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Bible
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



God's Awesome Creation!

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THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE Bible CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 11

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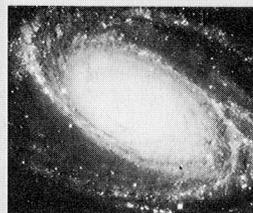
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About Our Cover . . .

It was by the awesome power of the Holy Spirit that God created the limitless universe, including this spiral galaxy—one of billions of such galaxies, each containing billions of stars! Man stands in awe of the tremendous forces at work in the universe. Yet few realize that the laws governing all physical phenomena were set in motion by the dynamic Spirit of God, and that God sustains His vast creation by this great power. Still fewer understand that God has promised to share this tremendous power with His Spirit-born children!

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WHY YOU NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is the Holy Spirit? What does it do? Why do we need it, and how does one receive it? The answers to these crucial questions are found in the Bible. This lesson will help you understand the TRUTH about God's Spirit!

JESUS said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). One reason Christ came to earth was to teach humanity the way to world peace, happiness and prosperity.

But more importantly, Jesus Christ came to reveal the way to receive God's gift of eternal life. He came to make the precious gift of the Holy Spirit available to those whom God would call to repentance.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said," proclaimed Jesus, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive)" (John 7:38-39).

Jesus taught that unless we receive the Spirit of God, we can never enter the Kingdom of God.

Why?

Because it is only through God's Spirit that we can develop the perfect, holy and righteous character of God in this life, and be resurrected to glorious eternal life in God's Family at Christ's return!

Jesus Promises Special Help

After teaching His disciples for three and one-half years, Jesus prepared to offer Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Soon He would be crucified, and after three days and three nights in the grave, He would be resurrected to sit at the right hand of His Father in heaven. His apostles would then continue the work He had personally begun while on earth.

These men would have to carry an unpopular Gospel to a hostile world. They would have to face

years of persecution, ridicule and finally, for most, even martyrdom! The apostles would need strength, encouragement and wisdom. They would need the love, patience and endurance to follow in Christ's steps and carry out His commission to preach the Gospel He proclaimed.

The apostles would also need to recall the lessons taught to them by Christ during His earthly ministry. As generally "unlearned" men, they needed wisdom to face the philosophers, scholars and intellectuals of their day. They needed faith and courage to confront the seething hostility of religious leaders who would attempt to stamp out the Church of God.

Jesus therefore said to them shortly before His trial and crucifixion: "I am not going to leave you alone in the world—I am coming to you" (John 14:18, Phillips). Christ would continue to teach and support the apostles, but not in the flesh. His Father in heaven would miraculously empower them in their efforts to spread the true Gospel after Christ returned to heaven.

Christ told His apostles that the Father would send the *Holy Spirit* to them. It would "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26, RSV). He said the Holy Spirit would impart the *power* they needed to be His witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8).

The record of the New Testament shows this is precisely what happened. The apostles *boldly* proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world. Great *miracles* were performed through the power of the Holy Spirit. And these men recalled and understood the teachings of their Savior, and were inspired by God's Spirit to write the New Testament Scriptures!

A Help and Comfort to Every Christian

Christ did not limit the help of the Holy Spirit to the apostles alone. "Repent," said the Apostle Peter to the crowd gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and *you shall receive* the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38, RSV).

You can have the power that will enable you to live the way of life leading to peace, happiness and eternal life in God's Kingdom. But this power can come only from above—from *God* in

heaven—not from within you or from the around.

The Apostle James said: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father" (Jas. 1:17). God stands ready to impart spiritual strength and understanding through the gift of His Holy Spirit—if we will only comply with the conditions outlined in His Word.

The Holy Spirit is indeed *the key* to the spiritual blessings of God. It is the only ingredient that will bring us God's love, joy and peace in this life and for all eternity.

Let's begin to understand much more about why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

LESSON 11

What the Holy Spirit Really Is

Spiritual qualities and entities seem unreal to most people. And no wonder. The spirit world is invisible, not discerned by any of the five senses. We can learn about the spiritual realm only by what is written in the Bible. God's Word reveals a great deal about His Holy Spirit.

In Lesson 8, we proved from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is not a "third person" of a limited "trinity." We discovered that the Spirit of God is the power and energy of the God Family, as well as the very nature, life and mind of God—not another spiritual entity!

Let's review some of those essential scriptures, and study a few others as we lay the foundation for understanding one of the most crucial subjects of the Bible.

1. What is God composed of? John 4:24. Do the Father and Christ have definite form and shape? Gen. 1:26; John 14:9; Rev. 1:13-16.

COMMENT: Both members of the God Family are composed of divine, immortal spirit essence. Yet, the Father and the Son have definite shape. From one end of the Bible to the other are references to the shape and the various parts of the bodies of both members of the God Family. The Father and the Son both have a head, hair, eyes, nose, mouth, arms, fingers, torso, legs and feet.

Man, as we know, was created in the "image" of God. But unlike God, we are composed of perishable physical matter. We do not have eternal life inherent within ourselves as does the God Family (John 1:4).

2. What is another important attribute of God? Ps. 99:9. Is there anyone as holy as God? I Sam. 2:2.

Are human beings naturally holy? Rom. 3:10-18, 23; 8:7; Jer. 17:9.

COMMENT: The word "holy," as used in Psalm 99:9, means pure of heart or free from sin. The two beings presently composing the God Family have a sinless, holy, *spiritual* attitude and mind. The Holy Spirit therefore expresses the very *mind and character* of God.

3. What are some of the characteristic attributes of God's Spirit? Isa. 11:1-2. What additional characteristics or "fruit" does the Holy Spirit manifest? Gal. 5:22-23; II Tim. 1:7.

