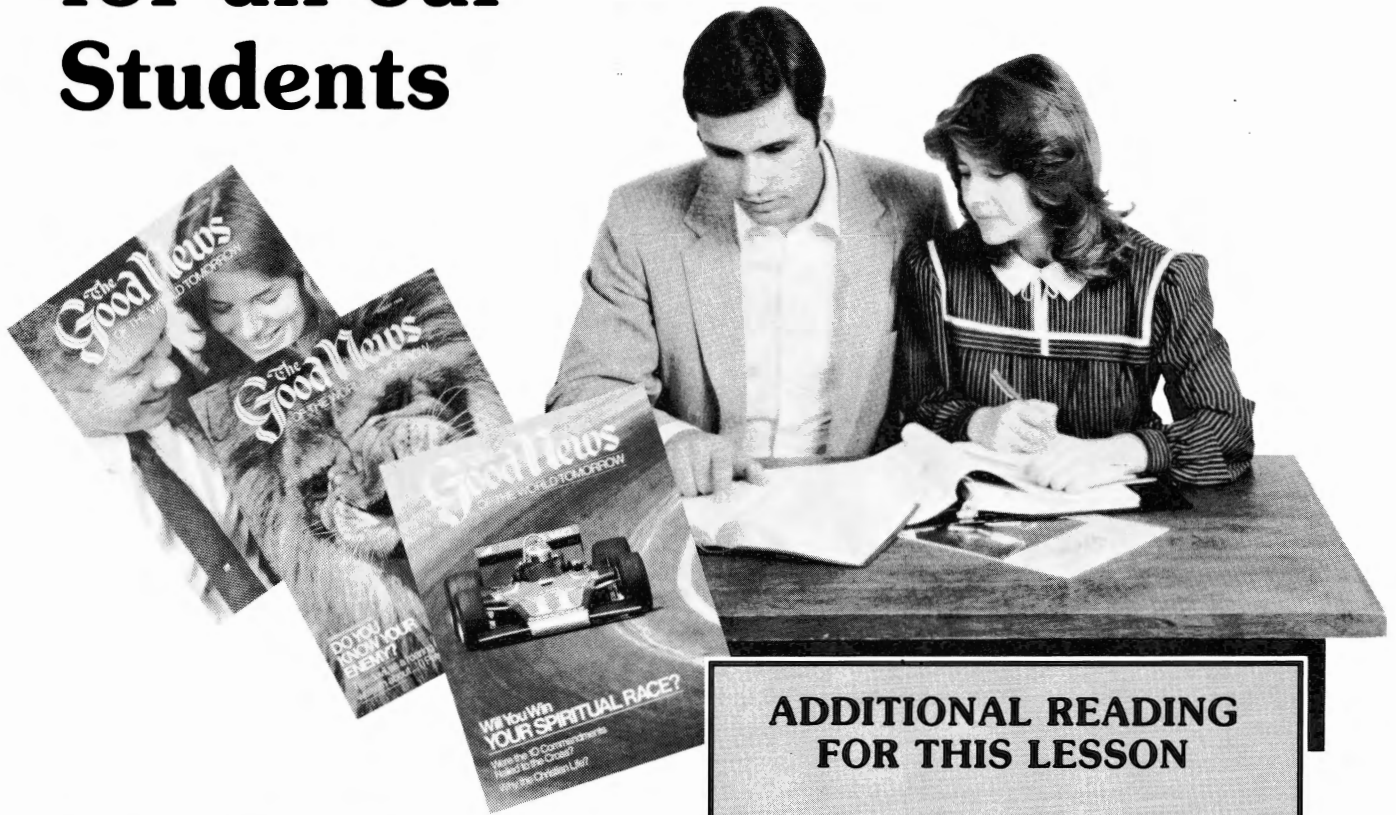
What else are we going to do? God, first of all, is Creator. Those who become the Sons of God will also be *creators!* The Scriptures indicate we shall impart LIFE to billions of dead planets, as life has been imparted to this earth. We shall create, as the Father directs and instructs. Planets will be turned into beautiful, productive, life-sustaining worlds. *We shall continue to create and rule throughout all eternity!*

Revelation 21 and 22 show that there will then be no pain, suffering or evil, because all will have learned to choose God's way, which leads to all that is good. It will be an eternal life of accomplishment, constantly looking forward in joyous anticipation to new creative projects, as well as looking back with happiness and joy over what shall have already been accomplished.

We shall never grow tired or weary. We will always be joyously alive—full of energy, vitality, exuberant life, strength and power! This is the incredible potential of every human being!

Are you in the process of preparing to fulfill this, God's *glorious purpose* for your life?

Supplementary Reading for all our Students

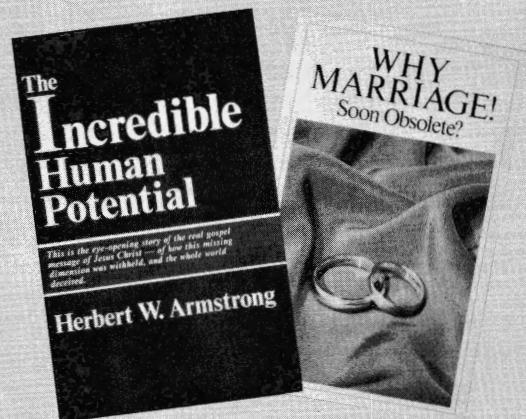


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