

# CHURCH OF GOD

## BIBLE COURSE

### LESSON NO. 13

#### WHO AND WHAT IS GOD?

There is much confusion about the **IDENTITY**, the **NATURE** and **PURPOSE** of God. Even traditional Christianity does not really understand. The astonishing truth about God is found in the Bible, as this lesson reveals!

When one of our ministers was in India years ago, he noticed cows and oxen wandering through the streets. He asked his driver, "Don't these cattle stray quite a distance from home?" "Oh, yes," was the answer. "But," the minister asked, "when they wander all over the streets so far away, how do their owners find them, to drive them back home for the night?"

The driver smiled. "The owners don't. But the cattle and oxen know their owners and where they live. They find their own way home in the evening."

#### **GOD NOT KNOWN TODAY**

The preceding incident illustrates the scripture found in Isaiah 1:2-4: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward ' "

These words were directed to ancient Israel, a nation to which God had revealed Himself by many infallible proofs and miracles. But the Israelites rebelled against Him and forgot who and what He is. How much less do the nations today know about who and what God is!

Today, modern science does not know whether God even exists-much less who and what He is. Neither does higher education know or teach the amazing truth about God's reality and identity. Rather, modern education has generally accepted the fable of evolution. Evolution is the atheist's attempt to explain the existence of a creation without the preexistence of a Creator. It totally excludes God from the picture.

#### **A WORLD IN RELIGIOUS CONFUSION!**

It seems utterly unbelievable, but the religions of this world do not know who or what God is! Yet religion is the worship of God. But how can one worship what is unknown?

You live in a world of religious confusion! Among the largest of the world's religions are Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The Christian religion, with its hundreds of denominations and sects, is the largest in number of adherents. Yet not even traditional Christianity really knows who and what God is!

One billion people-nearly a fourth of the world's population-live in China. In ancient times the religion in China was ancestor worship. Then came Confucianism, Taoism, and later, Buddhism. Today, communism prevails and therefore the nation is atheistic.

In India, the second largest nation in population, Hinduism is the chief religion. Do the multiple millions of Hindus know who and what the true God is? The answer is an astounding no!

Russian Orthodox Christianity was once the predominant religion of Russia, the third most populous nation. But now it, like China, is atheistic.

In ancient Egypt, the people worshiped Isis and Osiris-Egyptian gods corresponding to Nimrod and his mother-wife, Semiramis. The ancient Greeks and Romans had mythological gods such as Jupiter, Hermes, Dionysus, Zeus, Apollo, Diana and many others. But they did not know who and what God is, and neither do their modern-day descendants!

There is only one church on earth today that knows WHO and WHAT God is! That one true Church was founded in A.D. 31 by Jesus Christ, and that "little flock" is still in existence today!

### **THE "UNKNOWN GOD" REVEALED**

In Acts 17:15-34, we are told of the Apostle Paul's stay in the Greek city of Athens, where he preached God's truth. In the first century world, the Athenians were considered to be the intellectuals. One day, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered the Apostle Paul.

"What will this babbling say?" queried some in ridicule (Acts 17:18). Others said sarcastically, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods."

These intellectuals then brought Paul to Areopagus, the supreme educational and religious court of Athens, located on Mars' hill.

"May we know," they asked, "what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears" (verses 19-20).

Here were the world's most scholarly men. And Paul began preaching the truth of God to them.

"Ye men of Athens," said the apostle forthrightly and boldly, "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your [idolatrous] devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (verses 22-26).

WHO is God? He is the Creator, the One who "made the world and all things therein." Creation is the basic proof of God's existence. These Athenian Epicureans and Stoics, like the adherents of many religions today, did not even know that.

But what is the real NATURE of the Creator God? Just WHO and WHAT is God? We need a more concrete understanding than to merely say: "the Being who created everything." Certainly that is the starting point, but there is much more.

Before beginning your study of this all-important subject, be sure to get your Bible so you can look up every verse given in answer to the questions asked in this lesson. This procedure is absolutely essential in your study of the Bible with this course. "Study", said the Apostle Paul, "to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15). Be sure to "prove all things," as Paul exhorted the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:21).

Now let's begin this fascinating and revealing study of God's Word.

### **GOD IN PREHISTORY**

If you were asked where in the Bible can one find the earliest account of the existence of God, you would probably say: "Why, in the very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, of course."

Wouldn't that be right? Wrong!

Let's begin this study by going back in time into prehistory, before the existence of the material universe.