4. Does God's Spirit fill the entire universe? Ps. 139:7-8; Jer. 23:24.

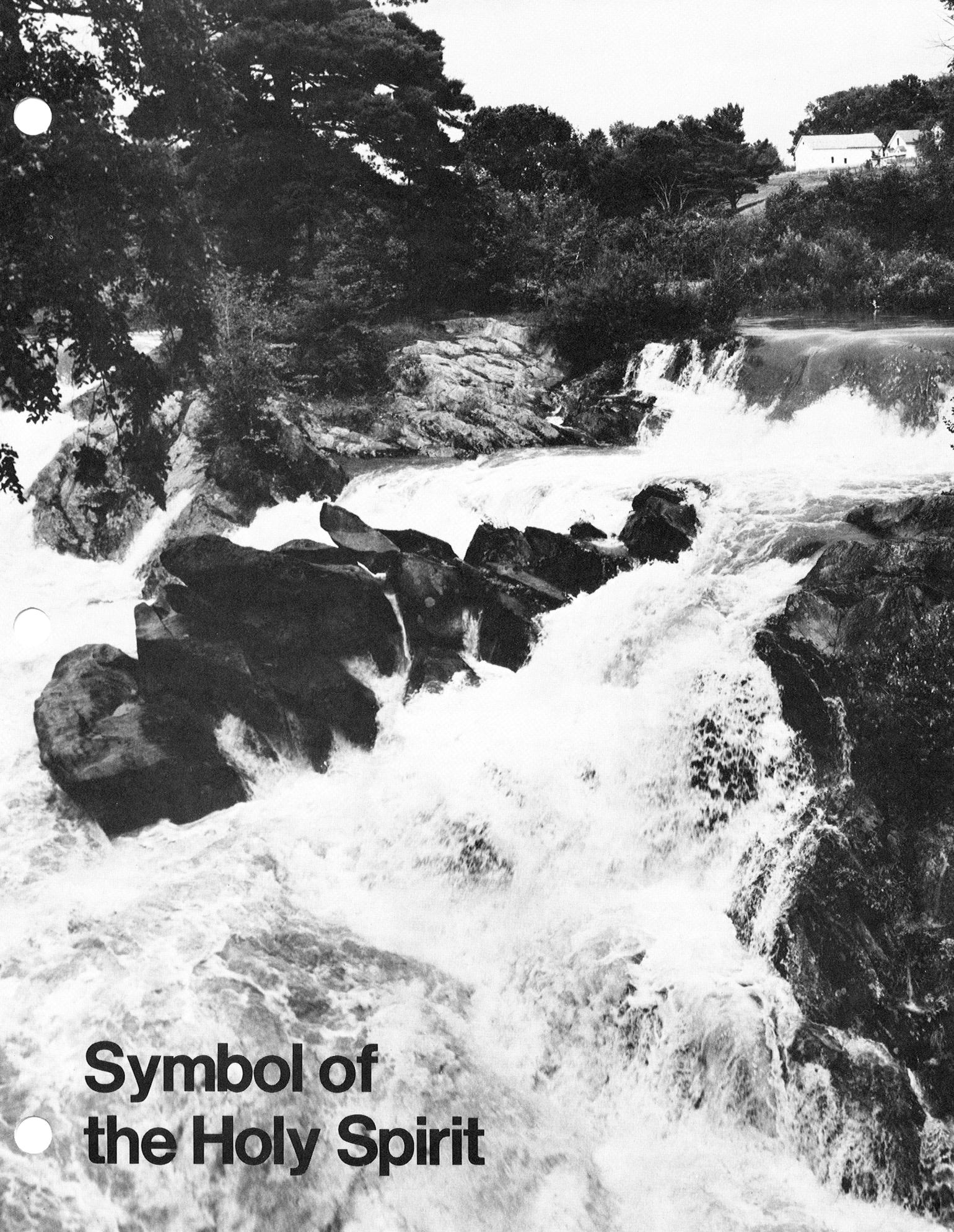
COMMENT: The Spirit of God, like matter, exists in various states. It not only has form, composing the members of the God Family, it also *flows* out from them as power and energy to accomplish their will throughout the entire universe!

5. Is the Spirit of God the *power* by which God—the ultimate Source of all power—created all things? Jer. 32:17; Ps. 104:30. How did God use His Spirit of power to bring His various creations into being? Ps. 148:1-5. (Notice the word "commanded" in verse 5.) Also read Psalm 33:6-9 and Genesis 1:1-3.

COMMENT: Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son and fills the entire universe—much like air is present everywhere on earth. The Bible clearly shows that God's Spirit is the instrument or means by which the God Family creates! Christ, the *Logos*

"LIVING WATER"—Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to dynamic "rivers of *living water*," and will give it to those who thirst for it (John 7:37-39).

H. Armstrong Roberts



**Symbol of
the Holy Spirit**



NASA Photo

or “Word” of the God Family (John 1:1-3, 14), “spake, and it was done” by God’s Spirit.

It was by the Spirit of God that the creative energy of God was transformed into the *physical* creation we see around us (Heb. 11:3). And it was by the power of God’s Spirit that He renewed the surface of the earth (Gen. 1).

Man is unable to create life or matter. God has purposely limited man’s creative abilities to dealing strictly with the already existing physical world around him. So man has learned to work with and use the physical laws God has set in motion. Man’s accomplishments are now seemingly bordering on the miraculous, but they are *physical* nonetheless.

God’s purpose for putting man on earth was to train him for rulership in the Kingdom of God. The earth is the training ground to prepare mankind for greater responsibilities, which God will give to those who are born into His universe-ruling Family. These responsibilities will even include *use* of the awesome creative power of God!

THE EARTH was brought into existence by the creative power of God’s Holy Spirit. It is the training ground for future members of God’s ruling Family.

6. Is the very creation all around us mute testimony of the miraculous creative power of God? Rom. 1:20. (Read Job 26:7-14 for more vivid illustrations of God’s *infinite* power. You can also read chapters 36:22 to 42:6 to see how *great* the power of God really is!)

7. How does God sustain and rule His vast creation? Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:2-3; Ps. 66:7.

COMMENT: God sits at the controls of the entire universe, so to speak, ruling and sustaining everything by the awesome *power* of His Spirit!

The Key to Glorious Immortality

Man is mortal, subject to death. We do not possess eternal life and great powers inherently within ourselves. Eternal life is a *gift* of God. Let’s notice

how having the Holy Spirit within us until our death, or until Christ's return (if we are then still alive), is the *key* to receiving glorious immortality at the resurrection.

1. What happened to Jesus Christ after having been dead and buried for three days and three nights? I Cor. 15:3-4; Matt. 12:39-40. How did the Father raise Christ from the dead? Eph. 1:19-21. (Note that verse 17 shows that it is God the Father and Christ who are being discussed.)

COMMENT: Clearly, it was by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit that God the Father raised Christ from death to glorious immortality, authority and power.

2. Were there any witnesses to Christ's resurrection from the dead? I Cor. 15:4-8.

3. Was Christ the *first* of *many* who will be resurrected to eternal life? Acts 26:23; Col. 1:18; I Cor. 15:22-23; Rom. 8:29.

4. Does the Father promise that He will also raise Spirit-begotten Christians to immortality as He did Jesus? I Cor. 6:14; 15:49-54; I Thess. 4:15-17. (Also read the entire 15th chapter of I Corinthians, Galatians 3:29, 4:7 and Titus 3:7.) Is it absolutely essential to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us in order to receive eternal life at the resurrection? Rom. 8:9-11, 14-17.

COMMENT: The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God desires to elevate mortal man to the God-plane of existence—literal Spirit-born members of His spirit-composed Family! It is also evident that *only* those who have (or did have at the

time of their death) God's Spirit at Christ's return will then be given the gift of eternal life. These individuals—true Christians—have been begotten by the Spirit of God and are manifesting the "fruit" (Gal. 5:22-23) of the Holy Spirit in their lives. (The "fruit of the Spirit" will be discussed later in this lesson.)

We, if we are begotten of the Spirit of God, are "heirs" (future inheritors) of immortal, incorruptible, perfect, all-powerful God-life!

