

CHURCH OF GOD BIBLE COURSE

LESSON NO. 15

WHAT MAKES MAN UNIQUE?

**Man is GOD'S unique physical creation. But HOW is man different?
WHAT makes him utterly unlike any other living creature?
More important, WHY is he unique?**

The most complex, truly unique mechanism ever designed and made is man with his marvelous mind and body.

With such a complex creation it was only natural that our Maker send along His "Instruction Book"-just as a manufacturer sends along with the instrument or device he manufactures an instruction book describing what his product is designed to do.

SOURCE OF MISSING KNOWLEDGE

That Instruction Book sent from God you have been studying with the help of these lessons. It is the Holy Bible. It reveals the missing dimension in knowledge-the incredible human potential. That all-important knowledge is revealed and made plain for those who will read it, study it, and believe what it says.

God's Instruction Book, tells us what we are, why we are, where we are going, and the way to get there!

It reveals, as we have seen in previous lessons, that "God" is a divine Family composed of two supreme Spirit Beings (John 1:1). God, the head of that Family, has existed eternally With Him there coexists, also from eternity, "the Word," a second Being who also is God. God created all things by and through this coexisting Spirit Being (verses 2-3).

The Word first created angels-composed of spirit, though lesser than God and lacking in ultimate creative power. Next, the physical universe, including the earth, was brought into existence. A third of the angels were then placed here on earth. They were put under the rule of the government of God, which was administered on earth by the great archangel Lucifer.

Under the government of God-which is in reality the administration of God's way of outgoing love as spelled out in the Ten Commandments-the earth was initially filled with peace, happiness, joy and wonderful accomplishment. But ultimately, Lucifer led his angels into rebellion. The government of God was rejected-no longer enforced. As a result, the earth became waste and empty, in confusion and utter darkness.

Later, in six days God renewed the face of the earth (Ps. 104:30). During what is commonly called creation week, God made physical life forms-the flora and then the fauna-that reproduce themselves. These life forms were created without thinking, reasoning, and decision-making processes, and without ethical or moral capabilities-unlike man, God's masterpiece of creative workmanship.

That which makes these God-plane attributes possible in man is the fascinating subject of this lesson! But before you begin this study, be sure to get your Bible so you can turn to each scripture given in answer to the questions. Always read these verses to benefit fully from your study.

MAN IS A MORTAL "SOUL"

In the FOUNDATION of knowledge, God's Instruction Book for man, the Creator God reveals much knowledge totally beyond man's ability to discover for himself-including the knowledge and understanding of what man is, why he was made that way, as well as what he is to become.

God created the first man. And He tells us how He made him so there would be no doubt as to what we really are.

1. Out of what did God form man? Gen. 2:7. Was it the whole man-"thou"-that was composed of dust? Gen. 3:19.

COMMENT: Adam was made from and therefore composed of earth-the dust of the ground!

2. After God had formed the man-made all the cells in his body-what did He do to give him physical life? Gen. 2:7.

COMMENT: God blew into the man's lungs through the nostrils air-"the breath of life"-containing oxygen and the man began to live! Notice that the verse does not say God breathed an immortal soul into the man.

3. Does the "breath of life" also pass through the nostrils of animals? Gen. 7:21-22. Is it therefore the breath of life that is cut off when a human being or an animal dies? Verse 23.

COMMENT: The source of physical life in man and all animals is the same. Not once does the "breath of life" even remotely refer to an "immortal soul" or life apart from the physical body. Otherwise animals, birds and even insects-gnats, fleas, mosquitoes-have immortal souls, for they all have the same "breath of life"!

4. After God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, what did he become? Gen. 2:7, last part.

COMMENT: Man does not have a soul - man IS a "soul"! the Hebrew word for "soul" is nephesh. Bagster's Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon defines it as "anything that breathes, an animal." It can also refer to a "person," or even "one dead, a dead body." In Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16 and Leviticus 1 1:46, nephesh is translated "creature" when referring to animals. And nephesh is translated as "dead body" or "the dead" in Leviticus 19:28; 21-1; 22-4; Numbers 5:2; 6:11 and 9:6, 7, 10.

