

Why Did God Create Mankind?



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The U.S. librarian of Congress emeritus, Daniel J. Boorstin, recently observed: “Throughout history the human race has sought answers to the fundamental questions of life: Who are we and why are we here?”

These are vital questions every man and woman should ask. We should add some others: What is man? Why do we exist? What is our destiny? Why were we created?



What does it really mean to be human? Do we just exist? Or were we created for a special purpose? What makes us different from any of the other living creatures?

From a strictly physical standpoint, people are but physiological and chemical phenomena. That is, we are made of matter—out of “the dust of the ground,” as the Bible puts it.

But what does it really mean to be human? Do we just exist for a short time and then disappear forever? Or were we created for a special purpose? What sets us apart from the animal world? What makes us different from any of the other living creatures?

Direct, unvarnished biblical answers to these questions will provide us with an accurate understanding of our human destiny and shed some seriously needed light on the mystery of our existence.

SOMETHING MORE TO MAN?

Biologically, we begin with man as a living organism. Our composition is chemical. We have a skeletal framework, various kinds of tissue,

a nervous system, internal organs, outer layers of skin—all making us human in a physical and material sense.

But is there more to man than meets the eye? Is there something unique about our makeup and nature? Is there something that transcends the purely physical and material realm, something that suggests that a great purpose and dignity are integral to our existence?

What makes us behave like we do? Why do we experience moral sufferings and craving for the unknown? Why do we push on to greater and greater heights of discovery in just about every field and discipline? Why do we seek knowledge for its own sake? Why do we have this human intellect that drives us on to more and more accomplishment in the material world?

Academic studies of the origins of humanity have proved to be among the most difficult of all sciences.

Significantly, in his recent book, *Darwin's Black Box*, biochemist Michael Behe convincingly demonstrates, from scientific evidence, the utter impossibility of life having evolved from inert matter.

The commonly accepted theory of evolution cannot explain why we pursue intangibles like beauty and higher spiritual yearnings. Our minds are far too complex to have arisen passively or accidentally. The Bible unequivocally tells us that God *created* man. (To learn more, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*)

We are in serious need of much better knowledge of ourselves. Our self-ignorance is staggering, particularly in the arena of moral and spiritual responsibility and purpose. We seem to know so much more about the inanimate, about the earth's flora and fauna and even the nature of heavenly bodies. Yet immense regions of our humanity remain a dark mystery.

World conditions are frightening and all too often reel out of control. The chief culprit is *man himself*. We urgently need to seek the root causes of our moral and intellectual shortcomings. If only we would turn our natural curiosity from its present exclusively materialistic path to include the much more profitable spiritual direction missing in our world, our future would cease to be so uncertain.

Man desperately needs knowledge from a source outside of himself—not only regarding the physical and material, but in the mental and especially in the spiritual sphere.

THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

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to the observable—the measurable—simply cannot provide us with all we need to know about ourselves. Philosophical speculations are woefully inadequate substitutes for divinely revealed knowledge. Adding to our difficulty in correctly understanding ourselves is the spiritual deception, described in Revelation 12:9, that affects the whole world.

What is so little understood today is that our minds are subject to *spiritual* laws that are as inexorable as the *physical* laws scientists have discovered. Although we cannot see gravity, none of us doubts its existence. Just as gravity affects and governs the actions of all physical objects, so do *spiritual laws* affect and govern our actions and behavior. We cannot transgress God's spiritual and moral laws without incurring serious penalties.

The scientific method has other limitations. Qualities that have neither weight nor spatial dimensions—such as love, vanity, hatred, the appreciation of beauty, the inspiration of a poet or even the aspirations of a scientist—cannot be scientifically ascertained.

Though science can and does contribute knowledge to the mystery of man, only God can tell us *who* we are, *why* we are and *what* is *our destiny*. His Word, the Bible, fills in the missing dimension in human knowledge.

God's Word views man as a whole. Man simply cannot be separated into distinct parts,



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divorced from each other. Just as we would cease to exist if our organs were isolated one from another, so would we be less than human if our spiritual qualities were not present. It is to the whole man (or woman) that we must focus our intellectual energies. Above all, the spiritual aspect must not be laid aside and ignored.

As the late Norman Cousins wrote in his book *Human Options*: “That something that constitutes human uniqueness cannot adequately be expressed by any single term. Even man's ‘spirit’ and ‘capacity for faith’ are not the sum total of that uniqueness.”

Many factors set us apart from the animal kingdom: our speech, our vision or conceptualization, our awareness of past, present and future, our capacity for reason, our superior number recognition, our bodies and much more. There is, however, an even more important overall factor—characterized by wholeness and completeness—our *need to understand*.

R.J. Berry, in his book *God and Evolution*, put his finger on an important distinguishing characteristic, one that



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includes and transcends all others: “The key factor in understanding our nature as taught in the Bible is to examine the meaning of *the image of God* which distinguishes us from the other animals” (emphasis added throughout).

MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The book of Genesis tells us that God created man *in His own image*, forming man from the dust of the earth and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7). The fact that God made man in his image and likeness delineates *the most fundamental difference between humans and other creatures*. All other distinguishing characteristics between man and the animal world fall within its broad spectrum.

The *image of God* imparts special meaning, harmony, intelligence and design to human life. To be human is to be created *in the image of God*. This is the certain testimony of the Bible!

Three scriptures in the book of Genesis refer to our being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6). As we will see, they show that the “image of God” is of crucial importance to the grand purpose of humanity on planet earth. They are not just statements of historical fact; they point directly to mankind's awesome destiny.

We begin our formal study with an overview of this intriguing subject.