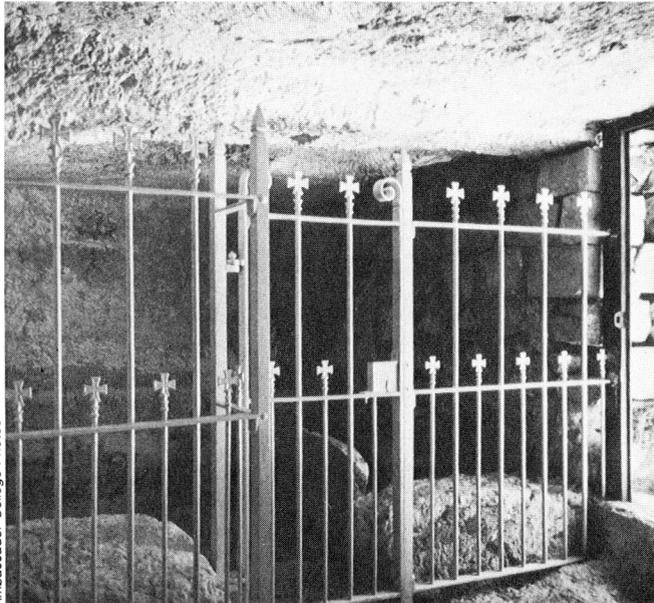
5. When and how quickly will a Spirit-begotten person be changed to immortality? I Thess. 4:16; I Cor. 15:51-52.

6. What type of body did Jesus receive at the time of His resurrection? I Cor. 15:44-45. Will those who are changed at the resurrection be given the same kind of glorious body Jesus Christ has today? Phil. 3:20-21; I John 3:2.

COMMENT: Their natural, mortal bodies will suddenly be changed to bodies of spirit, if they are alive at the time of Christ's return. If dead, they will be resurrected from the grave with new, spirit bodies like Christ has now.

7. Was Jesus, with His spirit-composed body, able to suddenly appear and disappear? Luke 24:36-37, 31. Was He able to pass through barriers or walls? John 20:19. Can one composed of spirit transform himself into mortal flesh and bone if necessary? Luke 24:37-39.

COMMENT: When one becomes a spirit being, he will also be able to perform miraculous feats as Christ did. Of course, Spirit-born members of



GARDEN TOMB—Inside and outside views of the tomb believed by many to be the one from which Jesus Christ was miraculously raised to glorious immortality by the power of God's Spirit. Iron fence protects inside of tomb from thousands of souvenir-conscious tourists.

God's Family, with the character of God, will always act according to the will of the Father, who will always be in charge over all.

8. Are spirit bodies capable of traveling through space at tremendous speed? Compare John 20:17, 19-20 with Matthew 28:9.

COMMENT: Earlier on the day after His resurrection, Christ would not let one of His disciples touch Him because He had not yet ascended to His Father's throne in heaven. But later that same day Christ allowed His disciples to touch Him. This shows that He had traveled to the Father in heaven and returned to earth on the *same day!*

9. Once a person has been changed into spirit, can he ever die? Luke 20:35-36.

10. Was Jesus glorified after His resurrection? John 17:5; Heb. 2:9. How did Christ's glorified body appear when manifested to the Apostle John in a vision? Rev. 1:13-16. (The "Son of Man" mentioned here is the glorified Christ.)

COMMENT: Before Jesus became a human being, He had a glorious, resplendent, spirit body that was like His Father's. After His resurrection, He was restored to the same power and glory. Christ's glorified, powerful spirit body radiates light as bright as the sun!

11. Will God also glorify His Spirit-begotten children at the resurrection by giving them this same great power and glory? Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4.

12. Did Jesus give three of His disciples a fleet-

ing glimpse of this future glorified condition? Matt. 17:1-2. What other scripture gives us an idea of the future glorified state of those who shall be born of God at the resurrection? Dan. 12:2-3.

COMMENT: The ultimate glory that Spirit-begotten children of God are to receive at the resurrection will be so great that it will make them shine as the brilliant stars of the heavens—like the sun in full strength!

(Before continuing this lesson, we recommend that you review the material on pages 10-15 of Lesson 8 regarding God's awesome purpose for mankind, about spiritual begetting, and what being born again really means.)

Our Spiritual Creation Now Possible!

With Lesson 8, we learned from the Bible what it means to be "born again." We discovered that if we are true Christians, we are already—in this life—the *children* of God the Father (I John 3:1-2). But even though considered God's children, we are now only *heirs* (Rom. 8:14-17)—ones who shall, in the future, become inheritors of all that God has promised.

Why only heirs?

Because we are now only *begotten* children of God. It is only when we are *born* of God that we become inheritors of God's Kingdom, having then become divine, eternal members of the Family of God.

Before our *spiritual creation* can begin, God the



CELESTIAL GLORY—David said the heavens declare God's glory (Ps. 19:1). God reveals that His glorified, Spirit-born children will "shine as the stars forever" (Dan. 12:3). Shown is a small section of our own Milky Way galaxy.

Wide World

Father must *beget* us spiritually. He does this by placing His Holy Spirit within our minds to join with the human spirit upon repentance and baptism. (Recall that we studied the scriptures about the “spirit in man” in Lesson 5.) In this spiritual begettal process, the Holy Spirit can be compared to a sperm, and the human mind to an egg with which God’s Spirit unites.

Thus we are impregnated, so to speak, by the “seed” or germ of eternal life (I Pet. 1:3-4, 23; Jas. 1:18). (As we learned in Lesson 8, “born again” in I Peter 1:23 should have been correctly rendered “*begotten* again.”) This impregnation is the *begettal* of the spiritual life of God within our minds, making us literal *children* of God (though yet unborn), for we will be just like our heavenly Father when we are finally born into His Family.

We also learned in Lesson 8 that the portion of the Holy Spirit a person receives upon begettal does more than impart the possibility of eternal life. It also imparts to us the characteristics and attributes of God the Father (II Pet. 1:3-4), just as the sperm of a human father transmits his characteristics and attributes to his newly conceived offspring. And just as a newly begotten physical embryo begins to grow in its mother’s womb, we must also begin to grow spiritually after being begotten by God’s Spirit.

If you are a true Christian as defined in the Bible, then you are now a Spirit-*begotten* child of God the Father. You were impregnated by the Spirit of God—the spiritual “seed” of eternal life—so you could begin the process of *spiritual growth*. But you are not yet born of God—not yet composed of spirit—not yet immortal.

Let’s fully understand about the spiritual growth that must take place after an individual has been begotten by God’s Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Growth

The Bible shows that a Spirit-begotten child of God must grow spiritually before he can be born into the divine Family of God. While still mortal, he is to become more God-like—developing more and more of the very mind and character of Jesus Christ. Let’s study the scriptures that show how this miraculous change and growth can be accomplished.

1. Must Spirit-begotten Christians change their former ways of living which were contrary to God’s Law? Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22. What does this changing process produce in true Christians? Verses 23-24. Also read verses 25-32 and chapter 5:1-12.