1. Where, in the time-order of God's existence, is the earliest revelation of WHO and WHAT God is? John 1: 1 -3.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John 1: 1 is Logos. It means spokesman, or one who speaks, and is the name of a divine Being.

2. Was the Word made flesh? Verse 14. Did He live on earth as a human being Same verse and Matthew 1:23. Is He the only begotten son of God the Father? John 1: 1 once again.

COMMENT: The Word is a divine Being who was made flesh and blood nearly 2,000 years ago. He became the human Jesus Christ! He was begotten by God who through this very begetting, became His Father.

But at the prehistoric time described in John 1:1, the Word was not yet the Son of God and God was not yet His Father. He was made God's Son later, through being miraculously begotten by God and born of the virgin Mary as a human being.

Jesus' begetting by God the Father was unique in the history of the world. Mary, His mother, was the only virgin who has ever conceived a child whose father was God! In the sense, Jesus is the "only begotten" Son of the Father.

So at the prehistoric time described in John 1:1-3, we find revealed the existence only two divine Beings. One is God. And with God is another Being who also is God the One who was later begotten and born as Jesus Christ.

3. Hebrews chapter 7 sheds more light on the preexistence of Jesus Christ Speaking of Melchizedek, who was "King of righteousness" and "King of Salem" (which later became known as Jerusalem) in the days of Abraham, we are told that He was the High Priest of God Most High. Had Melchizedek also existed from eternity? Heb. 7:3.

the risen Jesus Christ our eternal High Priest today? Heb. 6:20; 7:25-27.

COMMENT: Since Melchizedek was without descent, was "like unto the Son of God," and abides as High Priest forever, and since Jesus Christ is now our eternal High Priest, Melchizedek and Christ (the Word) are one and the same divine Being!

Christ, when He was the Word, was an immortal Being who had always existed. There had never been a time when he did not exist-He was literally without "beginning of days." He was then "like" the Son of God, but He was not yet the Son of God. He was God, along with God who became the Father.

Both members of the God Family have existed eternally (Ps. 90:2; Heb. 1:8,10-12; I Tim 1: 17). It is impossible for our finite human minds to understand how these Beings could have always existed, but neither can we really understand what electricity is. Yet we know electricity exists and is very real!

4. Exactly why did the Word-the second member of the God Family- become a flesh-and-blood human being? John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-10; Heb. 2:9-10.

COMMENT: Jesus was both human and divine. God was His Father and Mary was His mother. He was both the "Son of God" and the "son of man." He was born of the virgin Mary so that, as a human, he could die for the sins of all mankind.

As the Son of God and as the Creator of the entire universe and all of mankind (John 1:3; Eph. 3:9), Christ's life was worth more than all other human lives combined! Therefore, He could pay the death penalty of sin for the entire human race, so that others could receive God's Spirit and ultimately be born into the Family of God and become Christ's younger brothers (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11).

### **WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?**

1. In whose image and likeness did God make man? Gen. 1:26. Can we therefore conclude that both members of the God Family look like a man? Same verse.

COMMENT: We know what form and shape a man has. Since Adam was created in the "image" of God, after His "likeness," God therefore has the form and shape of a man. The Bible reveals that God has a face, torso, arms, legs, hands, fingers, feet and toes.

2. Recall that the Word of the God Family became flesh and blood and lived on the earth. Did Jesus look so much like other men in His community that He had to be specially pointed out to be identified? Matt. 26:47-49.

3. Whom did Jesus tell Philip that the Father in heaven looked like? John 14:9.

4. Even though God the Father looks like a man, what is He composed of? John 4:24.

Is He therefore invisible to human eyes? I Tim. 1: 17.

5. Are the Father's and Christ's appearances described as glorious? John 17:5. What does Jesus, after His resurrection and restoration to former glory, look like? Rev. 1:13-18.

COMMENT: If we could see both God the Father and Christ the Son as they appear today in their glorified state in heaven, their faces would be as bright as the SUN in full strength! Their eyes would be like flames of fire, their feet like burnished brass and their hair as white as snow!

### **GOD IS A FAMILY, NOT A LIMITED "TRINITY"**

We have learned that two Supreme Beings-God and the Word-have always existed. But what about the generally accepted Trinity doctrine of traditional Christianity? According to this teaching, God is composed of three divine Beings: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Do you know how the Trinity concept entered the Christian-professing world? It most emphatically did not come from the Bible!

We read in Revelation 12:9 that all nations have been deceived by Satan the devil. It seems incredible that Satan not only could have deceived the whole world, but also "Christianity"-the very religion bearing Christ's name and claiming to be His religion. Yet, paradoxically, Satan did! How did he introduce the false doctrine of the Trinity?

