

The Family

God's Plan for Mankind

By Herbert W. Armstrong

SOMETHING caused the Creator God to decide to create MAN on this planet.

Few indeed know what it was and what the PURPOSE for humanity's presence really is. WHERE are We going, and what is the way?

These are the most vital questions. Yet, I repeat still again, science cannot give the answers. No religion has the explanation. No university teaches this most important of all knowledge.

God is Ruler and Educator

Most people know almost nothing about God. To understand ourselves, why we are, where we are going and how, we need to know more about our Creator.

Our present life is like going on a journey. Suppose you had just won a prize - an all-expense-paid trip to some other country. Wouldn't you want to know where you are going, how to get there and as many things as possible about this trip? Should we not, then, be even more filled with eager anticipation to know as much as possible about this one great trip of life? And to know that, you need to know some things about the God who is sending you and providing the way.

It is vital at this point, then, to know this, as revealed In the Bible: The Eternal God not only is Creator of all that is but is the RULER over all he creates and also the EDUCATOR, the revealer of basic knowledge. He reveals through the Bible vital knowledge otherwise inaccessible to man. Yet mankind - generally - has rejected this revelation as a source of basic knowledge.

The Bible is far from the sum-total of knowledge. It is the BASIS, the FOUNDATION, the starting point and the foundational approach to the acquisition of discoverable knowledge! God, through his instruction book reveals what man cannot otherwise learn! FULL TRUTH comes from the biblical revelation, PLUS acquired and discoverable knowledge approached through the CONCEPT revealed in the Bible. Today educators, scientists, psychologists, doctors and those who set the moral standards, rely on the evolutionary concept as their assumed and erroneous basic premise and approach to knowledge. They do not know, for example, how, why or when the family originated. But the Bible reveals this knowledge otherwise unacquirable!

So once again, let us go to that SOURCE or knowledge!

God ordained Marriage

Jesus Christ said: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife . . . ' *Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate*" (Matt. 19:4-6, Revised Authorized Version throughout).

Marriage is a physical union but a divine institution. Almighty God ordained it! It did not evolve! It is not or MAN'S devising. Notice, in the scripture quoted above, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Have you not read . . . ?" He quoted an already written passage of Scripture. He said the Pharisees should have read it! Where is that scripture found? It is found in the second chapter of Genesis. It is part of the brief SUMMARY record of the ETERNAL'S original instruction to the newly created Adam and Eve.

The creation of Eve had just been described, and God then said: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife (Gen. 2:24). So the Almighty revealed the sacred MARRIAGE institution to the first man and woman.

Why Marriage?

Now stop and think for a moment. Why did God ordain the human relationship of MARRIAGE?

Animals reproduce. But animals do not marry! Animals are born with instinct. They need little or no teaching. As soon as a calf is born, it will begin to stagger to its feet, while the cow just stands waiting. She does not need to teach her calf how to walk; how to take its food? How to do anything. A little wobbly and unsteady the first minutes, the calf is soon up and walking.

But with humans all this IS different. The newborn human does not get up and walk immediately to its food. The tiny baby is helpless. It has mind - but at birth there is NO KNOWLEDGE as yet in its mind. It must be taught! It needs parents to teach it! It matures so very much more slowly than other creatures! Yet its potentiality is infinitely higher! And for this higher purpose, parental guidance and FAMILY LIFE are NECESSARY!

God made cattle "according to its kind." He made "every winged bird according to its kind." But he made MAN after the God kind!

Man's Destiny

Now, incredible as it may sound to those who do not UNDERSTAND the revelation of God's TRUTH - and only an infinitesimal minority do - GOD is a FAMILY!

Let me make this most wonderful truth of all time PLAIN!

First, go back once again to the very first words in God's revelation of knowledge to us: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

God inspired Moses to write those words in Hebrew, not in the English words above. The Hebrew name here translated "God" is *Elohim*. It is a plural form used with a singular meaning like the words *family, group, team*. One family, but composed of more than one person. One group, but unless composed of more than one person, it would not be a group. One athletic team, composed of two or more players besides a number of substitutes.

Almost no one today knows that God is, actually, a divine FAMILY. One family. That family is ONE GOD.

A clever Satan has deceived people into almost every other belief about God. Most have been deceived into believing God is only THREE persons - LIMITING God to three persons and misrepresenting the HOLY SPIRIT, which flows from God and from Christ, to be a single person.

Others think of God as ONE PERSON ONLY.

But notice, again, in the New Testament, John 1:1-5, 14: "In the beginning was the Word." Sounds similar to Genesis 1:1, doesn't it? In Genesis 1:1, it is "In the beginning God . . .," meaning more than one person forming ONE God. In John 1, the English word *Word* is translated from the original Greek word *logos*, which means "word," "spokesman," "revelatory thought," as a being or person.

The next words in John 1 are..... and the Word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (verses 1-3).

This "Logos" was a separate personage. He existed "from the beginning" the same as God. He ALWAYS self-existed. He existed with God. And he, also, was God. They both coexisted forever. "All things" (words elsewhere translated "the universe") were made by him - the Word - the divine Spokesman.

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But now notice verse 14: "And the word became flesh and dwelt among Us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This, of course, is speaking of Jesus Christ. In the human flesh, he was begotten of God the Father, the only one ever so begotten before human birth.

At the time of this begettal and human birth "the Word" became the Son of God.

The Father, from heaven, said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 17:5). Jesus, praying, called God "Father" - Father and Son, a FAMILY relationship. The Church, at the resurrection to immortal SPIRIT life, is to MARRY the resurrected and glorified Christ (Eph. 5:25-28). So we have here a FAMILY relationship - father, son, husband and wife. And the wife is to be composed of born children of God. In MAN, God is reproducing himself. Man has the supreme potentiality of being actually born into the divine God family!