COMMENT: One’s basic attitude of mind must be

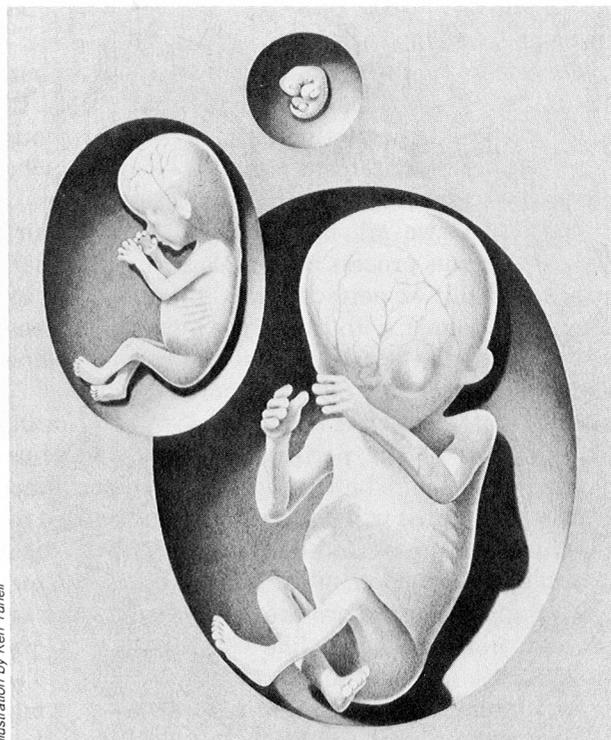


Illustration by Ken Tunell

HUMAN GROWTH in the womb at 1, 2 and 3 months pictures the fact that Spirit-begotten children of God must grow *spiritually*, developing more and more of their spiritual Father’s character.

changed—converted. This transformation is a tremendous undertaking. It requires a miracle! The Holy Spirit is the miraculous power needed to help *renew* one’s mind.

2. Therefore, are Spirit-begotten Christians admonished to grow spiritually? II Pet. 3:18. Are they to be like humble little children growing up—this time spiritually? I Pet. 2:1-2; Matt. 18:2-3.

COMMENT: As explained previously, once we have received God’s Spirit, divine life has been begotten in our minds. Our spiritual life has begun as a very small spiritual “embryo,” which must then *grow*.

To grow spiritually, we must take in *spiritual* nourishment. Just as an embryo in its mother’s womb must be nourished with life-giving food through the placenta, so we must be nourished by the Word of God. “The words that I speak unto you,” said Jesus, “they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Those words are recorded in the Bible, and Jesus said we are to *live* by every word of God (Matt. 4:4). We drink in these life-giving words from the Bible through reading, studying and thinking about what we read.

We also absorb spiritual nourishment through personal, daily contact with God in prayer and through fellowship with God’s other begotten children in His Church. (More about this later.)

3. Should we strive to develop the very character of God? Matt. 5:48.

COMMENT: Since it is impossible for any human being (with the exception of Jesus Christ) to achieve spiritual perfection in this life, the obvious intent of Jesus' statement is that we should *strive to become* perfect like our Father in heaven.

Only when we are born of God at the resurrection will this process be complete, for only then will we actually *be* perfect as the Father and Christ are now (I John 3:2, 9). But in the meantime, Jesus tells us to *strive* toward that goal, to *grow toward* spiritual perfection while still mortal beings!

But what, exactly, is spiritual growth? It is the development of the perfect, holy and righteous character of God! The impregnation of your mind by the Holy Spirit will plant within you the seed of the divine nature of God (II Pet. 1:4). It will make possible the development of His character in you. Once Spirit-begotten, we are to gradually grow to become more and more like God in the way we think, speak and do things.

We develop the character of God by obeying Him, and by giving to and helping others. This kind of godly character is developed in Christians through independent free choice combined with learning, experience, trial and testing.

It is interesting to note that years of experience with people of every social level and walk of life have shown that every Christian who is truly growing and developing spiritual character *has his heart completely in the work of God's Church*, which the living Christ has called His servants to do as His instruments. One's "works," or "fruits," therefore, also include his part in helping to spread the good news of Christ's true Gospel to the world as a witness (Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20).

4. According to the Bible, who must all Spirit-begotten Christians strive to emulate? Eph. 4:15; I John 2:6; I Pet. 2:21. What is the end result of this spiritual growth process? Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13.

5. Does Christ "live" in Spirit-begotten Christians to help them grow spiritually? Col. 1:27-29; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 13:20-21. How does Christ dwell in them? Phil. 1:19; 2:5; Rom. 8:8-10.

COMMENT: Not only must the words of God flow into our minds through Bible study, but *Spirit* must also flow into our minds. Recall that Spirit-begotten Christians have received the Holy Spirit of God, which united with the human spirit in their minds. That is what begets us. But that new spiritual life must *grow* spiritually, much like the fetus in a mother's womb grows physically until finally born.

Added to the germ of spiritual life, which came

from the Father, there must be a *continual supply of Spirit sent from Jesus Christ* (Phil. 1:19) so that we can continue to grow spiritually. Only in this way can our minds become more spiritual, growing toward the maturity of the spiritual character of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the living "Word" of God (John 1:1). And He lived by every word of God (Matt. 4:1-10). If we have the "mind of Christ"—if Jesus Christ is in us by means of His Spirit—we have the power to grow spiritually as we allow His Spirit to lead us along the path of righteousness (Rom. 8:14). Through His Spirit, we have the ability to obey God and thereby *grow* in the holy and righteous character of God.

Let's draw another analogy to further understand. The Spirit of Christ can be compared to a current of electricity flowing through a light bulb. We are that bulb. But there can be no light without a filament inside the bulb. The filament is comparable to the spiritual seed from the Father. The Spirit from Christ can be compared to the electricity flowing through the filament, causing it to radiate light. And so the more Spirit we receive from Christ, the more "spiritual light" we emit in the form of "good works" (Matt. 5:16).

The expression "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) does not refer to being filled with emotional manifestations, which come from the flesh. What Paul meant is that we are to be imbued with the Spirit of God, which is administered through Jesus Christ in His office as High Priest.

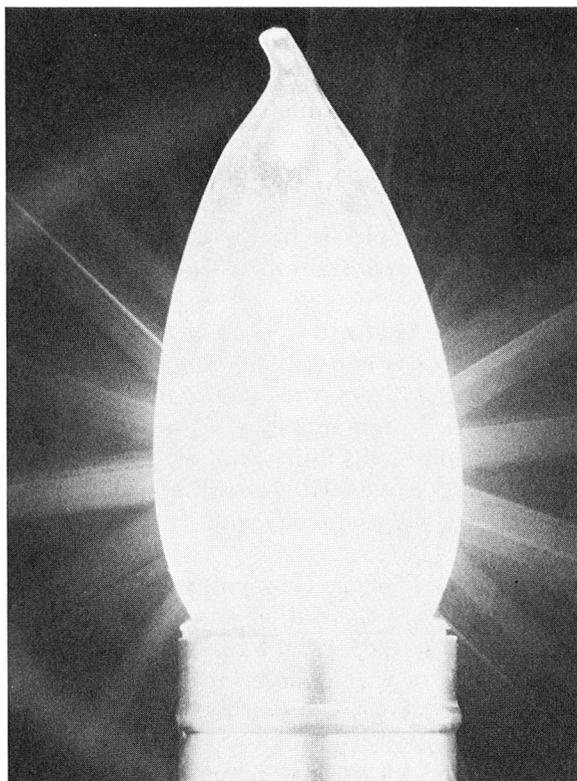
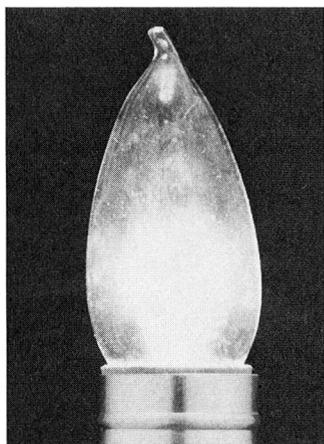
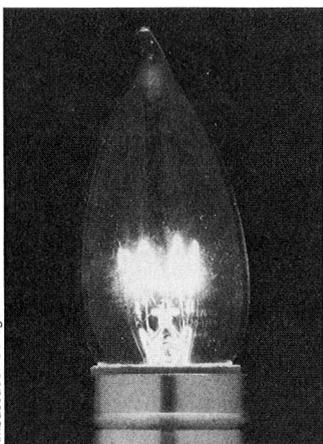
Notice how Paul explained this when he addressed Spirit-begotten Christians in the Church of God at Rome: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you [that is, the Holy Spirit from God the Father, which transmits His characteristics]." But notice what Paul added: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). He does not belong to Christ—he is not a *true* Christian!