Satan's deception was accomplished through a great false church, which was started in A.D. 33 by a man named Simon, who is mentioned in the eighth chapter of Acts. Simon was the leader of the pagan Babylonian mystery religion in Samaria. Two years after Jesus Christ founded the Church of God, the deacon Philip, who later became an evangelist, went to Samaria and preached Christ's Gospel there. Simon, sorcerer who had bewitched the people of that region, came with the crowd to hear what Philip had to say.

1. Did all the people of Samaria follow Simon? Acts 8:9-11. Had he deceived them into believing he was a man of God? Verse 10.

2. But when these same people believed Philip, who was preaching Christ and the Kingdom of God, were they baptized? Acts 8:12. Was Simon also baptized? Verse 13.

3. When the apostles Peter and John came to Samaria to lay hands on the newly baptized for the receipt of the Holy Spirit, did Simon try to buy from them what he thought was the power to impart the Spirit of God? Acts 8:18-19. Did Peter recognize that although Simon had been baptized along with a number of others, his attitude was totally wrong, and that he only desired to gain more power and further exalt himself in the eyes of the people? Verses 20-23.

COMMENT: Peter strongly rebuked Simon for his evil intentions. But Simon refused to repent, as indicated by his merely asking Peter to pray for him (verse 24).

Desiring to exalt himself among the people, Simon proclaimed himself an apostle, appropriated the name of Christ and began calling his pagan Babylonian mystery religion "Christianity" He accepted the doctrine of "grace" for the forgiveness of sin (which the pagan religions had never taught), but then turned grace into license to disobey God (Jude 4). He planned to turn his pagan religion, now under the name "Christianity," into a universal religion, and to use this as a means of eventually gaining political rule of the world!

Simon's religion grew rapidly. About 20 years later, the Apostle Paul indicates that much of the Middle East had turned from the true Gospel to a clever counterfeit! (Galatians 1:6-7).

But how did the Trinity doctrine become stamped upon the counterfeit Christianity started by Simon?

In A.D. 325, the Roman Emperor Constantine called the Nicene Council to settle several religious controversies, which included arguments about belief in a Trinity. Constantine was not then yet a "Christian," but as political ruler he assumed control of the church. The religious council approved the Trinity doctrine. Constantine then made this teaching law throughout the empire. But he was not able to make it the TRUTH!

The word "trinity" is not found anywhere in the Bible. That is because God is **not** a Trinity!

Recall from our studies with Lesson 8 that the false doctrine of the Trinity was further promoted by the addition of uninspired wording to I John 5:7-8. Those words were a by editors to the Latin Vulgate translation probably in the early fourth century.

There is a definite reason why Satan, the arch deceiver, wanted this false doctrine introduced into this world's Christianity. The Trinity doctrine is his clever attempt to completely do away with the heart and core of the Gospel Jesus Christ preached "Gospel of the Kingdom of God." It limits the number of members of the God Kingdom or Family to only three-with no possibility of expansion!

Jesus' Gospel is the message He brought to mankind from God the Father-the news of the Kingdom or Family of God coming to rule the earth. That is the one above all else Satan wants to hide from the eyes of man'

Through the Trinity doctrine, as well as other false doctrines, Satan has thoroughly deceived traditional Christianity, believe it or not!

Notice the candid admission of one world famous evangelist who teaches the doctrine: "When I first began to study the Bible years ago, the doctrine of the Trinity was one of the most complex problems I had to encounter. I have never fully resolved it, for it contains an aspect of mystery... To explain and illustrate the Trinity is one of the most difficult assignments."

The reason it is so difficult is because it simply is not true!

4. Does Genesis 1:1 speak of one God?

COMMENT: "in the beginning God..." was written by Moses in the Hebrew language. The English word "God" is translated from the Hebrew word Elohim-a plural noun. It, like the words "family," "team" and "church", denotes more than one component forming a whole.

God is NOT a Trinity. God is a Family composed of the TWO Personages mentioned in John 1:1. However, the God Family will not always be composed of only two divine Beings.

God is in the process of expanding His divine Family! Many thousands have already been begotten by God's Spirit, and will soon be born into His Family (either by a resurrection from the dead or an instantaneous change to immortality) at the return of Jesus Christ. Still later, thousands of millions will eventually be born into the Family of God!

Jesus Christ, by His resurrection, was born a divine Son of God (Rom. 1:4). But He is only the firstborn of MANY BRETHREN who will also be born into the God Family (Rom. 8:29).