What does the first chapter of Genesis teach us about the image of God?

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth . . .’ (Genesis 1:26).

Man stands apart from all other living creatures because of his relationship to God. The flora and fauna had already been created when God brought man onto the scene. Man was the crown of the physical creation and was designed to rule over it. Of all that God created,

only man was made in God's image and likeness.

The Hebrew Scriptures do not precisely explain what is meant by the image and likeness of God. *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* says of the words *image*



According to the Genesis account, God made man in His image and likeness. This is the most fundamental difference between humans and other creatures.

and *likeness*: “‘Image’ suggests reproduction in form and substance, physical or spiritual: and ‘likeness’ gives the idea of resemblance and outward similarity.”

Man, of course, by no means possesses all the powers, characteristics and attributes of the great Creator God. Nevertheless, we have been created as much as is physically possible in God's own image and likeness.

Throughout the Bible the relationship of God to man is represented as that of a father to his children. And children usually have a strong resemblance to their parents. The author of Hebrews explains our relationship to God: “For both He who sanctifies [Christ] and those who are being sanctified [Christians] are all of one [Father], for which reason He [Christ] is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: ‘I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.’ And again: ‘I will put My trust in Him.’ And again: ‘Here am I and the children whom God has given Me’” (Hebrews 2:11-13).

The verses quoted above also express and envision God's remarkable purpose for humankind. The message of the Bible shows that God created man with a mind capable of *communicating with God* and *thinking like He thinks*. And God wants us to be even more like *Him*—both in character and, ultimately, in composition. Our destiny is to be like Jesus Christ now is as the glorified Son of God (1 John 3:2).

Are both sexes included in God's grand purpose for humankind?

“So God created man in His own image; the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27; compare 5:1-2).

In verse 27 the Hebrew word for “man,” *etadam* (including the accusative particle *et*), is a collective noun meaning humanity or the race as a whole—not just the proper name of Adam, who was the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Chronicles 1:1). So the image of God applies both individually and collectively. Each person, male and female, is made in God's image, as is the human race as a whole.

Is this weighty account in Genesis 1 repeated at a key juncture in early human history?

“This is the book of the genealogy [generations, KJV] of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day that they were created” (Genesis 5:1-2).

After the original description of the creation of mankind in the Garden of Eden, we are again reminded of our uniqueness at the beginning of a new epoch in human history.

Are human beings once again told of their creation in the Bible's first book?

“Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6).

A person created in God's image is so precious in our Creator's sight that anyone who would deliberately and maliciously take another's life could himself be facing the death penalty from his peers. This final reminder in Genesis is positioned just after the time of Noah's flood—another benchmark in history. All three accounts of this essential theme in the human story of God's creation of us in His own image appear in the immediate context of human reproduction. Two appear directly before a command “to be fruitful and multiply,” and the third appears at the head of the first genealogical record. This reproductive relationship has some important spiritual implications in terms of God's ultimate plan and purpose for mankind.



How do we define humanity? What is a human being? These questions have intrigued and exercised the minds of philosophers from time immemorial.

Does the Bible also mention the two words

image and likeness in connection with the normal reproduction of a human being?

“And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth” (Genesis 5:3).

The Bible interprets the Bible. The context (verses 1-2) mentions God making men and women in His own likeness. Does this passage give us an important indication as to what our Creator intends by the expression “the image of God”? Just as our Creator made humans in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), so did Adam have a son, Seth, who was in Adam’s image and likeness (the same Hebrew words are used in both passages). As *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* observes: “Man’s resemblance to God is analogous to Seth’s resemblance to his father Adam. This makes it certain that physical resemblance must not be excluded” (p. 683).

In other words, just as children resemble their human parents, so do all humans resemble our Creator. Although God is spirit (John 4:24) rather than a physical being, all humans bear a physical resemblance to Him. He actually showed Moses His back in His glorified form (Exodus 33:18-23). In regard to such physical resemblance, it is noteworthy that Jesus Christ appeared in human form and shape to His disciples *after* the resurrection. In the Transfiguration account (Matthew 17:1-9), Jesus also appeared in the same glorified form to Peter, James and John.

When God appeared in vision to the biblical prophets they described Him in human form. Certainly man has been physically designed to be as much like God as it is possible for a physical being to be made in the image and likeness of the awesome spirit being that God is. In this lesson we will also discover that there are other ways we humans are intended to become like our Creator, and *why*.

WHAT IS MAN?

What is man? Few today have an adequate answer to this enormously significant question.

In the Hebrew Scriptures the question “What is man?” is asked twice. David’s reflections in Psalm 8 are widely known and are quoted in the New Testament book of Hebrews. In contrast, the passage in Job 7 is rarely remembered. But both are worthy of careful consideration. (They are specifically addressed in the last section of this lesson, “God’s Great Purpose for Man.”)

But how do we define humanity? What is a human being? These questions have exercised the minds of philosophers from time immemorial. But in this lesson we are concerned with what *God’s Word* reveals about the nature of people.

What does God reveal about man?

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [soul, KJV]” (Genesis 2:7).

“Behold all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins

shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4; compare verse 20).

Genesis 1 tells us that man was made in the image of God (verses 26-27). Then chapter 2 reveals a little more detail about the specifics of that creation. God created man out of matter, “the dust of the ground.” The Bible nowhere reveals him to either *be* or to *possess* an “immortal soul.” All such ideas representing man as



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possessing immortality in his being are nonbiblical concepts originating from distinctly nonbiblical sources.