So man is a creature. Man is a SOUL. Animals are creatures or souls, too! The "soul" is merely physical life that is subject to death and decay.

The soul of man clearly is material, not spiritual. It is not immortal! 5. Is man plainly said to be "mortal"? Job 4:17. And are we emphatically told that "souls" can die? Ezek. 18:4, 20.

COMMENT: Since man is a soul, and the soul is mortal, then man is mortal, subject to death. That is why the Scriptures call human beings "mortal man ' "

6. Was Adam subject to the penalty of death if he sinned? Gen. 2:17, last part. What would he become after death? Gen. 3:19. Was it the body only that would die, or was it the whole man-"thou"-that would die? Same verse.

7. What one thing befalls both man and beast? Eccl. 3:19. Is this because air ceased to enter their lungs? Same verse.

8. Do all men and animals alike go to the same place at death? Verse 20.

COMMENT: When an animal dies, it is dead. When man dies, he is completely dead, too. Both go to the grave. And all men and animals become dust once again.

9. Now what does Ecclesiastes 3:21 ask?

COMMENT: The Hebrew word *ruach*, translated "spirit" in this verse, also means air, wind, breath. It is translated 27 times as "breath" in the King James Version. Three examples are Genesis 6:17; 7:15 and Lamentations 4:20. It is also translated 83 times as "wind." Thus we can see that *ruach* has a very broad meaning, and may be applied to a wide variety of things whose common denominator is invisibility. It can mean "attitude" as well as "spirit," and with the word "holy," it means the Holy Spirit of God.

Solomon asks, therefore, since the same event-death-occurs to both man and beast, "Who knows whether a man's roach goes up or whether a beast's goes downward?" Although the same death befalls both, the Bible reveals there is a vast difference between man and beast, as we will shortly see-and that difference does not have to do with any "immortal soul."

10. When a person dies-becomes lifeless-does he still have a conscious existence apart from the body because of an "immortal soul" that existed within him? Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 146:4.

11. Are the dead able to praise God? Ps. 115:17. Is there any remembrance of God in death? Ps. 6:5.

12. Is the "soul" something which can be destroyed? Matt. 10:28. Then didn't Jesus plainly show that the soul of man is not immortal? Let's understand exactly what Jesus was talking about.

COMMENT: There are those who use this text to support the common belief of the immortality of the soul. Yet this verse plainly says the soul is something that can be destroyed! Thus, whatever this "soul" is, it could NOT be immortal!

The New Testament Greek word here translated "soul" is psuche. The Greek psuche simply means "life", "existence," just as does the Old Testament Hebrew word nephesh.

In Matthew 10:28, the word soul refers to life that man cannot permanently destroy-but which God can. What kind of life could this be? Obviously life which God RESTORES by a resurrection!

Man cannot permanently destroy a life that God renews by a resurrection. Although men may kill their physical bodies, said Jesus, true Christians know that men cannot take from them eternal life, which God has promised to give them at the resurrection. But GOD can permanently destroy all possibility of eternal life. How? By casting a physically resurrected person into the "lake of fire" to be utterly consumed-never to be resurrected again. This is the ultimate penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23)-eternal death!

The book of Luke makes the meaning plainer: "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which AFTER he hath killed power to cast into hell..." (Luke 12:5). God not only has the power to take our present physical life, but also has the power to resurrect us and if we have proven to be disobedient and incorrigible-to cast us into the lake of fire, from which there will be NO future resurrection! (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8.)

This possibility of eternal destruction is a key reason why God made humankind mortal!

WHY CREATED MORTAL

Recall from our previous studies that the government of God ceased to be administered on earth after the rebellion of the archangel Lucifer (now called Satan), and one-third of the angels. Later, God created the first human, Adam, with the potential of qualifying to replace Satan as ruler of the earth, and thus restore the government and way of God. But to qualify as successor to Satan, the human successor had to reject Satan's way and come under the government of God.