God the Father is the divine Father of the GOD Family, and when we who are now the Spirit-begotten sons of God are BORN into His divine Family at Christ's return, we shall be like God (I John 3:2), for we shall then be the Spirit-born Sons of God!

## **GOD IS CREATOR**

1. Did God create all things by Jesus Christ (the Word)? John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2, 10.

2. How did the Word create the universe and everything that exists? Ps. 33:6-9; 148:1-5; 104:30; Gen. 1:1-3. Does God the Father, as the Supreme Creator, tell Christ what to do? John 8:28-29. And does Christ always obey? Same verses.

COMMENT: Christ at all times does what His Father tells Him to do. When creating all things, He spoke, as the workman, and the Holy Spirit was the power through which all that Jesus commanded was accomplished.

3. But matter-the earth, stars and galaxies-was not the first thing God created.

What does the Bible reveal was created before the material universe? Job 38:4-7.

COMMENT: In verse 7 the biblical terms "morning stars" and "sons of God" refer to angels. Notice that Revelation 12:4-9 speaks figuratively of the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion as the "stars of heaven." In Isaiah 14:12, we learn that Satan, before he sinned, is referred to as "Lucifer, son of the morning" or "Day Star" (see margin of most Bibles).

In Job 1:6 we read that when the "sons of God" (angels) presented themselves to God, Satan came among them. Angels here are referred to as "sons of God" only in the sense that God is their Creator. There is no father-son relationship as Jesus has with God the Father. Angels were not begotten and born of God, as was Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:5)-they were created.

Angels are individually created beings. They can never be begotten by God the Father through His Holy Spirit or be born into His Family as humans can. (Recall that the subjects of spiritual begetting and birth have been thoroughly explained in previous lessons.) But angels shall forever remain the "sons of God" in the sense that God created each angel a separate, immortal spirit being.

And so we find that the angels, who had been created previously, were shouting for joy at the creation of the earth, perhaps millions or billions of years before the creation of man. How many angels God created and how long ago, He does not reveal. However, the earth, at first, was the abode or home of angels. The next lesson will reveal much more about the creation, purpose and activities of the angels.

4. Was the entire material universe created at the same time as the earth? Gen.1:1.

COMMENT: Genesis 1:1 speaks of God creating the heavens and the earth. In the Authorized (King James) Version, the singular form of the word "heaven" is used. But other translations render the original Hebrew in the plural form-"heavens"-implying that the entire material universe was created simultaneously with the earth.

### **A PERFECT CREATION BECOMES RUINED!**

We have learned that two all-knowing, all-powerful, all-perfect Superbeings have existed from eternity-possessing supreme mind and creative power. These two divine Beings, composing the nucleus of the God Family, created the entire universe, including man.

Just as human beings think, plan and design before starting to build or construct, so these two Superbeings thought, planned and designed the entire creation. There was no hurry. They may have thought and planned for many millions (or even billions) of years as we count time, before the actual creation.

But these two Supreme Beings first designed and created the angels, which are invisible to human eyes. God created these spirit beings before creating planet earth, the home or "habitation" (Jude 6) for at least a third of the angels. The angels were so filled with joy and happiness that they "sang together" and "shouted for joy" when the earth was created (Job 38:7)

1. In addition to the creation of angels, the earth and the heavens, did God also create governmental administration? Col. 1:16.

COMMENT: The Bible reveals that God placed the great archangel Lucifer on a throne on earth to administer God's government over the angels who were placed here. God's Law, by which Lucifer was to rule, is a way of life. It is the way of love-outgoing concern for the welfare of others-the way of peace, harmony, helping, serving, sharing.

2. Did Lucifer continue to administer God's government on earth, or did he rebel and thereby sin greatly? Ezek. 28:12-15; Isa. 14:12-14. (The "king of Tyrus," as succeeding verses in Ezekiel 28 show, refers to Lucifer, now Satan, the evil spirit being who will inspire the prophesied human "prince of Tyrus" - verse 2.) Who followed Lucifer in his rebellion? Rev. 12:3-4.

COMMENT: The archangel Lucifer rebelled against God. Instead of continuing to administer the government of God on earth, he became a traitor. In his rebellion, one third of all the angels followed him in his unsuccessful attempt to invade and take over God's headquarters in heaven and dethrone the very Creator God Himself! Lucifer was renamed "Satan," which means "adversary", and the angels who followed him in this attempted coup became "demons."

3. Did the beautiful and majestic earth become waste and empty, chaotic and in confusion as a result of Lucifer's sin? Gen. 1:2.