Scripture tells us plainly that the soul is something that *can die or be destroyed*. It is *not* immortal! Jesus said not to fear “those that kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him [God] who is able to *destroy* both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). (For a more complete explanation of this crucial topic, please request our free booklet *What Happens After Death?*)

Though man clearly does not possess an immortal soul, is there an important nonphysical component of man’s being?

“But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding” (Job 32:8).

Apparently this “spirit in man” adds that essential non-physical ingredient that gives humans their innate capacity to learn and understand on a level vastly superior to animals. Paul indicates it imparts the ability to *know* “the things of a man” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

What happens to the spirit in man when one dies?

“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Is this spirit in man conscious apart from the man’s brain and body?

“For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

“For in death there is no remembrance of You [God]” (Psalm 6:5).

Many verses in the Bible show us that the state of

death is compared to human sleep (Daniel 12:2; Luke 8:52; John 11:11-13; 1 Corinthians 15:19-20). The dead, however, will be awakened to consciousness by Jesus Christ at the time of the resurrection (John 5:28-29; 6:39).

WAS JESUS CHRIST TRULY A MAN?

Because of the crucial role Jesus plays in the destiny of mankind, it is essential that we understand His humanity. On several occasions Jesus of Nazareth is plainly called a man. Unlike the English language, the Greek tongue has two terms for man. One is *anthropos*, which merely means a man as representative of the human species.

The second Greek word, *aner*, means a man solely as a male human. Both words are used to describe Jesus Christ.

Many years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, how did the apostle Paul refer to Him?

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man [Greek anthropos] Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

Any understanding of Jesus Christ’s role and purpose must be based on this historic fact. Jesus’ manhood was full and complete (Philippians 2:5-8) in the sense that He lived a life as a physical human being—He became hungry and ate, got tired and rested and walked and talked just like any other man. (The book of Hebrews fully attests to Christ’s existence as a human being. It would be well worth your time to read and meditate on the book of Hebrews from this perspective.)

As a man, Jesus had nothing in His appearance to distinguish Him from other men of His time (Isaiah 53:2). The essential difference was in the realm of the spiritual. Unlike any other member of the human species (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23), Jesus Christ never sinned (compare Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). He carried out His Father’s will perfectly!

What did Jesus accomplish during His short lifetime on earth?

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth [was] a Man [Greek aner] attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22).

Though Jesus was truly a man, a physical human being, yet He came forth from God. God was His Father and the Holy Spirit the agent of procreation. He was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin (Mary) of the line of King David. Luke 3 contains His maternal genealogy. His legal genealogy (through Joseph) is found in the first chapter of Matthew. Truly Jesus Christ is both the Son of Man and the Son of God.

What was one of the biggest heresies that threatened the first-century Church?

“. . . Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world” (1 John 4:3; compare 2 John 7).

Denying Jesus Christ’s humanity leads people away from the truth of God. If He had not been truly human, then His sacrifice for our sins would be null and void. Yet this same heresy that afflicted the early Church persists even to this day, creating doubt and confusion as to Jesus Christ’s true nature and role.

WHY THE SON OF MAN?

Jesus Christ is called “the Son of Man” more than 80 times in the Bible. It was the term he most commonly used in referring to Himself. Whether in Aramaic (which Jesus spoke), Greek or Hebrew, the expression means an ordinary man.

Glossary

Character: Spiritually defined as the ability to discern God’s right way from the wrong, and to voluntarily surrender one’s own will to do what is right in God’s sight and, with the promised supernatural help, to resist the wrong even under pressure and temptation. God has perfect, righteous character implicit in His very Being.

Heaven: The Bible speaks of three heavens: (1) the atmosphere surrounding earth, that is, the sky (Acts 1:9-11); (2) space, including our solar system and the observable stars and galaxies (Genesis 1:14-18; Psalm 8:3); and (3) the location of God’s throne, from where He governs the entire universe, called “the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). Solomon said: “God is in heaven and you are on earth” (Ecclesiastes 5:2). In the Bible, the context usually tells us which of the three “heavens” is being discussed.

Humankind: Humanity, mankind (men, women and children with mind capacity), homo sapiens as a species distinct from species of the animal kind.

Image: The word *image* is generally used throughout the Bible in a literal sense to denote a physical or material representation, whether in human or animal form. In a theological sense, it denotes a relationship between man and his Creator, God.

Image of God: This biblical expression encompasses the purpose of God’s creation of humankind. As explained in this lesson, mankind was created for a special relationship with God and with the potential of manifesting the character and nature of God.

Likeness: Denotes similarity, resemblance, representation, etc.

Man: Biblically defined as especially created by God as both male and female in His own image—a distinction not accorded to the animal world. At creation man was given free will, a capacity for rational thought patterns, and dominion over the animals.

Science: Primarily the pursuit and study of physical and material knowledge, particularly in a systematic and organized manner, of spiritual matters.

This phrase “son of man” is used more than 90 times in the book of the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel. It was God’s way of addressing Ezekiel. It is also used in the Bible to refer to any ordinary man, not always to a prophet or one occupying a special position.

Still, since “the Son of Man” is used in reference to our Savior so many times, we should consider the spiritual implications of this phrase.

In what connection did Christ often use the phrase “the Son of Man”?

“The Son of man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men” (Matthew 17:22; compare 26:45; Mark 9:31; 14:41).

Jesus Christ repeatedly referred to Himself as “the Son of Man” in connection with His sufferings and sacrificial death.

In what other important respect did Jesus use this term?

“So Jesus said to them [the disciples], ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’” (Matthew 19:28).

Christ also used the term “Son of Man” when referring to His role as the coming ruler of humanity in the Kingdom of God.

Is this phrase connected to a special day?