God's Master Plan for accomplishing his purpose in the human race took form and shape even before man was made. If mortal man sinned by rejecting God's government-as all but Jesus have-God would make it possible for him to REPENT-to turn from sinning, to be reconciled to God and to live God's way of life, finally to be born of God as members of His eternal Family!

1. Did the Word volunteer, in advance, to divest Himself temporarily of the supreme power and glory He had possessed from eternity, to be begotten by God, and be born of human flesh for the purpose of death to pay the penalty for the sins of mortal man? John 1:1, 14; 17:5; Heb. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Rom. 5:6-9; 1 Pet. 1:19-21; Rev. 13:8.

COMMENT: Since God delegated the actual creation of man to the Word (John 1:3), the Word, when physically born as a human being for the purpose of death, would, in that death, be giving a life of greater value than the sum total of all human lives. And, being Divine as well as human-being God as well as man, He, the person of Christ, avoided sinning through the power of the Holy Spirit, which He possessed without measure (John 3:34). Then He, who never sinned, although tempted in all points just like the rest of humanity (Heb. 4:15), in death could pay in our stead the penalty we have incurred, which is eternal death (Rom. 6:23).

Since God the Father has the power of life and death, He resurrected Christ from death to immortal life-thus making a resurrection to immortal, spirit-composed life also possible for mankind (Rom. 5:10).

2. Does God therefore command all men to repent? Mark 1:14-15; Acts 17:30; 2:38. What are we in reality choosing when we repent? Deut. 30:19-20.

COMMENT: Repentance is turning away from the way of Satan to the government of God. It is accepting God's rule over our lives through His Law of love. It is accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and soon-coming King-the "second Adam" who did qualify (whereas the first Adam failed) to reestablish the government of God on the earth by overcoming Satan. Those who are to reign with Christ must also qualify during this mortal life by turning from and rejecting Satan's way, overcoming that way day by day, and actually living by God's Law of love.

3. Will those who choose life—who repent of sin and obey God—be born of immortal spirit at the first resurrection? I Cor. 15:42-54; John 3:3-8.

4. But what about those who refuse to repent and who reject Christ's sacrifice in payment for their sins—those who refuse to turn from Satan's way and refuse to come under the government of God in their lives—what will ultimately happen to them? Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:14-15; Mal. 4:1-3.

COMMENT: God wants every human being who has ever lived to have the opportunity to repent and live forever (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:3-4). But God will not force anyone to choose life. Those who refuse to follow God's way to eternal life will die the "second death"—the fate of all UNrepentant sinners. They will cease to exist forever. They will be as if they had never been!

We can now see that God chose to make man first out of physical matter instead of spirit for an important reason. Prior to the creation man, He had made angels out of immortal spirit—not mortal flesh and blood subject to death. And one-third of these angels sinned by rebelling against the government of God. But the punishment for sinning angels is not death.

Angels are composed of spirit and therefore cannot die. Since one-third of the angels chose the way of sin, their punishment is eternal loss of the glorious opportunity God gave them to accomplish His purpose on earth. And their sins have resulted in eternal hopelessness and frustration, their minds being filled with resentment, bitterness and rebellion. Happiness and joy have left them forever!

God planned in advance that if man, composed of matter, sinned and refused to repent, he would die—he would be as though he had never been. God will not allow any incorrigible human being to live forever in mental anguish and torment like the fallen angels. This plan reflects the great mercy of God toward mortal man!

When called by God and made to realize that he has sinned—man can REPENT—turn from his sin to God's way. And once his course is changed, with God's help he can pursue a life of obedience to God. He can grow in spiritual knowledge and develop the character of God—overcome wrong habits, weaknesses and faults. (More about this later.) And this is all done through the free will and choice of each human mind. And that brings us to the crux of this lesson!

Only man, of all God's physical creatures, has the seemingly miraculous ability to think, reason, plan, design, and come to conclusions based on acquired knowledge. Animals cannot comprehend the concepts of good and evil. They don't repent.

Have you ever wondered why? Have you ever thought about the vast difference between animal brain and human mind, and what could possibly account for it?