COMMENT: The Hebrew words for "without form and void" are *tohu* and *bohu*, which mean "chaotic and in confusion," "waste and empty."

The words *tohu* and *bohu* are also used in Jeremiah 4:23, Isaiah 24:10 and Isaiah 34:1. In each of these scriptures the condition of chaos and confusion was a result of sin.

4. In Genesis 1:2 we find the earth in chaos and confusion. Is that the way God created it? Isa. 45:18.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word translated "in vain" in Isaiah 45:18 is *tohu*. This is the identical word used in Genesis 1:2, meaning confusion, emptiness or waste-in this case a result of rebellion against God's government and His Law.

In Isaiah 45:18 we have the plain statement that God created the earth NOT "tohu", that is NOT in confusion, NOT in disorder. But in Genesis 1:2, the earth "was," or the earth **became** -as it ought to be translated-chaotic and in confusion!

5. What does Genesis 19:26 tell us that further proves the earth became different from what it was when originally created by God?

COMMENT: The same Hebrew word translated "was" in Genesis 1:2 is translated "**became**" in Genesis 19:26. There it clearly refers to a changed condition. So the word "was" in Genesis 1:2 denotes a condition that was different from a former condition. In other words, the earth "became" something it had not always been before. The Rotherham translation of Genesis 1:2 reads as follows: "Now the earth had become waste and wild " It hadn't always been that way!

God did not create the earth in a state of confusion, topsy-turvy and chaotic. I Corinthians 14:33 states that "God is not the author of confusion." But the devil is ! God is the author of peace, of order and of law.

God would not have created the earth in disorder, chaos and in confusion just to straighten it out. That doesn't make sense!

6. After the destruction of the earth's surface resulting from the sin of the angels, did God then recreate the surface of the earth and make it habitable for plant, animal and human life? Ps. 104:30. Also read the entire first chapter of Genesis, noticing especially verse 26.

COMMENT: After Lucifer's rebellion caused the ruination of a perfect earth, God set out to renew the surface of the earth, making it a place fit for human life.

God then undertook the most stupendous creation of all-that of reproducing Himself through human beings! The ultimate creation of God Beings as members of His divine Family, superior to angels, will be the crowning pinnacle of God's creative power-the zenith of all divine accomplishment!

God producing Himself is a project so transcendentally and incredibly awesome it is hard for the human mind to grasp. The great God-who is self-existent, before all else, Creator of all else-is in the process of reproducing Himself, creating what will ultimately be millions of others like Himself. God's Sons will each be divine, powerful and perfect in character-each by his own free choice perfectly likeminded with the Father, having so set himself that he will not-cannot-sin! (I John 3:9).

To accomplish this incredibly awesome feat, God first made man from the dust of the ground in His own "likeness". This was so that humans, upon God's call to repentance and begetal by the Holy Spirit, could begin to develop the character of God while still flesh and blood. Then, at the resurrection, they will be changed to immortality and given powerful spirit-composed bodies like that of the Creator God Himself!

7. After God's plan for humanity is complete, will He then create new heavens and a new earth? Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1-5.

COMMENT: The chaos caused by Lucifer's rebellion can be seen throughout our solar system. Apparently the rest of our galaxy and the entire universe have been affected as well. But God will one day make all things new!

In the meantime, God has made the earth a habitable place for man. Yet, He has allowed the devastation, clearly visible on other planets (as evidenced by photos of pockmarked landscapes taken by deep space probes) and in space debris, to remain as mute testimony to the results of SIN-of going contrary to God's government and His way of life.

8. Did Isaiah clearly indicate that the government of God will expand not only on the earth, but eventually to other parts of our galaxy and even throughout the universe? Isa. 9:6-7.

COMMENT: God promises there will be no end to the increase of His government! Peace, harmony, happiness and eternal joy will spread throughout the universe.

But only those who develop God's righteous character and are born into His divine Family will become part of His government, prophesied to soon be restored on this earth.

## DUALITY PRINCIPLE IN CREATION

The Bible reveals there is duality in God's creative process-including the creation of godly character within man.

First, it is important to understand that the angels were created in two stages. The duality principle is seen in their creation as well as in the creation of the earth and man.

God created the angels with minds-with the ability to think, know, reason and make choices. But their creation could not be a finished creation until character-either good or evil-was developed in them. This is a process requiring time and experience. The character development was the second stage of their creation.

God initially instructed the angels in His way of righteous character. It is the way God's spiritual Law-the basis of God's government. Then came the time of the creation of the physical universe. Here again we find the duality principle involved.