Paul was talking about the Holy Spirit from God the Father—the seed or germ of spiritual life which begets us spiritually as children of God—and the Spirit sent to us from Jesus Christ so we can overcome and grow spiritually.

Great Spiritual Benefits Now

We have already seen that many marvelous blessings are made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But there are yet other great benefits available through the Spirit of God.

1. Can the human mind—having only the



“LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE”

This light bulb shines brighter and brighter as more electrical energy flows through it. Similarly, the more Spirit a Christian receives from Christ, the more his spiritual “light” will shine in the form of “good works” (Matt. 5:16) and in expressing the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23).

human spirit, which imparts only human understanding—understand the *spiritual* things of God? I Cor. 2:9, 14. What must be *added* before a person can comprehend spiritually revealed knowledge? Verses 10-13.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit gives one the ability to understand *spiritual* concepts and principles—the very truth of God!

In John 6:63 Christ revealed that His words are spiritual in nature: “The words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit*.” God also reveals in Romans 7:14 that His Law is spiritual. The Bible and the laws and principles it contains are *spiritual* in nature. And spiritual things *cannot* be understood by one who does not have the Spirit of God.

This is not to say the Bible cannot be understood in an academic sense. Many are familiar with what it says—some can even recite large portions of God’s Word from memory. But God inspired Paul to say that spiritual things are *beyond* the comprehension of human intellect alone!

Spiritual things simply 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 aid of God’s Holy Spirit. The greatest scientific and philosophical minds simply cannot understand *spiritual* truths with only their natural minds.

Just as surely as no animal brain—such as that of a cow, for example—can understand *human* affairs, so no human mind can comprehend spiritual things *until* it has received the Holy Spirit of God!

Without the Holy Spirit a person cannot spiritually understand the Bible. Therefore, the average individual is hostile and unreceptive to the truth of God and looks upon those who understand and practice it as peculiar! As Paul said, spiritual things are “*foolishness*” to the unconverted (I Cor. 2:14).

Before their conversion, God’s begotten children did not understand the Bible and God’s way of life. But then God began to *draw* them (John 6:44) to Christ by His Spirit—He began to grant certain spiritual understanding. They were led to understand the meaning of true repentance. After baptism and the receipt of the Spirit of begetting from the Father and the continuous supply of that same Spirit from Christ, they began to understand and to truly keep the Law of God. And the more they yielded to God and His Law, the greater became their spiritual understanding. Notice what God inspired David to write in this regard: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a *good understanding* have all they that do his commandments” (Ps. 111:10).

2. Of itself, is the natural, “carnal” (fleshly)

mind (with which we were all born) totally unable to comprehend the true spiritual intent of God's Law, and therefore unable to obey it—unable to really love God and man? Rom. 8:7-8; Gal. 5:19-21.

3. But what are the fruits of a mind that is motivated by God's Spirit? Rom. 8:6; Gal. 5:22-23. Will the Holy Spirit in us impart the strength to do good works—to literally *obey* God? Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21.

COMMENT: God will work in us through the Holy Spirit. But it is important to understand that the Holy Spirit will not force you to do things against your will as do demonic spirit beings who "possess" some people. God's Spirit will not force you to live righteously. But it will strengthen you spiritually to do God's will as it *leads* you to understand God's way.

4. Do Spirit-begotten children of God have direct access to the Father and Christ in heaven? Eph. 2:13-14, 18; Heb. 4:14-16. What are the special advantages of this close relationship? Heb. 4:16; Matt. 21:22. Why may we receive what we ask? I John 3:22-24; 5:14.

COMMENT: A Christian may come boldly to God in prayer to request help in whatever form necessary, and *can expect to receive it* according to God's will, if he is striving to please God in the way he conducts his life.

Divine guidance, intervention, wisdom, understanding, inspiration, protection, physical needs, and the *power* to do God's will are available through contact with God as made possible by His Holy Spirit.

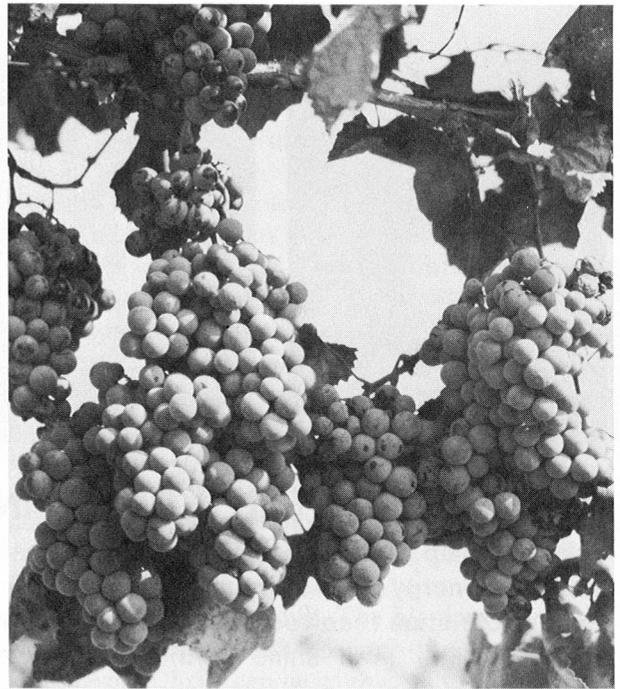
5. Does God also grant His servants the spiritual power needed to conduct the work of His Church? Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:18-20.

COMMENT: The gift of the Holy Spirit provides the power to carry out Christ's great commission of preaching His Gospel to the end-time world. That power is active and working dynamically in the collective body of Christians God has called to do that work today!

The "Fruit of the Spirit"

Recall that the presence of God's Spirit in one's mind, or the lack thereof, is the sole factor that determines whether or not a person is really a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Therefore, it is important to understand *how* one can know if he has the Holy Spirit.

1. Did Jesus Christ clearly indicate that a person is known by his "fruits," or works? Matt. 7:20. In what way did He describe Himself, His Father, and



H. Armstrong Roberts

FRUIT OF THE VINE—Christ is the "vine," and He works in Spirit-begotten Christians (the "branches") through the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit.

true Christians? John 15:1-8. How much fruit does God expect Christians to bear? Verses 5, 8.