ANIMAL BRAIN vs. HUMAN MIND

There is a great uncrossable GULF between animal brain and human mind. The evolutionary theory assumes that humans are animals. But one thing evolution can never explain is the total difference between animal brain equipped with instinct, and the human mind with creative reasoning powers of intellect and devoid of instinct in the strict sense that animals possess it.

Some animals have physical brains as large or larger than man's brain, and with similar cerebral cortex complexity—but none has the powers of intellect, logic, self-consciousness and creativity.

The physical brain of a dolphin, whale or elephant is larger than the human brain, while a chimp's is slightly smaller. Qualitatively the difference between them and the human brain is very little—not enough to remotely account for the vastly superior intelligence and output of the human brain. The gap between animal brain and human mind is incredibly vast!

1. Were animals created in God's image—or was each created after its own kind? Gen. 1:21, 24-25. Who was created in the "image" and "likeness" of God? Gen. 1:26-27. Was man to rule all other creatures? Verse 26.

COMMENT: These verses reveal God's great plan—His ultimate purpose for mankind. When God molded Adam out of the dust of the ground, he was made in the "likeness"—the outward form and shape—of GOD Himself! God didn't make any of the other creatures to be a clay replica of Himself. This unique form and shape was given to man alone. This is because man was created with the potential to become God!

Each animal was created with a brain suited for its particular animal kind. But animals do not have the potential of MIND and CHARACTER, which God gave only to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power-the ability to think, to reason, to make choices and decisions-as was man!

It is this very SPECIAL ATTRIBUTE OF MIND AND CHARACTER that separates men from animals!

Animals possess what we call instinct. Their brains are "programmed," so to speak, by God with particular instinctive aptitudes to live and perform in a certain way. They follow instinctive habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration and reproduction. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests. These aptitudes are inherited-they are not the result of logical, cognitive or thinking processes.

For example, millions of birds flock south each year as winter approaches in the Northern Hemisphere. They don't stop to "reason" why, they don't ask themselves whether they should, they don't "plan ahead" on itinerary for the trip. At a given internal signal-like the preset alarm of a clock-they leave their summer feeding grounds in the north and travel hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles south. Scientists don't fully understand how or why-they merely observe the operation of this amazing animal instinct.

Each species or kind of bird builds a different type of nest and feeds on specific kinds of foods. Many migrate at different times to various destinations. But none of these actions is planned in advance by the birds. They merely have the capability and proclivity to do that which Almighty God built into the instinct of each at creation.

But man's mind is vastly different from animal instinct. Man is able to devise various ways to do any one thing or to achieve a predetermined goal. Man can acquire knowledge and reason from it. He can draw conclusions, make decisions, will to act according to a thought-out plan.

Man can design and build different types of houses, using different designs and different building materials. Men also eat different foods, prepared in many different ways. Men may live entirely different lifestyles from one another. And if a man wants to change his way of life-he can! Man is not subject to instinct as animals are. He is not governed by a set of predetermined habit patterns.

Man can choose-he has free moral agency. He can devise codes of conduct and exercise self-discipline. Man can originate ideas and evaluate knowledge because he has a M I N D which is patterned after God's own mind! Man can devise, plan, and bring his plans to fruition because he has been given some of the very creative powers of God!

Man alone can wonder, "Why was I born? What is life? What is death? Is there a purpose in human existence?" Man, unlike the animals, not only knows how to do certain things, but he also KNOWS that he knows-that is, he is aware that he has "knowledge." He is conscious of the fact. He is self-conscious, aware of his own existence as a unique being.

These attributes of mind and character make man God's UNIQUE physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with man. And God expects man to develop and become conformed to the spiritual "image" of God's perfect mind and holy character (Matt. 5:48)-just as man now is formed in the physical "image" of God.

"HUMAN" SPIRIT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!

Man was created to have a very special relationship with God that is utterly nonexistent with animals. Man was made in the similitude of the GOD kind. He was made in God's image so that he might one day be born into God's divine Family!

God's purpose in making mortal man after His own likeness demanded mind power in man patterned after God's own mind. That is why the most remarkable thing about man is his mind.