God's physical creation can be compared to unfinished furniture sold in stores. Such furniture may be of fine quality, but it lacks the finishing touches-it needs to be sanded then lacquered, varnished or painted.

At the time God created the heavens and the earth-the universe with its countless galaxies containing solar systems and attendant planets-they, like unfinished furniture were not yet complete. They were a perfect, orderly creation, but more was yet to be done before that original creation would be finished!

Now we come to a double duality in the creation of the angels and of the earth.

God's Word tells us the earth was inhabited by angels prior to the creation of man. Scripture indicates that God placed at least a third of the angels on earth. They were given the opportunity to share in finishing the earth-working with its many elements to improve, beautify and complete it.

This required harmonious teamwork-all working together toward the common God-ordained goal. God intended the earth to be the "proving ground" to QUALIFY the angels-by righteous character development and by finishing earth's creation participate with Him in the ultimate completion of the billions of planets of the universe!

1. Whom did God place in authority on earth to regulate this angelic effort and administer the government of God over the angels? Read Ezekiel 28:13 Isaiah 14:12-14 once again.

COMMENT: We learned that Lucifer ultimately turned against God and sinned. And when Lucifer (now Satan) sinned, the government of God and His Law-the means of building and instilling righteous, holy, perfect character-were abolished from the earth.

2. When Jesus Christ returns to earth, will He restore all things, including the government and Law of God over all the world? Acts 3:20-21; Isa. 2:2-3; 11:9.

COMMENT: The government of God leads those under it into God's way of life, which is the way of His Law. It is the way that develops righteous, holy and perfect character. It is the way that produces peace, harmony, happiness, joy and abundance. It is the way of love. Therefore the government of God must, and will, be restored on earth! That is uppermost in God's mind.

3. What was the first step in God's plan to restore His government on the earth? Turn to and read Genesis 1:26 once again.

COMMENT: God created man to have rule over the earth. God's purpose in creating man was to:

- 1) restore the government of God upon the earth;
- 2) complete the physical creation of earth, which the angels had turned to ruin
- 3) in the process, complete the creation of man by developing righteous spiritual character in him ;and
- 4) establish the Kingdom of God, which will become composed of countless divine God Beings, who will eventually finish the creation of the vast universe.

This supreme purpose required that man reject Satan's way and embrace God's way of love, based on God's spiritual Law. It required that man first be made of matter so that if he was led into Satan's way he could be changed-"converted" to God's way of love through repentance, baptism and the receipt of the Holy Spirit. This was absolutely necessary because spirit, once a finished creation (like the character of those angels who became evil) cannot be changed! Spirit is constant and eternal-not subject to change. But physical matter is constantly changing and therefore capable of further change.

The first human was created with the potential of qualifying to replace Satan as the world's ruler under God, thus restoring the government and Law of God to this earth. But it was necessary that Adam first resist and reject Satan's "get" way and choose to live the way of God's Law-the way of God's love, which is the "give" way.

After creating Adam and Eve, their Maker-who is the Source of all wisdom and knowledge-instructed them in the government and Law of God. (The account in Genesis chapter 2 reveals only a very

condensed summary of God's instruction.) Satan was restrained from any contact with them until God first had taught them what they needed to know.

4. What was some of the most important knowledge God revealed to Adam and Eve? Gen. 2:8-9, 15-17.

COMMENT: In the gloriously beautiful Garden of Eden, in which God placed Adam and Eve, were two trees with great symbolic meaning. One was the "tree of life." Taking its fruit, freely offered by God, symbolized obedience and faithfulness to God's Law of outgoing love. Partaking of its fruit also symbolized receiving the gift of God's Holy Spirit, which spiritually begets one into God's Family. Spiritual understanding would also be granted through the Holy Spirit.

The other tree with great symbolic meaning was the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Taking its fruit would be taking to themselves the knowledge of what is good and what is evil-of deciding for themselves what is right and what is sin. This, of course, meant the rejection of God's Law, which defines right and wrong. And this would result in death!

5. Did Adam, the first man, qualify to replace Satan as earth's ruler? Gen. 3:1-6, 17-19, 22-24.

COMMENT: The glorious archangel Lucifer, as God originally created him, was the pinnacle of God's creative power in a single being. Few today remotely realize Satan's great power, now turned to cunning deception.

The wily devil got to Adam through his wife, Eve. He did not say, "Choose my way." Appearing to her as a serpent, he said, "Choose your own way" cleverly deceiving her. Adam, who was not deceived, nevertheless chose to follow Satan's way also. And mankind ever after has followed the way of Satan. Adam thus failed to restore God's government and failed to replace Satan as ruler of the world.