COMMENT: This is the reason God calls Christ's disciples—to *bear much fruit!* "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

Jesus was not talking about a momentary emotional thrill or experience that proves you are one of His. Once begotten by the Holy Spirit from the Father, you must continually be *led* by the Spirit from Christ (Rom. 8:14) and *bear spiritual fruit* throughout your Christian life.

But what spiritual fruit, or *results*, does the mind of Christ through God's Spirit produce in one who is striving to do the will of God? Let's understand.

Christ is the "vine," and we—if we are God's Spirit-begotten children—are the "branches." The vine determines the kind of fruit produced by the branches. In the case of a grape vine, the fruit is grapes, not tomatoes. By this simple analogy we see that it is Christ who determines what kind of fruit we should bear as Christians. That fruit is the result of having the mind of Christ at work in us, as made possible by the Spirit of God.

2. How did the Apostle Paul, who was inspired by Christ, outline the fruit or results the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian? Gal. 5:22-23.

3. What is the very first fruit Paul lists? Gal. 5:22. Also notice Romans 5:5. Is love the basic characteristic of God's nature? I John 4:16. Is it the greatest attribute God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit? I Cor. 13:13. Be sure to read all of I Corinthians 13. ("Charity" in the King James Version is an old English word meaning *godly love*.)

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit imparts the traits of God's character to true Christians. And the first and *most important* fruit of God's Spirit is LOVE. It is not just another form of human love, but the divine love that comes directly from God! The Greek word translated love in Galatians 5:22 is *agape*. It means devotedness or kindly concern—an intense desire to *serve* God and man.

4. Is this the same love that will enable us to fulfill—to *obey*—God's Law? Rom. 13:8, 10.

COMMENT: Humans have had many conflicting ideas about how God's love should be expressed in a Christian's life. But God makes it very clear that *His* love is expressed by obedience to the Ten Commandments! Obedience to the first four commandments expresses love toward God. And obedience to the last six commandments expresses love toward fellowman (see Matthew 22:37-40). John said: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*" (I John 5:2-3).

Notice the two necessary elements: 1) love God, and 2) love the children of God—human beings. The kind of love imparted by God's Spirit works *no ill* to anybody! God's love is a *deep concern* and an intense desire to serve, help and encourage other people.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, the love of God is the first fruit that will begin to show. You will begin to have a fervent desire to serve God and express a genuine concern for your neighbor.

Over a period of time—not all at once—you will begin to exhibit this wonderful fruit in your life as you *use* God's Holy Spirit.

The other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, amplify this basic characteristic of God's nature—the divine love given to those whom God begets with His Holy Spirit.

5. What is the second fruit Paul lists in Galatians 5:22? Is it God's will that we be literally *filled* with joy? Rom. 15:13.

COMMENT: Some people think of "joy" as the end result of some kind of self-gratification—a new car, a new home, or a new baby. Physically speaking, when things go your way, the emotion you feel is joy. But joy received from personal gratification is only temporary. The car wears out, the ball game is

soon over, the baby grows up, the stomach empties. None of these physical things—though perfectly all right to enjoy—can bring permanent, lasting joy.

6. Does the Bible give rich, deep meaning to this vital fruit of God's Spirit? Luke 15:7, 10.

COMMENT: What causes the angels to have joy? Is it something personal they receive? Is it adding to or gratifying themselves in some way? It is none of these. Their joy comes from seeing *others* receive something good for them. In this case, it is the knowledge that when a human repents, he has started on the road that leads to eternal life and Sonship in God's Kingdom. The angels delight in seeing human beings begin to learn to live the way that will result in the permanent blessings of being in God's Kingdom!

7. What kind of joy does Jesus Christ experience? Heb. 12:2.

COMMENT: Christ was willing to suffer in anticipation of the real joy He would experience afterward in seeing fellow heirs begotten and finally born into God's Kingdom. This was possible *only* through the sacrifice of His life. Christ and the righteous angels receive great joy from *serving God and others!* This kind of joy lasts for all eternity.

8. What is the third fruit which God's Spirit will manifest in a Christian's life? Gal. 5:22. Does peace of mind come from keeping the Ten Commandments? Ps. 119:165.

COMMENT: Peace of mind is what everyone would like to have, but what so few really possess. Many vainly attempt to achieve peace of mind through escape into alcohol, drugs, bizarre activities, etc.

The person who obeys God's Law truly has peace of mind and control over his emotions—even in trying circumstances. But no one who consistently breaks God's Law can have real peace of mind. He will have fears and frustrations, as well as a guilty conscience.

The person who keeps God's Law *knows* he is doing the right thing. His goals and purposes are stabilized. His life isn't fraught with frustrations, and he is not plagued by a guilty conscience. He is *at peace* with God, with himself, and with his neighbor. He has "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

9. What is the fourth fruit of the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

COMMENT: "Longsuffering" is an old English word for patience. It is also forbearance and clemency, which is the ability to have mercy. One who is short-tempered and easily upset with the faults and inadequacies of others is inviting real trouble for himself, as human relationships will inevitably suffer. And his health can suffer too!

Patience is that steadiness of mind by which you wait for the result to be achieved. One who is patient does not become frustrated because problems don't always have immediate solutions. The godly longsuffering (or patience) Paul is referring to can *come only through the Holy Spirit*.

10. Is gentleness also an important fruit or result of having the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

COMMENT: Gentleness means usefulness, willingness, graciousness, and pleasantness. A gentleman attends to other people's needs; he is courteous. But gentleness is much more.

Notice Paul's statement to the Thessalonians: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (I Thess. 2:7). The apostle used this analogy to describe how he and other ministers dealt with the members of God's Church. A nurse must be firm and loving, kind and sure, able and compassionate—all at once! It takes a qualified, as well as a *willing* person, to be a good nurse. And so a gentle person is willing to take extra steps to look out for the needs of others.

11. Is goodness also one of the attributes of the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

COMMENT: Goodness describes a person possessing God-like qualities of virtue, uprightness and true character.

12. Is faith one of the vital fruits of the Spirit of God? Gal. 5:22. What is God's definition of faith? Heb. 11:1. Did the righteous men and women of old possess this kind of faith? Read all of Hebrews 11.

COMMENT: Faith is the "substance"—more accurately, the assurance or confidence—"of things hoped for." Before you receive what you hope for, you already have it in *substance*, and that substance—that assurance or confidence that you shall possess it—is FAITH! Faith is your evidence that you *shall have* what you do not yet see. This faith is based on the sure promises of God, which are recorded in the Bible.

13. Is it possible to please God without real faith? Heb. 11:6. Must obedience to God accompany one's faith in order to make it *alive* and acceptable to God? Rom. 3:31. Also read and summarize James 2:14-26.

COMMENT: As Hebrews 11:6 explains, faith toward God is our absolute recognition that He exists, and our realization that He blesses us according to His promises as long as we sincerely strive to serve and obey Him. This faith is given to us by God. You cannot cause yourself to have that kind of faith through autosuggestion or any other self-help technique.

14. Is the faith all Christians must possess, which comes as a gift from God (Eph. 2:8) through

the Holy Spirit, in reality the faith of Jesus Christ? Rev. 14:12.