What is it then that separates humankind from the animal kingdom? What gives man this God-plane power of intellect?

It all boils down to a nonphysical component in the human brain that does not exist in animal brain. It is this nonphysical component that makes man so vastly different from animals. It is what makes man truly UNIQUE!

1. Since man does not have an immortal soul within him which enables him to live on apart from his body after death (remember man is a mortal soul), does the Bible nevertheless speak of a "spirit IN man"? Job 32:8, 18; Zech. 12:1; 1 Cor. 2:11.

COMMENT: Many passages of Scripture show that there is a "spirit" IN man! This spirit is not the man-it is something that is in the man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms human MIND. It imparts to man's brain his unique powers of intellect and personality-the ability to think rationally and make free will decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or other types of knowledge such as music, art, carpentry, flying, etc.

But that's all. The spirit that is in man has no consciousness of itself. It is not an "immortal soul."

2. Is this "spirit in man" clearly distinguished from the Holy Spirit of God? I Cor. 2:11.

COMMENT: The spirit which is in man can be called "human" spirit, for it is in each human, even though it is spirit essence and not matter. It is not a "ghost", spirit being, or the Holy spirit. It is not the man, but spirit essence IN the man. It is NOT a soul-the physical human is a soul.

The human spirit, given to every human being by God, does not supply human life-the human life is in the physical blood, oxidized by the breath of life (Lev. 17:1 1). But the spirit in man does impart the power of intellect to the human brain. This nonphysical component in the human brain does not exist in the brains of animals.

The spirit in man is spirit essence, just as in the material world air is a gaseous essence. But this "human" spirit cannot see. The physical brain sees through the eyes. The human spirit in a person cannot hear. The brain hears through the ears. This human spirit cannot think. The brain thinks. The human spirit imparts the power to think far above the level of brute animals' brain function. Without such spirit animals cannot do original thinking.

Whatever knowledge enters the brain through the five senses is instantly stored (recorded) in the "human" spirit within the person, much like a computer stores information. It enables the brain to have instant recall of stored-up knowledge in the spirit, thus enabling the brain to utilize bits of related knowledge in the process of THINKING and REASONING.

The human spirit imparts the power of intellect to the physical brain in two ways: 1) it gives the brain instant recall of whatever the brain calls for in the knowledge stored in this memory; 2) it supplies the brain whatever energy is needed to cause it to think-that is, to put the pieces of information stored in the spirit together in the process we call "thinking", reasoning " and "drawing conclusions" The human spirit also is the very means God has instilled to make possible a personal relationship between human MAN and divine GOD. (More about this shortly.)

Animals also see, hear, smell, taste and feel, but what they perceive through their senses is not stored as in the human spirit. There is no spirit to enable the animal brain to function in the process of thinking, reasoning and acquiring knowledge.

3. Why has the truth about this "human" spirit in man not been understood by the world today? Rev. 12:9.

COMMENT: The marvelous truth about the "spirit in man" is so important that Satan twisted and perverted it long ago. He clouded the minds of men and led them into believing his "big lie" as far back as the time of Adam and Eve.

4. What did Satan tell Eve? Gen. 3:4.

COMMENT: Here was the origin of the "immortality of the soul" teaching so prevalent today! Satan told Eve she would "not surely die"-in other words, she has an "immortal soul" that would live forever. Eve believed this lie. And most of the world today continues to believe some variation of that ancient "big lie"

A SECOND SPIRIT NEEDED

Man has the intellectual capacity to design spaceships to take him to the moon and back, to invent the computer and to do other marvelous exploits in the physical, material realm. Yet during man's nearly 6,000 years on earth, he has proved that he cannot solve his problems with fellowman.

Why has this been so? Because man's real problems are spiritual in nature and the natural man simply cannot solve spiritual problems. In producing the computer or in flying to the moon, he is dealing with physical matter which he can understand because of the human spirit within him. But he cannot solve problems with fellow humans because this involves knowledge and understanding of spiritual principles which he cannot comprehend without the addition of another spiritual element to his mind!