But God is now in the process, as understood by the duality principle of creation, of creating more God Beings for His Family. God realized that if a third of the angels could choose the way that resulted in evil character, it left Him and the other member of the God Family as the only Beings in existence who could be relied upon to never deviate from His government and His Law-His way of life.

God realized He needed thousands of millions of perfect and righteous beings, ruled by His government, to complete in beauty, majesty and glory not only the other planets of our solar system, but also of our Milky Way galaxy, and the countless other galaxies of the vast, limitless universe.

So, about 4,000 years after Adam's sin, came the next phase of God's awesome purpose of reproducing Himself into billions of God Beings!

6. Notice now the duality principle with regard to Jesus Christ. How is Jesus referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:45?

COMMENT: The "first" Adam was the first man, created by God from the dust of the ground. The second or "last Adam" was Jesus, who also was made flesh and blood, but who became an immortal being by a resurrection, thus completing in Himself the second phase-the spiritual phase-of God's creation of mankind.

In God's Master Plan for His spiritual creation of mankind, it had been determined by God and the Word that the Word would in due time divest Himself of His supreme glory and be born as the human Jesus Christ. This would make possible the spiritual phase of the creation of man-God reproducing Himself-God creating in man His very own holy, righteous and perfect character!

What a marvelous plan for the ultimate in creative accomplishment How great is our God in mind, purpose, planning, designing as well as creating-from the tiniest germ to the greatest sun, and ultimately, other God Beings!

The incredible human potential is that the great majestic God is, in man reproducing Himself. Man can literally be born into the God Family!

7. Did Jesus Christ, the second Adam, qualify to replace Satan and restore God's government on earth? Matt. 4:1-11; 28:18.

COMMENT: Christ qualified to be the Supreme King over all the earth by overcoming Satan's way and obeying God perfectly. He will depose Satan and restore God's government when He returns. But in the meantime, He is acting as our High Priest, helping us to qualify as with Him-helping us to resist Satan and to build righteous character in preparation for our future spiritual birth into the God Family.

8. How did Jesus speak of this spiritual birth? John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Once again we see the duality principle in action in describing the creation of Sons of God. Man's first birth is into the human family, which is composed of flesh and blood. His second birth will be into the divine Family of God, which is composed of spirit, and which possesses perfect, holy, righteous character!

## **GOD'S CHARACTER REVEALED**

Why is it so important for us to know who and what God is? Because God's glorious purpose for our existence is that we ultimately become like Him!

When God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, he was made in the "likeness"-the outward form and shape-of GOD Himself. This unique form and shape was given to man alone. At his creation, man was also given the gift of intellect-the ability to think, to reason, to make choices and decisions. This God-like attribute of mind and character was not given to any animal. Man possesses these unique characteristics and abilities because he was created with the potential he become God!

For God to complete the spiritual creation of mankind as God Beings, we must learn to think more and more like God does, developing His attitude and character while flesh and-blood human beings. Then, when resurrected or changed into immortal spirit, we will be eternal members of God's Family, possessing the supreme character and awesome powers of God!

Our purpose in human life, then, is that we grow in God's character. But what, exactly, is the character of God?

The character of both God the Father and Christ the Son is that of spiritual holiness, righteousness and absolute perfection. That character can be summed up in the word love, defined as an outflowing concern for others. It is the way of "give," of serving, helping, sharing-the opposite of the "get" way of Satan the devil.

It is the way devoid of all coveting, lust and greed, vanity and selfishness, competition, strife, violence and destruction, envy and jealousy, resentment and bitterness.

God's inherent nature is the way of peace, justice, mercy, happiness and joy radiating outward toward those He has created.

God is the embodiment of perfect, holy and righteous character!

Since God possesses perfect, righteous character, He will never sin! God 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 (I John 3:9).

1. How does the Bible define the nature and character of God? I John 4:8, 16. What is the love of God? I John 5:3.

COMMENT: The spiritual Law of God enables us to know what God is like because it describes His character, which is summed up by the word LOVE!

2. How did Jesus summarize the Law of God? Matt. 22:36-40.

COMMENT: God's Law is further defined in the two Great Commandments: LOVE to God and LOVE to neighbor. God's Law is further divided into ten points by the Ten Commandments. The first four tell us how to love God, and the last six tell us how to love our neighbor-all fellow human beings.