COMMENT: In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the true Church of God. Those in God's Church have the faith of Jesus. It is not just their faith in Him, but *His* faith placed in them and acting in them!

15. Did Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Gal. 2:20. How did Christ live in him? Phil. 2:5; Rom. 8:9-10. Did Paul live by the very *faith of Christ*? Notice Galatians 2:20 once again.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God from Christ implanted in Paul's mind the faith of Christ—the same faith that can be in your mind! That faith—the very faith of Jesus Christ—will enable you to live God's way of life, as did the Apostle Paul and all the righteous men and women of God.

If we were able, of ourselves, to supply the faith to obey God, our obedience would be self-righteousness, which to God is but "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Our righteousness must be through the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith, not our own! (Much more about this godly faith will be covered in the next lesson.)

16. Will meekness also be one of the traits of a Spirit-led individual? Gal. 5:23. Who set an outstanding example in this regard? Num. 12:3.

COMMENT: This kind of meekness is *not* synonymous with weakness. After his conversion, Moses

GENTLENESS—Paul used the example of a nurse, who tenderly looks after the needs of others, to illustrate one of the fruits of God's Spirit.



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became so dedicated to God and filled with the Holy Spirit, he was considered to be the meekest man on earth. He did not seek to exalt himself, but was lowly and humble in attitude (a required trait of a servant of God—see II Timothy 2:24-25).

When God was about to disinherit and destroy the children of Israel because of their many rebellions, Moses—in spite of false personal accusations against him—entreated God to save them (Num. 14:11-20). A meek person is not revengeful!

17. What is the last fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul? Gal. 5:23.

COMMENT: Temperance does *not* mean abstinence! Temperance means *self-control*, self-government, *moderation*—particularly in reference to sensual appetites. The proverbs of Solomon are full of exhortation about temperance—a vital attribute of God’s Spirit.

18. When one receives the Holy Spirit, will these precious fruits suddenly appear overnight—almost all at once? II Pet. 3:18.

COMMENT: Fruit does not appear overnight on a tree. It takes *time*, water, the nutrients in the soil and sunlight to grow. Likewise, it takes time to *grow spiritually* and manifest the “fruit of the Spirit” in one’s life once a person has received the Holy Spirit.

Spirit Must Be Used and Renewed

One is spiritually minded to the degree that the fruits of God’s Spirit are produced in his daily life. But merely having the Spirit as a begettal will not make you spiritually minded unless you *draw on* and *USE* the Holy Spirit every day. Let’s notice how the example of the Church of God in Corinth in Paul’s day bears this out.

1. Were the members of the Corinthian Church begotten by the Holy Spirit? I Cor. 3:16. Yet were many of them not really showing the fruit of God’s Spirit? Verses 1-3.

COMMENT: There was strife and arguing, debating, contentions and divisions among the Corinthian brethren. These are some of the “works of the flesh” mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. We need to understand why the Christians at Corinth were manifesting these *unspiritual* characteristics.

2. Must the Holy Spirit be put to *use*? II Tim. 1:6-7.

COMMENT: Even though the members of God’s Church at Corinth had the Spirit of God, they seemed to have forgotten the fact that God’s Spirit must be *used* and *drawn upon* to produce its fruit. They were producing works of the flesh—“doing what comes naturally”—simply because they were

not “stirring up” the *Spirit of Christ* and drawing on it to produce the results of the mind of Christ! (Phil. 2:5; 1:11.)

Another obvious reason some were acting “carnal” was because they also lacked a *supply* of the Spirit of Christ. Notice how the following scriptures bear this out.

3. Does one receive all at once enough of the Spirit of Christ to last as long as he lives, or must the supply be replenished daily? Phil. 1:19; II Cor. 4:16. Also notice Jesus’ profound analogy in John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: The Spirit of God, which is administered by Christ, is *active*—DYNAMIC! It is a moving force that can’t be bottled up within you. Jesus compared it to “living water” that comes *into you*, and then flows *out from you* in obedience to God. It *circulates* like electricity in a complete circuit—from God, into you, and then out from you manifesting the “fruit of the Spirit,” and then back to God.

Since the Spirit must flow into and out from us, then obviously it must be continually supplied. Therefore, the supply of the Holy Spirit must be *renewed in us daily* by asking God for it in believing prayer (Luke 11:13).

To put it in the vernacular, our “spiritual battery” must be continually “charged up.” We must daily “plug in” to the POWER SOURCE. That source of the Holy Spirit is *GOD!*

Why Holy Spirit Withheld From Mankind

1. Did God offer the first human beings an opportunity to receive His Holy Spirit? Gen. 2:8-9, 16-17.

COMMENT: God made available to Adam and Eve His Holy Spirit and eternal life, which were symbolically represented by the fruit of the “tree of life.”

2. But from which tree did they choose to eat? Gen. 3:1-6.

COMMENT: Though their Creator warned them of the dire consequences of eating fruit from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” Eve was persuaded by the devil’s clever arguments to eat of the fruit that would lead to *death!* Adam also ate the forbidden fruit.

3. What was their punishment for disobeying God? Gen. 3:16-19. Were they denied further access to the tree of life and therefore God’s Spirit? Verses 22-24.

COMMENT: God intended from the beginning to give the Holy Spirit to humans. It was only after



Illustration by Basil Wolverton

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN—Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden after disobeying God. Because of sin, they and all mankind in general have been denied access to God's Holy Spirit.

Adam and Eve disobeyed a specific command from their Creator that the Holy Spirit was denied. Then, as now, God gives His Spirit *only* to those who strive to obey Him (Acts 5:32).

4. Did our first parents' disobedience to God set a pattern for the entire human race? Rom. 5:12.

COMMENT: Had Adam and Eve eaten of the tree in the Garden of Eden that represented God's Holy Spirit—the "tree of [eternal] life"—they would have been begotten by God, and ultimately received eternal life, if they had continued to obey God. But Adam and Eve had to desire the Spirit of God and obey God in order to receive His Spirit—*exactly as those God calls today must do*. Instead, they listened to Satan and pursued the way that leads to death (Gen. 2:17).

From the very moment mortal man disobeyed God, he was cut off from access to the Spirit of God and the gift of eternal life. Ever since then, God has permitted man to go his own way, setting apart 6,000 years during which He has allowed mankind

to learn the painful results of following the dictates of the carnal mind as influenced by Satan. And mankind has continued choosing the way of disobedience to God (Rom. 3:23), which has resulted in untold suffering and death!

An atonement, therefore, had to be made for mankind. It would be the sacrifice of Jesus Christ approximately 4,000 years later. Until then, the Holy Spirit would *not* be given to mankind. But there were a few exceptions during the Old Testament era.

5. Did the patriarchs and prophets of antiquity have access to the Holy Spirit? I Pet. 1:10-11.

COMMENT: Notice that "the Spirit of Christ... was *in them*." Apparently none were called to spiritual salvation except those called by God to perform a *special mission* in service to God. From Adam to Noah, a period of about 1,900 years, we have the record of Abel, Enoch and Noah. From Noah to the calling of Israel out of Egypt there were Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and a few others. These few, who were specially called by God, were given the Holy Spirit and will be born into God's Kingdom, as we are clearly told in Hebrews 11.