“And He [Jesus] said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” (Mark 2:27-28; compare Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5).

Christ is Creator (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2), and the Sabbath was instituted just after man was made (Genesis 2:3). So the Son of Man had the authority to give us spiritual instruction on how to properly observe the seventh day with mercy and compassion. (If you would like more information about this special day of God, please request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest*.) The command to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy is the Fourth of the Ten Commandments.

What question did the Son of Man ask the disciples?

“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’” (Matthew 16:13).

They replied by recounting several commonly held—but erroneous—beliefs about Christ’s identity.

But what was Simon Peter’s unusual insight?

“And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not

revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven’” (Matthew 16:16-17).

Through the Father’s inspiration, Peter responded by saying that Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, is also the Son of the living God. Though on occasion His apostles referred to Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 14:33; John 20:31; etc.), He rarely used that term to describe Himself. Evidently He chose to deliberately emphasize that He identifies with our plight—the sorrows and sufferings



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of mankind. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah calls Him “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3).

JESUS CHRIST: MAN AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

Does the apostle James confirm Genesis 1:26?

“... With it [the tongue] we curse men, who have been made in the similitude [likeness] of God” (James 3:9).

Clearly, two passages in Genesis (5:2 and 9:6) substantiate the fact that men and women continued in the image and likeness of God even after sin had entered man’s world and greatly marred human character. Several millennia later Christ’s apostles confirmed this basic biblical teaching: To be a human being is to have been created in the image and likeness of God.

This is one good reason we should greatly value our human relationships and how we deal with each other. Slander, backbiting and maligning others contradict the natural dignity of our awesome purpose in life.

Did the apostle Paul also confirm this crucial truth?

“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man” (1 Corinthians 11:7).

These two apostles, Paul and James, reaffirm this basic, fundamental biblical teaching. However, some

have supposed that this particular passage excludes women from sharing in the image of God, which, if true, would clearly contradict Genesis 1:26 and 5:2.

However, just a few verses later Paul shows this is not what he means. “For as woman came from man, even so the man also comes through woman; but all things [including His image, reflecting His character] are from God” (1 Corinthians 11:12). Apparently Paul is discussing the Corinthian congregation’s seeming disregard for the proper distinction between the roles of men and women.

Through whom is the image of God perfected in men and women?

“For since by man came death, by Man [Christ] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of



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dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Christ]” (1 Corinthians 15:47-49).

We humans have clearly let ourselves down. We have failed to grasp God’s purpose for us. We have not lived up to our marvelous, godly potential. Sin has marred the image of God in all people. But the restoration and renewal of the spiritual likeness (character) of God take place through Jesus Christ, in whose image we are destined to finally and fully conform at the resurrection of the just. Our fleshly bodies will then become glorious spirit bodies (Philippians 3:20-21; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Is Christ also in the image of God?

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose mind the god of this age

has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

“He [God the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation” (Colossians 1:13-15).

Though humans are made in the image of God, it is the righteous and sinless Jesus Christ who justifies men and women who have sinned and brought the death penalty on themselves (Romans 6:23).

Paul tells us that we, “who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, . . . [Christ] has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present [us] holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed [we] continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast” (Colossians 1:21-23). Though we have fallen far short of our potential, Jesus Christ—who is much more “the image of God”—provides a way for us to be reconciled to our Creator and attain that potential, which is to reflect the character of God in our lives (2 Peter 3:18).

Jesus Christ was the *visible image* of the *invisible God*. Christ said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Through Christ we both see the Father and better grasp our purpose and potential.

Clearly, a major aspect of our goal in life is to attain God’s character. Hebrews 1:3 explains that Jesus Christ was “the brightness of [God’s] glory and the *express image* of His person . . .” In this verse *image* is translated from the Greek word *charakter*. This word means “a tool for [en]graving . . . ‘a stamp’ or ‘impress,’ as on a coin or seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression bears the ‘image’ produced by it, and, *vice versa*, all the features of the ‘image’ correspond respectively with those of the instrument producing it” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, “Image”).

Jesus Christ was truly *the exact image of God the Father*. The Revised Standard Version translates Hebrews 1:3: “He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature.” Christ confirmed this when He said, “He who has *seen Me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9).

What is the spiritual task of every Christian?

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and . . . put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:23-24).

It is the new man (or new woman) who is spiritually in the image of God. But none can accomplish this transformation by himself (please request our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*). The image of God can be renewed in human beings only through the living presence of Jesus Christ in their lives.

The apostle Paul wrote: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in

the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). This truly miraculous experience can be accomplished only by and through God’s Spirit.

What is our ultimate destiny in God and Christ?

“For whom He [God the Father] foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

Everlasting life in the Kingdom of God as part of God’s family is our destiny. That is why we were made in the image of God in the first place. True Christians are destined to join the Father and the Son in that great family as “brethren” of Jesus Christ.

Great and abundant will be the rewards of the righteous! But what will happen to the wicked who refuse to repent?

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Look at it from God’s perspective. He has already determined to give all human beings every possible opportunity to choose life. What would you do with a person who—whether willfully or through continual neglect—rejects God’s gracious offer of eternal life and deliberately chooses the devil’s way? Would you give such a person eternal life in your kingdom, where he could continue to harm others indefinitely? What option would you choose?

Certainly some people picture God as a monster who punishes failed human beings in hellfire for eternity. Yet when we carefully and prayerfully examine the relevant scriptural passages—coupled with an understanding of God’s true purpose for mankind—that is *not* the punishment of the wicked.

When will God reward those who love and obey Him?

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:35).