1. What was the Apostle Paul inspired to write about man's understanding of the spiritual things of God? I Cor. 2:9-11. What must be added before a man can comprehend spiritually revealed knowledge? Verse 11, last part; verse 14.

COMMENT: Man was made to need another spirit-the Holy Spirit of God! Just as a human could not know the things of human knowledge except by the human spirit within him, so he cannot know the things of God-spiritual knowledge-except by the addition of the Spirit of God.

Just as surely as no animal brain-such as a cow's or chimpanzee's, for example-can comprehend or understand human affairs without the human spirit, so no human mind can have comprehension of spiritual truths on the divine plane without the Holy spirit'

Even the greatest scientific and philosophical minds simply cannot come to know and understand SPIRITUAL truths with their natural minds. God's truth is "foolishness" to them. The natural man with his human spirit is limited to material knowledge.

Spiritual things cannot be seen with the eye, heard with the ear, felt with the hands. The human mind, which can receive knowledge only through the physical senses, can never really comprehend spiritual concepts and principles without the Holy Spirit of God. A man can come to know that which is spiritual only through God's Holy Spirit, which works with the human spirit in his mind. That is the only way the human mind can receive and comprehend the knowledge of and attain God's GREAT PURPOSE for man's existence!

2. Does God reveal there is duality in the creation of man? I Cor. 15:45-49. Must man be born again to enter the Kingdom or Family of God? John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Mortal man was created incomplete. The complete creation of man is to be accomplished in two stages: 1) the physical phase, which was completed with the first man, Adam; 2) the spiritual phase, which began with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. And to accomplish the spiritual phase, man was made to need another Spirit-the Holy Spirit of God.

3. How does one receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38; John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: Through Christ, the second Adam, we can receive God's gift of His Holy Spirit. Upon repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose death paid the penalty for sin in our stead, we may be reconciled to God and receive the Holy Spirit of God, which is added to our human spirit.

4. Do we then become the begotten children of God? I Pet. 1:3; Rom. 8:14-17. (Recall we studied this marvelous truth in Lesson 8.)

COMMENT: The human spirit in man and the Holy spirit of God join to make a begotten child of God, just as the male sperm cell and the female ovum or egg cell join to make a begotten human, but not yet developed or ready to be born as a human being.

God's Holy Spirit, when it combines with the human spirit in the human mind, does two things: 1) it begets the human with divine, eternal life to be later born into the God Family as a divine being, then composed wholly of spirit; 2) it imparts to the mind the ability to comprehend spiritual knowledge-to understand the things of God.

5. Could Adam and Eve have been begotten by God's Holy Spirit? Gen. 2:9, 16-17.

COMMENT: As thoroughly explained in the previous lesson, the first human beings were freely offered this second and much-needed Spirit. Of the two symbolic trees in the Garden of Eden, the "tree of life" represented God's Holy Spirit. If Adam and Eve had taken the fruit of that tree, they would have received God's Holy Spirit, which would have joined with their human spirits, impregnating them as spiritually begotten (not yet born) children of God.

But by taking of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," our first parents rejected God's Spirit, which would have begotten the very life of God in them and would have enabled them to understand revealed spiritual knowledge. Thus they cut themselves and their descendants off from access to God's Spirit, limiting themselves and the human race to material knowledge and understanding, except for those whom God would specially call (John 6:44).

6. When will spirit-begotten Christians be born into God's spirit Family? I Cor. 15:50-53; 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

COMMENT: The Spirit-begotten Christian now has, conditionally, the presence of eternal life within him (or her) through a portion of the Spirit from the Father. But this does not mean he is an immortal spirit

being. He is not yet composed of spirit. He is now an "heir" of God (Rom. 8:16-17)-not yet an inheritor or a possessor, not yet "born again." But, if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, God will, at Christ's return to earth as King of kings, give us immortality by His Spirit that dwells in us (Rom. 8:1 1).

Now just as in human reproduction the impregnated embryo, which later becomes a fetus, is not yet born but must be nourished for a period of time through the human mother; so the begotten Christian is not yet born into the God Family. The divine life has merely been begotten. It must now grow!

