Before It’s Too Late

Before it's too late we must find out the answers to the most critical questions ever asked.

Did we just evolve or is there a creator God?
Who and what is man?
Why did God create man in the first place?
What happens when we die?
What is this life really all about?

If we don't know the answers to all of the above questions then can we really consider ourselves to be an educated person? Man is God's unique physical creation. But HOW is man different? WHAT makes him utterly unlike any other living creature? More important, WHY is he unique?

THE most complex, truly unique mechanism ever designed and made is man with his marvelous mind and body. With such a complex creation it was only natural that our Maker send along His "Instruction Book"--just as a manufacturer sends along with the instrument or device he manufactures an instruction book describing what his product is designed to do.

In the FOUNDATION of knowledge, God's Instruction Book for man, the Creator God reveals much knowledge totally beyond man's ability to discover for himself--including the knowledge and understanding of what man is, why he was made that way, as well as what he is to become. God created the first man. And He tells us how He made him so there would be no doubt as to what we really are.

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

Why Repent?

Repentance is turning from the way of Satan to the government of God. It is accepting God's rule over our lives through His Law of love. It is accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and soon-coming King--the "second Adam" who did qualify (whereas the first Adam failed) to reestablish the government of God on the earth by overcoming Satan. Those who are to reign with Christ

must also qualify during this mortal life by turning from and rejecting Satan's way, overcoming that way day by day, and actually living by God's Law of love. God wants every human being who has ever lived to have the opportunity to repent and live forever (II Peter 3:9; I Tim. 2:3-4). But God will not force anyone to choose life. For those who refuse to follow God's way to eternal life there will be the "second death"--the fate of all UNrepentant sinners. They will cease to exist forever. They will be as if they had never been!

God chose to make man first out of physical matter instead of spirit for an important reason. God planned in advance that if man, composed of matter, sinned and refused to repent, he would die--he would be as though he had not been. God will not allow any incorrigible human being to live forever in mental anguish and torment. This plan reflects the great mercy of God toward mortal man!

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

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

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

Animal Brain vs. Human Mind

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

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

The physical brain of a dolphin, whale or elephant is larger than the human brain, while a chimp's is slightly smaller. Qualitatively the difference between them and the human brain is very little--not enough to remotely account for the vastly superior intelligence and output of the human brain. The gap between animal brain and human mind is incredibly vast! Each animal was created with a brain suited for its particular animal kind. But animals do not have the potential of MIND and CHARACTER which God gave only to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power--the ability to think, to reason, to make choices and decisions--as was man!

It is this very SPECIAL ATTRIBUTE OF MIND AND CHARACTER that separates men from animals! Animals possess what we call instinct. Their brains are "programmed," so to speak, by God with particular instinctive aptitudes to live and perform in a certain way. They follow instinctive habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration and reproduction. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests, etc. These aptitudes are inherited--they are not the result of logical, cognitive or thinking processes.

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

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

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

Man can design and build different types of houses, using different designs and different building materials. Men also eat different foods, prepared in many different ways. Men may live entirely different lifestyles from one another. And if a man wants to change his way of life--he can! Man is not

subject to instinct. He is not governed by a set of predetermined habit patterns as animals are.

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

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

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

"Human" Spirit Makes the Difference!

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

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

What is it then that separates humankind from the animal kingdom? What gives him this God plane power of intellect? It all boils down to a nonphysical component in the human brain that does not exist in animal brain. It is this nonphysical component that makes man so vastly different from animals. It is what makes man truly unique!

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

The human spirit, given to every human being by God, does not supply human life--the human life is in the physical blood, oxidized by the breath of life (Lev. 17:11). But the spirit in man does impart the power of intellect to the human brain. This nonphysical component in the human brain does not exist in the brains of animals.

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

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

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

A Second Spirit Needed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Spirit-begotten Christian now has, conditionally, the presence of eternal life within him (or her) through a portion of the Spirit from the Father. But this does not mean he is an immortal spirit being. He is not yet wholly composed of God's Spirit. He is now an "heir" of God (Rom. 8:16-17)--not yet an inheritor or a possessor, not yet "born again." But, if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, God will, at Christ's return to earth as King of kings, give us immortality by His Spirit that dwells in us (Rom. 8:11).

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

Why We Must Grow Spiritually

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

Just as the human body and brain gradually begin to form during the gestation period in human reproduction, the righteous and holy character of God must begin to form and grow once one is begotten by God's Spirit. Obviously, we cannot become absolutely perfect in character until the resurrection when God will complete the process by giving each of us a new, perfect spirit body with its perfect--sinless (I John 3:2, 9)--nature that will be like Christ's and the Father's. But in the meantime, God wants us to grow in His spiritual character daily by obeying His commandments and overcoming and rooting sin out of our lives--growing toward that spiritual perfection!

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

Spiritual character development requires time and comes largely by experience--by putting the Word of God into practice in our daily lives. One

builds the righteous character of God as he comes to discern, through God's revelation in the Holy Bible, right from wrong--the true values from the false--truth from error, then chooses the right and rejects the wrong and, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, resists the wrong and DOES the right! Growing in spiritual knowledge and spiritual character is a gradual process that continues the rest of one's life.

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

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

Spirit “Recording” Makes Resurrection Possible

There is an old saying, "You can't take it with you when you die." You may drive yourself relentlessly to amass a financial fortune in this life, but you'll leave it all behind when you die. There is, however, something infinitely more valuable in life that isn't lost when one dies. And that is the righteous, spiritual character that God, the Master Potter (Isa. 64:8), is fashioning in those of us who are His spirit-begotten children. In the resurrection, you not only will look just like you do now (without handicaps or blemishes, of course), you will have the same knowledge you acquired in this life--and the same character!

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

God can bring a dead individual back to life even though a human body that once lived disintegrates, decomposes, or is cremated and scattered to the four winds. It is the "spirit in man" that preserves our very form, shape,

memory and character. The resurrected immortal body in the first resurrection will be precisely like the former, though now composed of spirit.

Recall that God puts in every person a separate "human" spirit. As was emphasized before, this spirit does not impart life, cannot see, hear, feel or think. But it does impart mind power to the brain. And this spirit records every bit of knowledge received through the five senses and it records whatever character has been developed during one's life. The "spirit in man" also records the personality of the individual and the physical makeup of the whole body! When we die, all consciousness ceases (Eccl. 9:5, Psalm 146:4). The physical brain decays. But the "human" spirit, which is not conscious because it has separated from the human brain which makes consciousness possible, returns to God. It is preserved intact by God until the resurrection! It is the one ingredient that was IN humans which makes it possible for individuals to exist again. Therefore the Bible speaks of the dead as being "asleep" in the meantime (Dan. 12:2).

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

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

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

And finally, in the resurrection the child of God, will be composed of spirit, not of matter as the human model was. He will suddenly come alive with his new body. It will seem like the next second from his loss of conscious-

ness at the time of death. He will discover all his memory intact. He will look as he did when he was a physical human being. The character which he built within him will be there. And he will remain alive forever!

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

Church of God Rocky Mount
27 Brookledge Lane
Rocky Mount, VA 24151

www.cogrm.com