“But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid [rewarded] at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13-14).

Is God also a God of justice in the sense that He will punish those who deliberately refuse to repent of their wickedness and wrongdoing?

“Then He will say to those on his left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matthew 25:41).

“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (verse 46).

The wicked suffer everlasting punishment in the sense that they are forever cut off from God and life itself, but He does *not* inflict them with eternal torment. Never forget that the wages of sin is *death*, but the gift of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23). Life and death are *opposites*, not two

ways of saying the same thing. Death means the *absence of life*, not eternal life *in another place*.

The final book of the Bible prophesies of evil human beings being cast into the lake of fire. “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence . . . These two were cast alive in the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20). What happens to physical human beings who are thrown alive into a massive cauldron of fire? They *burn up* and are *completely consumed*.

The Bible shows that a consuming fire is the ultimate fate of the wicked (Malachi 4:3). In fact, God has used just such a conflagration as an eternal example of the fate of those who refuse to repent of their wickedness. Jude explains:

“. . . Sodom and Gomorrah, . . . having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7).

Although they are figuratively described as suffering “the vengeance of eternal fire,” the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning. On the contrary, they are promised an opportunity to yet obtain eternal life (Matthew 10:14-15; 11:23-24) in the resurrection to judgment described in Revelation 20 and Ezekiel 37. (For more information about these little-understood biblical truths, please request your free copies of the booklets *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?* and *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

Above all, God is a God of mercy. Read Psalm 136. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and often delays His judgments in the hope of repentance. As the apostle Peter explains: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering towards us, *not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

In principle, the apostle Paul expresses the same godly hope. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, *who desires all men [all people] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

It is the eternal purpose of the living God to bring us into His family!

IS HEAVEN THE REWARD OF THE SAVED?

But where will the family of God reside? What will its members be doing? Is there any biblical basis for the common idea that they will be playing harps



It is “the new man” (or “new woman”) who is spiritually in the image of God and can then do His good works in his life.

somewhere in heaven for eternity?

What did Jesus say about the reward of the righteous?

“In My Father’s house are many [rooms]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

The crucial question is *where will Christ be?* Several scriptural passages clearly show that Jesus will return *here*

to earth and rule the nations with His saints (compare Revelation 19; 20:1-6).

Where will the righteous rule?

“You [Jesus Christ] are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9-10).

How to Learn More From This Bible-Study Course

How can you get the most benefit from this *Bible Study Course*? Here are some useful tips you can use to significantly expand the knowledge and understanding you gain from your study of these Bible lessons.

- If you do not have a Bible, we suggest that you buy one soon so you can check all the biblical references in each lesson and study on your own. We recommend the New King James Version as a first translation. In case you choose to buy a used Bible, the older King James Version is usually more readily available in used-book stores.

- You will greatly benefit from looking up in your own Bible every scriptural reference. This is important! Only then can you be certain that *your understanding* comes specifically *from Scripture*. Our goal in this course is to *assist you* in learning and correctly applying the truths of the Bible. The greatest benefit comes from reading the Scriptures directly from your own Bible.

- Many thousands of students of the Bible have found that writing out or typing each scripture has increased their comprehension and doubled or tripled what they remember. Reproducing each scripture forces you to look at and carefully consider every word.

- We suggest that you also acquire and learn to use an exhaustive Bible concordance. A concordance enables you to find every verse in the Bible in which a particular word is used. With this tool you can search the Bible for verses containing words relevant to your personal study. Most exhaustive concordances also contain an abbreviated lexicon (dictionary) of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words to help you better understand their original meaning. Concordances are available for the most popular Bible versions.

- If possible, use various translations of the Bible in your study. Since English has changed considerably since the King James Version was first published in 1611, many Bible students find that a more-modern translation greatly helps their study and comprehension. Here are some strengths and weakness of the three major types of translations.

In some translations, like the King James and the New King James versions, the translators do their best to render every word in the original language into its equivalent or close equivalent in English. This can sometimes make the meaning difficult to grasp in our own language. Yet the Hebrew or Greek text is reflected rather accurately. These are known as *literal*, or *word-for-word*, translations. These are the best

translations to use when accuracy is vital.

In other translations, such as the New International Version, the translators have attempted to correctly render the thought or meaning of each sentence as close to the thought of the original as possible. These are generally called *literary* or *thought-for-thought* translations. This approach makes the meaning considerably easier to grasp, providing the translators’ own understanding is accurate. The risk, however, in this type of translation lies in the understanding of the translators. Errors are introduced if the translators’ perception of the original meaning is flawed.

Last, and least reliable, are the *paraphrased* versions of the Bible. In these versions the translators simply tell, in their own words, what they think the original author meant. They can be useful, but only if the translators have clearly and accurately understood the original text. These loose translations are far more prone to contain major misinterpretations of the Scriptures than the other two types. For that reason we should never use them to establish what the Bible teaches. But, occasionally, they can be helpful in making hard-to-understand language more comprehensible.

- Occasionally we will recommend additional reading material you may obtain from a library or bookstore. For this lesson we recommend the book *Darwin’s Black Box*, by Lehigh University (Pennsylvania) biochemist Michael Behe (The Free Press, New York, NY, 1996). Dr. Behe thoroughly explains a fundamental scientific impossibility in the widely accepted theory of evolution. His book is especially valuable for those who desire scientific confirmation that life on our planet was created rather than evolved from inanimate matter. It convincingly demonstrates, from strictly scientific evidence, that life cannot spontaneously evolve.