WHY WE MUST GROW SPIRITUALLY

Included in God's purpose for creating man is the development of righteous, spiritual character within him! Notice again what God said in Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image... ' " The original Hebrew here indicates far more than merely the form and shape of God-His outward likeness. "Image" also refers to mind and character! God intended for man-to whom He gave the gift of a thinking, reasoning mind-to ultimately have the very mind and character of GOD!

God's purpose in creating man is to reproduce Himself with perfect spiritual character as only God possesses. Man was therefore created in God's own image and likeness. His own form and shape with a mind similar to His-so God could begin to develop the very character of God in him.

1 . Are Spirit-begotten Christians therefore admonished to grow spiritually? 1 Pet. 3:18;

1 Pet. 2:1-2. Who are we eventually to become like? Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:15; 1 John 3:2, 9.

COMMENT: Just as the human body and brain gradually begin to form during the gestation period in human reproduction, the righteous and holy character of God must begin to form and grow once one is begotten by God's Spirit.

Obviously, we cannot become absolutely perfect in character until the resurrection, when God will complete the process by giving each of us a new, perfect spirit body with its perfect-sinless (1 John 3:2, 9) - nature that will be like Christ's and the Father's. But in the meantime, God wants us to grow in His spiritual character daily by obeying His commandments and overcoming and rooting sin out of our lives-growing toward that spiritual perfection!

Such perfect, holy character cannot be created by fiat. It must be developed, and that requires time and experience. God gives us time in which to learn that only His way of life brings real peace, happiness, and a joyful, abundant life. We will have learned that sin causes only heartache, misery, suffering and death.

2. What is one important way we are to grow once spiritually begotten of God? Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

COMMENT: We become spiritual "embryos" when, upon receipt of the Holy Spirit, we are begotten of God. And to grow spiritually, we must take in spiritual nourishment. Just as the embryo in a mother's womb must be nourished with life-giving food through the placenta, so we must be nourished by the Word of God. "The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Those words are recorded in the Bible-and Jesus said we are to live by every word of God. We drink in these life-giving words from the Bible through reading, studying and meditating (thinking) on what we read.

Spiritual character development requires time and comes largely by experience-by putting the Word of God into practice in our daily lives. One builds the righteous character of God as he comes to discern, through God's revelation in the Holy Bible, right from wrong the true values from the false-truth from error, then chooses the right and rejects the wrong and, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, resists the wrong and DOES the right! Growing in spiritual knowledge and spiritual character is a gradual process that continues the rest of one's life.

3. Is prayer also essential to our spiritual growth and overcoming? Matt. 6:5-15; Eph. 6:18.

COMMENT: In addition to Bible study, earnest prayer is absolutely necessary. We also absorb spiritual nourishment through personal, daily contact with God. When you study the Bible, God is talking to you. When you pray, you are talking to Him. You really get to know God in this manner, just as you become better acquainted with people by conversation.

4. Is the love we share in Christian fellowship with other Spirit-begotten people in God's Church another important way we grow in God's character? 1 John 1:3, 7; Heb. 10:25.

5. Exactly what part does God's Church play in the individual Christian's spiritual growth? Gal. 4:26; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-15.

COMMENT: God's Church is the spiritual "mother" of all who have been begotten by God's Holy Spirit. God has set His called and chosen ministers in His Church to "feed the flock" so the individual members may grow spiritually. Christ has given His ministers the responsibility to instruct, teach and counsel the members of the Church. So just as a human mother feeds her begotten child within her womb through the placenta and umbilical cord, God's children are nourished with spiritual food within the true Church.

And as the human mother carries her unborn baby in that part of her body where she can best protect it from physical harm, the function of God's Church is to also protect the begotten children of God from spiritual harm-from the false doctrines of false ministers who appear as Christ's representatives, but who actually (whether wittingly or unwittingly) represent Satan and his way (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

6. When will we, if we are Spirit-begotten Christians, become fully mature, fully grown members of God's divine Family? I Thess. 4:16-17; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2.