Do you realize what that means? Of course, God is composed of immortal SPIRIT. Man, like animals, is composed in this life of material FLESH - matter! But the transcendent essential factor is that God is PERFECT SPIRITUAL CHARACTER! It is the Supreme intelligence, combined with holy and righteous CHARACTER OF MIND, that most importantly distinguishes God from every other living creature; No animal has this potential, but it is the true destiny of MAN. Of course God, too, possesses supreme, ALL-MIGHTY POWER. But without right CHARACTER, this power would be destructive and dangerous!

What is this righteous spiritual character?

It is that controlled ability in a separate independent entity to come to a knowledge of the true and right from the false and, further to use the self-discipline to will and to actually DO the right.. And how define right? By the spiritual law of God!

This necessitates that each individual human be an independent entity, with a mind of his or her own - with freedom of choice (free moral agency). It requires MIND to absorb KNOWLEDGE, to reason to think, to plan, devise, to draw conclusions to will and to act. Inanimate objects have no mind, make no decisions, have no character. Animals have instinct, but they do not possess human - level consciousness of self, do not absorb knowledge from which to reason abstractly. Animals do not create, question or decide whether to obey moral codes.

Humans are born with MINDS. Humans must be taught and learn. The human mind can absorb knowledge and reason from it - think creatively, formulate plans, make decisions, render judgments and exercise self-discipline. Man has the capacity to develop righteous CHARACTER. This character is not created instantaneously. It develops through experience, and Experience requires TIME. A human baby is born without knowledge, but with capacity for acquiring it and of developing righteous CHARACTER. The human has the supreme potential of receiving God's own HOLY SPIRIT that imparts the divine nature, to equip the MIND to comprehend revealed spiritual knowledge!

Human babies - born helpless - need the tender care, the loving instruction, the patient training and discipline and the warm affection and love of a mother and father. They need the warmth and protection and security of family and of home life. And they are of supreme importance - for they are the potential HEIRS of God! Animals have never been given FAMILY relationship as humans experience it. Angels have never enjoyed FAMILY status. The family relationship is a God-PLANE relationship - not an angel-plane relationship. And God bestowed it on MAN! Because MAN is to be born INTO THE GOD FAMILY

Of all life forms - whether plant, animal or angel - in all God's creation, MAN ALONE was created for MARRIAGE - for HOME and FAMILY LIFE!

Man is, now, composed of matter. Yet in man, and in MAN ONLY, is God's creation still going on! Humans, by repentance, surrender to God and acceptance of Christ, may be in mind and attitude converted - may receive God's Holy Spirit. Thus, they are actually begotten as God's children. They may have direct contact with God and call him Father! They are brought into a FATHER-AND-SON relationship with God!

This is possible for no other creature - not even angels! Angels were not, never can be, begotten and BORN of God! Each angel is a separate creation. No angel can ever become a part of the DIVINE FAMILY OR KINGDOM OF GOD!

Notice! God says: "For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'?" (Heb. 1:5). Neither animal nor angel, not any other being, except MAN, can be literally begotten by spiritual reproductive process, and then actually BORN into the divine GOD FAMILY!

Humans are, if converted through Jesus Christ, the heirs of the God FAMILY. They are to enter the divine FAMILY. They are, even now, the begotten children of God. Therefore God ordained the family relationship for human beings.

Family relationships demand MARRIAGES!

The FAMILY relationship demands the HUSBAND-AND-WIFE relationship! And that demands MARRIAGE and faithfulness to that matrimonial bond! The CHURCH of God is merely that BODY composed of the begotten children of God. And the church, as a BODY, is the affianced BRIDE of CHRIST, to MARRY Christ at the time of the resurrection and his Second Coming!

Now UNDERSTAND! The husband-and-wife relationship, and the family relationship, are God-plane relationships!

Since humans were put on earth for the very PURPOSE of being begotten, and then BORN into the God FAMILY - which is the KINGDOM of God - the ETERNAL has endowed this GOD-PLANE relationship for HUMANS and for humans only! What a wonderful privilege to be humans - to be given the marriage relationship now, to marry Christ and become part of the God family!

The Affianced Bride

Here is another reason for the institution of marriage in the human family. It is to teach us - to constantly remind us - of our sacred relationship to Jesus Christ!

Here is the vital teaching: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word [the word, if obeyed, washes away error] that He might present it to Himself a glorious church [glorified - deified], not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. . ."

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:22-28, 30-32).

Notice! For this reason - because of the coming marriage (spiritually) between Christ and the church - because the church is, now, the affianced bride, engaged to marry Christ - FOR THIS REASON, God ordained the MARRIAGE institution for humans! But not for animals! Not for angels!

Notice Revelation 19.7, speaking of the Second Coming of Christ in glory: "the marriage of the Lamb [Christ] has come, and His wife has made herself ready." Only those made ready in righteous character will be presented to him then!

Why Home and Family

So, in addition to the family relationship, there is also the divine marriage relationship. So understand! The husband-and-wife relationship and the family relationship are God-plane relationships!

Humans are free moral agents. God never forces one to be truly converted to become his very begotten son. Yet the purpose God is working out here below is, to reproduce himself - to bring, through Christ, many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10) In the divine KINGDOM OF GOD!

Since humans were put on earth for the very purpose of being begotten, and then born into the God family, the Eternal has endowed this God-plane family status for humans, now - and for humans only!

What a wonderful privilege to be given the MARRIAGE and FAMILY relationships that we may be prepared for the spiritual marriage to CHRIST and the divine family status, for eternity, in THE KINGDOM OF GOD!