- We also sometimes recommend booklets or other items of literature you can obtain directly from the United Church of God, an International Association. We recommend that you request and carefully study each of them. They address specific aspects of these lessons in much greater depth. This literature is available free for the asking from our Web site (www.gnmmagazine.org) or by contacting any of our offices on the back page of this lesson. We hope you will request your free copies of this literature. If you have any questions about material covered in these lessons, please contact our office nearest you. We look forward to serving you.

The righteous saints will assist Jesus Christ in reigning over the nations during His millennial rule. As a specific example, the Bible states that the 12 apostles will reign over the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30; compare Matthew 19:28). Scripture even reveals that King David will preside over the reunited tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 37:21-25). Others will oversee the administration of several cities (Luke 19:16-19). This is a sorely neglected biblical truth.

What did the apostle Paul say about the future activities of those who receive everlasting life?

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1 Corinthians 6:2).

What does Jesus Christ, through the apostle John, plainly state in the book of Revelation on this subject?

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations” (Revelation 2:26).

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

The apostolic writings show that the true role of the resurrected saints ruling in the world of tomorrow was widely taught and understood in the first-century Church. However, over the many centuries since, an apostasy grew and grew until today relatively few comprehend this major biblical teaching. The proclamation of these largely misunderstood Bible truths remains an important goal of the teachings and publishing efforts of the United Church of God.

Simply *moving* from the earth to heaven is not the promised reward of the saved. Assisting Jesus Christ in ruling over the nations of this earth is! (For further understanding, please request our free booklets *What Happens After Death?* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*).

Will the righteous ever be with God the Father Himself?

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God’ (Revelation 21:2-3).

God, our heavenly Father, has promised ultimately to make His headquarters on the new, or totally renovated, earth (verse 1), dwelling forever with those who have been transformed into spirit and glorified to live forever with Him.

GOD THE FATHER

Who, then, is the Father?

“And at that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father; Lord of heaven and earth, that You have

hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes’” (Matthew 11:25).

God the Father is the supreme ruler of the whole universe. Everything in the heavens and the earth is subject to His authority (1 Corinthians 15:27-28). He is spirit (John 4:24) and possesses immortality (1 Timothy 6:16). Life is inherent within the Father. (To learn more, please request our free booklet *Who Is God?*)

He has absolutely perfect righteous character, and



The crucial question is where will Christ be? Several scriptural passages clearly show that Jesus will return here to earth and rule the nations with His saints.

Jesus expressly told us to become like Him. “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect,” said Christ (Matthew 5:48).

Further, God the Father is the source of every blessing. A passage in Ephesians 1:3-10 makes this truth abundantly clear. The Father is the subject of these verses, and they show how He is generously working out His eternal plan for humankind. He has made known unto us “the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself” (verse 9). We suggest that you study this whole passage carefully in one or more modern translations as well as the King James or New King James version.

What one word describes the character of God the Father perhaps better than any other?

“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).

Love is the foundation of the character and law of God. It is the basis of everything that God has revealed to mankind in the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 22:35-40). Eventually God, through His power, will overcome evil, forever banishing it from the coming holy city of God which will come down to earth (Revelation 21:1-3, 27). Only those

who have this kind of godly love will remain in the Father's presence.

Paul called love the greatest Christian attribute (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is the first fruit of God's Spirit that he mentions (Galatians 5:22). It is the bond of perfection, binding everything together in perfect harmony (Colossians 3:14). It is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10).



In exercising this kind of love, we express the image of God even though we are still human.

This word is used in the Bible to sum up the wonderful character of the Father. *God is love.* But, lest we misunderstand, we must define our terms. In some instances the English language is not nearly as precise as the Greek. The word *love* is a case in point. In English *love* encompasses at least several attributes and feelings. In some ways it is one of the most abused words in the language. The Greek language, however, is much more specific. It uses at least four words for love, although two are not used in Scripture.

Eros encompasses sexual love—the love that a man and woman should enjoy within the marriage relationship. *Storge* is limited in its meaning to the love of parents for children (and vice versa) and the normal, familial love of siblings for each other. *Philia* is used in the Bible and describes warm and tender feelings between people. It can include physical affection that is decent and appropriate. But the Bible uses none of these three words to describe the Father.

Agape is the term the Bible uses to describe godly love, the love of God. *Agape* generously embraces concern for the one loved. It depicts unconquerable benevolence and goodwill. It even encompasses love for one's enemies.

God's nature and character are characterized by this kind of love. We can receive this type of love only from God Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ. Upon repentance we can begin to exhibit this kind of love through the Holy Spirit. Our Christian love must be patterned by *agape*. Read Matthew 5:43-48. Here we learn that the Father sends His rain on the just and the unjust, makes His sun shine on both good and evil and is kind even to the unthankful and evil.

We must learn to think as God thinks and do as He does—to *love as the Father loves*. In exercising this kind of love, we express the image of God (reflecting His character), even though we are still human. But we hasten to add that human beings cannot generate this type of love of and by themselves. It emanates ultimately only from God (Romans 5:5).

In what major way has the Father expressed this love (*agape*) for all people?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

From God's perspective, the world is not easy to love. Certainly the Bible tells us not to love its evils (1 John 2:15-17). Living in the world, we are all too aware of the many human problems that afflict every continent, island, region, city and village. But the Father is guided by His wondrous plan, *not* by the whims, foolish ideas and pervasive sins of mankind.

The Father began to rescue humanity from itself by sending His Son to earth. Jesus Himself said: “. . . I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

What is the relationship between God and Jesus Christ?

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).

“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son . . .” (Matthew 11:27).

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” (Colossians 1:3).

These passages describe a close family relationship. So close is Their relationship that Christ could say, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). These two Beings share a close and deep bond with each other (John 10:15).