COMMENT: Finally, when resurrected from the dead or changed from mortal flesh to immortal spirit at Christ's return, the incredible human potential will have blossomed into reality. We will have been BORN into the divine Family of God possessing the fullness of the very character of God!

But since the mortal bodies of those to be resurrected will have already returned to the dust of the earth, how will God restore their former appearance and accumulated funds of knowledge? And what about the righteous character God built within them while alive? The answer to these intriguing questions has to do with the "spirit in man"!

SPIRIT "RECORDING" MAKES RESURRECTION POSSIBLE

There is an old saying, "You can't take it with you when you die." You may drive yourself relentlessly to amass a financial fortune in this life, but you'll leave it all behind when you die.

There is, however, something infinitely more valuable in life that isn't lost when one dies. And that is the righteous, spiritual character that God, the Master Potter (Isa. 64:8), is fashioning in those of us who are His Spirit-begotten children. In the resurrection, you not only will look like you do now (without handicaps or blemishes, of course), you will have the same knowledge you acquired in this life-and the same character!

Such men of God as Abraham, Moses, David and Daniel died thousands of years ago. But they will be brought back to life at Christ's return. Since they were composed of corruptible flesh and blood, their bodies have long since decomposed and returned to dust. So how can they exist again as individual personalities? God had to provide some way to preserve their form, shape, appearance, mind and character.

God can bring a dead individual back to life even though a human body that once lived disintegrates, decomposes, or is cremated and scattered to the four winds. It is the "spirit in man" that preserves our very form, shape, memory and character. The resurrected immortal body in the first resurrection will be precisely like the former, though now composed of spirit.

Recall that God puts in every person a separate "human" spirit. As was emphasized before, this spirit does not impart life, cannot see, hear, feel or think. But it does impart mind power to the brain. And this spirit records every bit of knowledge received through the five senses and it records whatever character has been developed during one's life. The "spirit in man" also records the personality of the individual and the physical makeup of the whole body!

1 . But what happens to the spirit in man at death? Eccl. 12:7.

COMMENT: When we die, all consciousness ceases (Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 146:4). The physical brain decays. But the "human spirit, which is not conscious because it has separated from the human brain which makes consciousness possible, returns to God. It is preserved intact by God until the resurrection! It is the one ingredient IN humans which makes it possible for them to live again as the same individuals. Therefore the Bible speaks of the dead as being "asleep" in the meantime (Dan. 12:2).

And so when a person dies, the spirit "recording" returns to God and is "filed" away until the time God will "replay" it to bring about the resurrection of the identical personality to life and consciousness!

To help illustrate how the spirit in man preserves an individual's physical makeup, knowledge, character, personality-actually the whole person-intact until the resurrection, consider how magnetic recording tape is now used to preserve both sound and picture. In sound recording, a voice or the music of an orchestra is electromagnetically recorded. Your naked eye can't see anything that was recorded on the tape, yet it's there. This sound is then reproduced or "resurrected" when played on a tape machine. Until then, however, it makes no sound whatsoever. But when played on a tape machine, the whole sound "comes to life" precisely as it sounded when originally recorded.

In the case of a television tape recording, both video (picture) and audio (sound) are recorded. It comes "back to life" in the form of a vivid full-color picture with sound when replayed!

All of this seems commonplace today. We have come to take these "modern miracles" for granted as part of everyday life. Then should it seem too difficult for the Creator, miracleworking God to preserve the unique individual that we are by means of the "spirit in man"?

2. What type of body will the dead in Christ receive at the resurrection? Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 52.

COMMENT: The resurrection being, now born of God, will be composed of spirit, not of matter as the human model was. He will suddenly come alive with his new body. It will seem like the next second from his loss of consciousness at the time of death. He will discover all his memory intact. He will look as he did when he was a physical human being. The character which was built within him will be there. And he will remain alive forever!

Now we see clearly the great purpose the Creator God had in making man UNIQUE among all His physical creation. Mortal man has within his reach the glorious reality of attaining the resurrection of the dead and receiving immortality-forever being a part of the universe-ruling Family of God!