3. What very important thing was Jesus prophesied to do regarding God's Law? Isa. 42:21. What are two examples of how Jesus "magnified" the Ten Commandments? Matt.5:21-22, 27-28.

COMMENT: When a spiritual "magnifying glass," so to speak, is put on the Ten Commandments, they are enlarged in spiritual principle into many more points. And in a larger sense, the entire Bible is a magnification of God's Law. The Law is the basis of all Scripture. It defines God's way of life-the way to peace, success, happiness, joy and eternal life. Notice how like God His Law really is.

4. Is the Law of God good? Rom. 7:12.

COMMENT: God is good!

5. Is the Law of God just? Same verse.

COMMENT: God is just!

6. Is the Law of God holy? Same verse.

COMMENT: God is holy!

7. Is the Law of God spiritual? Verse 14.

COMMENT: God is spiritual!

8. Is the law of God perfect? Ps. 19:7.

COMMENT: God is perfect!

9. Will the character of God ever change? Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8. Therefore, is the Law of God-including all His commandments-unchanging and eternal, standing fast forever and ever: Ps. 111:7-8.

COMMENT: God is eternal and so is His Law, for the Law expresses the very character, the very nature, of God!

God's Law travels in the direction of His character. It is the way of LOVE. It is the way of giving, serving, helping. God has that character! He has an outgoing concern for all humanity. He gave His only begotten Son to reconcile us to Him, thereby making the joys of His character and 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 the Father after we repent and turn from the wrong way of Satan's world, begin to resist it, and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior!

10. What are some of the divine characteristics or "fruits" of God's nature that begin to be exhibited by God's children after their begetting by His Spirit? Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Tim. 1:7. COMMENT: Righteous, holy, godly character is the possession and practice of love, joy, patience, mercy, faith, kindness, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-restraint and right self-direction. Character also involves knowledge, wisdom, purpose and ability-all properly controlled and developed through independent choice. Is love the greatest single attribute of God's nature? I Cor. 13:1-8, 13. Why? I John 4:16. How can we have this divine love? Rom. 5:5.

COMMENT: We can have the Father's love if we have His Spirit and keep His commandments-strive to live the way He, Himself, lives.

There are just two possible ways of life: God's way, or God's Law, summed up in the Ten Commandments, which we call the "give" way; and Satan's way of competition, greed and vanity, which we call the "get" way. This is the way of disobedience to God. All suffering-all unhappiness, fear, misery and death-has come from living by Satan's way of "get," instead of living by God's way of "give," which is the only way to peace, happiness and joy.

One-third of the angels failed to develop the godly character that would have guaranteed them everlasting peace and happiness. They believed Satan's way of "get" was better than God's way of "give," and therefore developed evil character. The rebellious Lucifer was no longer qualified to be ruler of the earth. Someone had to qualify to replace him. So God created Adam and gave him the opportunity to develop the godly character required of a righteous ruler. But Adam failed.

So Adam's descendants-all mankind-have been born in Satan's world of competition, strife and violence, and have been allowed to transgress God's Law. God has allowed this for a great purpose. He wants man to learn, through experience-and experience requires time-that Satan's way of "get," which is disobedience to God's spiritual Law, causes only misery, suffering, heartache and death. Those who are called of God and voluntarily choose to reject and resist Satan's way and live a life of obedience to God are developing the holy, righteous, perfect character they, by their own choice, and with the help of God's Holy Spirit, live His righteous way of life!

The previous four lessons of the Bible Correspondence Course reveal the ways and means by which God creates His perfect, sinless character within those He has called. (You'll find it profitable to review these lessons after completing this lesson.) Lesson 9 shows that those who have been developing evil character by sinning (and all, except Christ, have sinned - Rom. 3:23), must first repent of having broken God's holy, righteous Law. Then they must be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), as Lesson 10 thoroughly explains.

Next, God's Word promises that those who repent of their sins and are baptized will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from God, granting them the spiritual power and understanding necessary for righteous character development. Lesson 11 covers this subject in great detail.

Lesson 12 shows how Christians, who have thus been begotten by the Spirit of God, are to be developing and growing in God's holy, righteous character. Spiritual character growth results from following God's way of life as revealed in the Bible. Lesson 12 explains what God's way-the Christian way of life-is all about.

Finally, at the resurrection to eternal life, the supreme masterpiece of God's creation will have been finished! Those whom God has called and who have voluntarily chosen to work with their Creator in completing His supreme creation within them while flesh and blood will at last be a "finished" creation-created in God's own spiritual "image" with His perfect, righteous, holy character-eternal members of His divine ruling Family!