Perhaps more than any other apostle, John describes the relationship that Jesus Christ enjoyed with His Father. To gain a much clearer understanding, please read through the entire fourth Gospel and the first epistle of John with that one-of-a-kind relationship firmly in mind.

What is the motivating force that defines and guides this relationship?

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again . . . This command I have received from My Father” (John 10:17-18).

“But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do” (John 14:31).

The world at large rarely equates love with obedience. Yet Jesus expressed His love to the Father by obedience. That same kind of love is required of all Christians. Christ said to His disciples, “If you love Me, *keep My commandments*” (John 15:10). Also John, the apostle of love, wrote: “For this is the love of God, *that we keep His commandments*. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

In what miraculous way did the Father express love to His Son?

“Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him [Jesus Christ], they took Him down

from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead” (Acts 13:29-30; compare Romans 8:11; 10:9).

“... God... raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory...” (1 Peter 1:21; compare Ephesians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 6:14).

“Paul [is] an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)” (Galatians 1:1; compare Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

God the Father raised His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead. This is clearly confirmed in many scriptures. Remember, after our reconciliation to the Father through the blood of Christ, we are saved by His life (Romans 5:10). The book of Hebrews shows that He regularly intercedes with the Father on our behalf as our High Priest.

Who came to reveal or unveil the Father to humankind?

“Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son,

and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matthew 11:27; compare Luke 10:21-22).

One of the major reasons that Jesus Christ came in human flesh was to fully reveal the Father to especially called and chosen people (compare Acts 2:38-39).

Who is the ultimate source of all biblical truth?

“And the Jews marveled, saying, ‘How does this Man know letters, having never studied?’ Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His [the Father’s] who sent Me’” (John 7:15).

“... I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things” (John 8:28; compare verse 26; 14:10).

Who initiates salvation?

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day [the resurrection]” (John 6:44; compare 6:65).

Although it is certainly true that we can be saved only

David: A Shepherd Learns From the Creation

Sitting on a hilltop, surrounded by sheep, the young shepherd looked into the shimmering night heavens in wonder. Later the boy would grow up and record some of the private thoughts that came to him as he gazed into the sparkling starlit skies: “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” (Psalm 8:3-4).

The boy was David—the shepherd who became a king and wrote many of the Psalms. What can we learn from this shepherd boy’s example?

David was fearless. He killed a bear, a lion and the Philistine giant Goliath. Faithful David restored God’s honor before a fearful Israel and an arrogant heathen nation. Revering God, he served paranoid, jealous King Saul, who tried to kill him.

In God’s honor David led Israel victorious through many battles. His faithfulness moved heir-apparent Prince Jonathan to help David ascend the throne in his place.

Yet David was not immune to fleshly temptations. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, then had her husband, Uriah, killed. God publicly chastised David for his sins, of which he deeply repented (Psalm 51).

God forgave David but informed him that his lack of self-control would result in continual turmoil within his own family. Later, David had to flee from his son’s attempt to usurp his kingdom. The king mourned as a true father when this rebellion cost the life of his son, Absalom. Then, when David numbered his armies before going to battle, God punished Israel for this faithless act. This was King David, righteous acts, blemishes and all.

A key to David’s success and close relationship to God is found in Psalm 51. There we find the very heart of God

buried deep in the chest of a contrite sinner (Acts 13:22). His humble attitude helped David to understand God’s purpose for mankind.

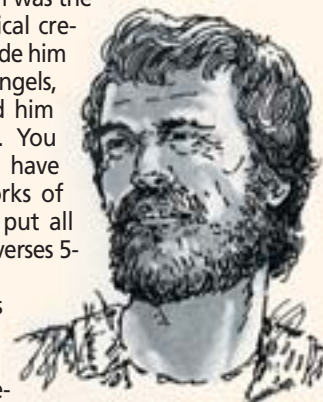
Awestruck by the magnificence of God’s creation, David asked, “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” (Psalm 8:4).

David knew that man was the pinnacle of God’s physical creation: “For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet” (verses 5-6; see also Genesis 1:26).

The book of Hebrews records David’s words, then adds that we have not yet reached our awesome destiny: “For in that

He [God] put all in subjection under him [man], He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him” (Hebrews 2:6-8).

We then read that God, through Jesus Christ (verses 9-11), will bring “many sons to glory” (verse 10). The time is coming when we can truly be “crowned... with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5), when those faithful to God will reign on earth as kings and priests to God (Revelation 5:10). The crown of glory and honor of which David spoke is part of our destiny. Be sure to request our free booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Road to Eternal Life* to discover more about your awesome future!



David

through the name of Jesus Christ and His actions on our behalf (Acts 4:12), it is also true that God the Father begins the salvation process. Even the original disciples were drawn by the Father (John 17:6, 11). Jesus prayed all night to Him for guidance before He chose the 12 (Luke 6:12-13).

Of whom has this world always been largely unaware?

“Then they said to him, ‘Where is your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither Me nor My

Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (John 8:19).

“O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have



Humankind has been blinded to the right knowledge of God and His plan for all of us—and the world suffers horribly as a result.



Did Jesus Christ follow the instructions He gave to His disciples?

“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour is come . . .’ (John 17:1).

The 17th chapter of John records a long prayer of Jesus Christ. Several times during this prayer, Christ shows that He is directing His prayer to His Father (John 17:5, 11, 21, 24-25).

Is God the Father of Jesus Christ only?

“Jesus said to her [Mary Magdalene], ‘Do not cling to Me [touch me, KJV], for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).

This important passage serves as a fitting introduction to the final section of this lesson: the knowledge of the purpose for human life. But, speaking of a Christian’s time as a human, the apostle Paul’s

fondest desire for Christians was “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Ephesians 1:17).



known You; and these have known Me that You sent Me” (John 17:25).

This is why the apostle Paul called man’s civilization “this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4, KJV). This is why “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19, KJV). Humankind has been blinded to the right knowledge of God

and His plan for all of us—and the world suffers horribly as a result. A time is coming, however, when “the knowledge of the LORD” will cover this earth “as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9; Habbakuk 2:14).

To whom should we address our prayers?

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven; hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9).

GOD’S GREAT PURPOSE FOR MAN

God’s ultimate purpose for mankind is inextricably linked with the ancient question “What is man?”—the question that King David and the patriarch Job posed so many centuries ago.

In what general context did David ask, “What is man?”

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:3-6).

Under what circumstances did the patriarch Job ask

the same question?

*“Let me alone,
for my days are
but a breath.
What is man that
You should exalt
him, that You
should set Your
heart on him,
that You should
visit him every
morning, and
test him every
moment?”*
(Job 7:16-18).

David was overwhelmed by the awesome majesty of God’s purpose for man and expressed His thankfulness in grateful praise to His Creator. In contrast, suffering Job protested that man seems too temporary and insignificant to justify God’s perpetual concern and asked God to leave him alone in his misery.

Yet both men pondered why God—having such greater power and majesty—should take such a conspicuous interest in the human race. We need to understand the sense of both scriptural passages so we can fully comprehend the majesty and breadth of God’s purpose.

What apostolic book quotes these words of King David?

“What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet” (Hebrews 2:6-8).

Perhaps more than any other New Testament book, the letter to the Hebrews helps us grasp the basic truths God gave to mankind in what we call the Old Testament.

Does the book of Hebrews elaborate on David’s poetic words?

“For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now [in this present age of man] we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:8-9).

In the Bible’s first book, God gave man dominion over His earthly creation—an awesome responsibility that mankind has only partially fulfilled. The chaotic state of the modern world bears witness to this reality. But the real fulfillment of this whole passage occurs at



In the Bible’s first book, God gave man dominion over His earthly creation—an awesome responsibility that mankind has only partially fulfilled. The chaotic state of the modern world bears witness to this reality.



the time when Jesus Christ returns to reign on earth. All things will be placed under the feet of human beings who will have been resurrected to immortality. We will rule with God and Christ forever in the Kingdom and family of God.

In this particular passage suffering is brought into the picture. Jesus Christ suffered in the flesh so each one of us could be a part of God’s Kingdom. The suffering is first, and the glory comes afterwards.

What was the unrealized purpose of Job’s sufferings?

“For it was fitting for Him [Jesus], for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

This is what the patriarch Job did not yet fully comprehend. But Jesus Christ is not the only one who had to suffer. Though our sufferings in no way can compare with His, we must tread the same path. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,” wrote Paul (2 Timothy 2:12, KJV).

Indeed, Christ set us an example of how to suffer without complaint. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Partially through suffering, God is creating in His children His own divine nature and His holy and righteous character (2 Peter 2:1-4). (The subject of suffering will be covered in depth in Lesson 4.)

Those who become like Jesus Christ at the time of the resurrection will be more than just spirit beings similar to Him. They will share the very nature of the Father. God gives that godly nature to such people when they receive the Holy Spirit, but over time they must grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

Salvation in God’s Kingdom is the ultimate purpose of all our lives. It makes worthwhile the good times and the sufferings we experience. Many will be brought to eternal glory—possessing the awesome righteous character of God Himself.

Never underestimate the value of your life. You were born to become *one of God’s children*. You were born to receive His nature. You were born to become a member of the very *family of God!*

To better understand the points covered in this lesson, be sure to request the following free booklets:

- *What Is Your Destiny?*
- *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*
- *Who Is God?*
- *What Happens After Death?*
- *The Road to Eternal Life.*
- *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion.*
- *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*
- *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.*
- *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest.*
- *The Gospel of the Kingdom.*

For your free booklets, contact any of our offices listed below or you can request or download them from our Web site at www.gnmagazine.org.

Points to Ponder

These questions are intended as a study aid, to spur thought on the concepts discussed in the lesson and help you apply them on a personal level. We suggest you take the time to write out your answers to these questions and compare them to the scriptures given. Please feel free to write us with any comments or suggestions, including questions about this lesson or the rest of the course.

- What is the basic, fundamental difference between human beings and other creatures? (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; 9:6).
- Does man have an immortal soul? What happens to the soul that sins? (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Ecclesiastes 12:7).
- Some people do not believe that Jesus came in the flesh. Did Jesus Christ become truly human? (1 John 4:3; 1 Timothy 2:5; Isaiah 52:2).
- Have all human beings been created in the image of God? (James 3:9). Was the man Jesus also made in the image of God? (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Colossians 1:13-15).
- What are we ultimately destined to become? (Romans 8:28) And whose glory will we have? (Colossians 3:4).
- Many believe that heaven is the reward of the saved. Where will the resurrected saints of God rule? (Revelation 5:9-10).
- What family relationship is typified by the relationship between God and Jesus Christ? (Mark 1:1; Matthew 11:27; Colossians 1:3).
- Where did Jesus get the understanding and doctrine that He expressed to the people of His day? (John 7:16).
- Is God the Father our Father also, or only the Father of Jesus Christ? (John 20:17).
- As Christ was glorified, will each of us be glorified, too, as we are made perfect through our sufferings? (Hebrews 2:10).

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