6. Did Caleb have the Holy Spirit too? Num. 14:24. What about Joshua? Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9.

7. Did King David also have God's Spirit? I Sam. 16:13. (Remember that the "LORD" was Christ.) What did David say that further proves he did indeed have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him? Ps. 51:11.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, before His human birth, was the member of the God Family who administered the Holy Spirit to all the faithful men and women of old. He sent the Spirit to be in them to impart God's faith and power. Notice: "And all these, though well attested by their *faith*, did not [yet] receive what was promised [God's Kingdom], since God had foreseen *something better for us*, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40, RSV).

Perhaps the understanding of *how* one is begotten and later born into God's Kingdom was not fully revealed to the patriarchs and prophets as it is to us today. However, they knew that through Christ, who would come in the human flesh to give His life as a ransom for many, they, too, would inherit eternal life.

8. Did Jesus promise His disciples that the Holy Spirit would dwell in them after His death and resurrection? John 14:16-17.

9. Since Christ's First Coming, is the way of salvation and receipt of the Holy Spirit open to all who are *called* by God? John 6:44, 65; Acts 2:38-39.

COMMENT: Today, all who are called by God can have His Holy Spirit as a very part of their being, enabling them to overcome and grow spiritually toward the Kingdom of God.

10. Will the knowledge of God and the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit and eternal life ultimately be made available to *everyone* after Christ returns and establishes the rule of God over the earth? Isa. 11:9; Joel 2:28-29.

Spirit Given on Pentecost

1. What did Jesus promise His disciples regarding the receipt of power from heaven? Luke 24:49. Where did He tell them to wait for this power? Same verse and Acts 1:4-5, 8.

2. What miraculous display of power did the Holy Spirit cause in Jerusalem? Acts 2:1-12.

COMMENT: The Spirit of God was manifested as the sound of a mighty rushing wind and as divided—equally distributed—tongues like fire. It filled the disciples, speaking through them in such a way that, although they came from many nations, every man there heard them in his *own* language! (The miracle was in the hearing as well as in the speaking—verses 6, 8).

3. What was the name of the day on which this great display of the Holy Spirit's power occurred? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: The word *pentecost* is a Greek word signifying “fiftieth (day).” The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (a Sunday), fifty days after Jesus' resurrection.

The sudden, spectacular and awe-inspiring exhibit of divine power working within Christ's disciples on that day of Pentecost heralded the *beginning* of the time when those God would call to be members of His Church could receive the Holy Spirit.

It marked the beginning of the crowning act of God's supreme creative work in mankind—the development of God's perfect, holy, and righteous character. It was a *forerunner* of the era foretold by God long ago when He said to the ancient nation of Israel (and through it to the whole world): “The days come . . . that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it *in their hearts*” (Jer. 31:31, 33).

This mighty manifestation of the Spirit marked the coming of the power God would use to engrave His Law within the hearts of those whom He would call and who would surrender themselves to Him. That is why God made this such a *spectacular* and

momentous event on that first day in the history of the New Testament Church.

How to Receive the Holy Spirit

1. Is the Holy Spirit a gift from God? Acts 10:45; II Tim. 1:6.

2. How readily did Jesus say God will give us His Holy Spirit if we ask for it? Luke 11:10-13. But how do we know God will hear us when we ask Him in prayer? I John 3:22.

3. Are repentance, belief and baptism initial steps in our obedience to God, after which He is bound to keep His promise to give us His Holy Spirit? Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:38; 5:32.

COMMENT: Notice the stress placed upon *obedience*, upon submission to the will of God—to the Law of God. God will give His Holy Spirit only to those who have demonstrated—both by *attitude and actions*—that they have truly repented and want to obey Him.

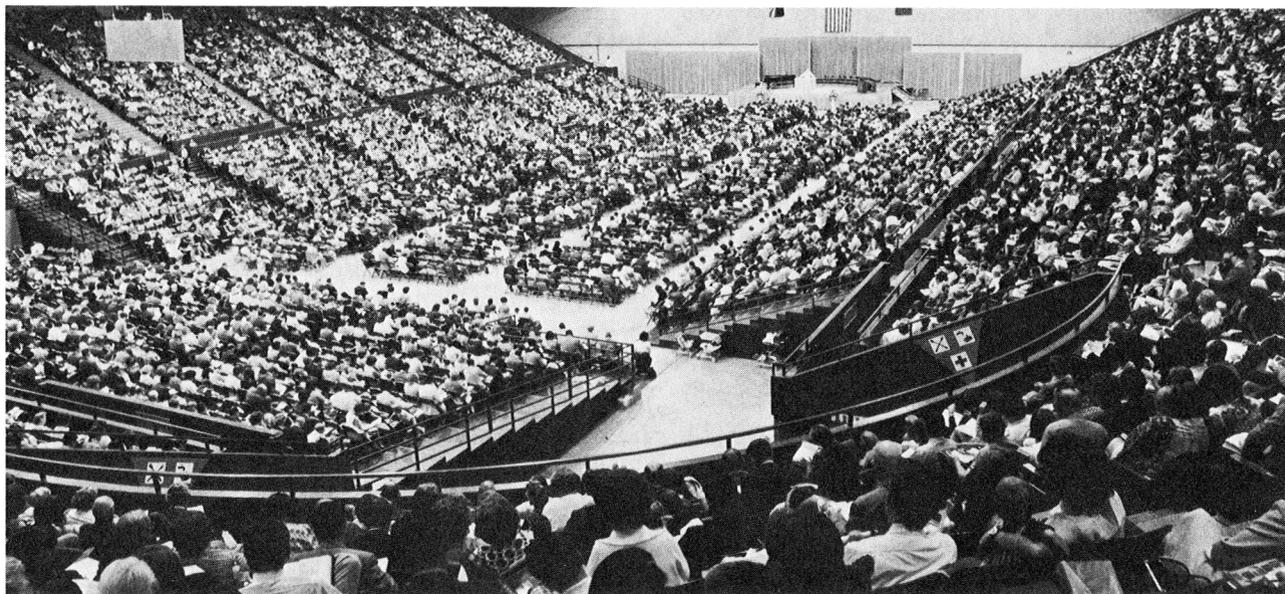
Jesus said, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). God wants to see a submissive, obedient attitude in us *before* He gives us His Spirit. If we surrender unconditionally to God, *He will give us His Spirit!*

The subjects of repentance and baptism were covered thoroughly in Lessons 9 and 10. Suffice it to say, by way of review, that repentance means to turn around and go the other way—to forsake all of your ways which have been contrary to God's Law, and turn to God's way, which is the way of obedience to His Law. To “believe the gospel” means to believe the message Jesus proclaimed—the good news of the coming Kingdom of God on earth, which includes belief on and acceptance of Him as personal Savior.

God makes it very plain that no one who continues to practice sin as a way of life will ever be born into His universe-ruling Family (Gal. 5:19-21). All who desire to become born-again members of God's Family and co-rulers with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God must *stop sinning now*—stop breaking His Law! All must *REPENT* of rebellion against God and begin to literally *OBEY* His Word. They must submit to His authority over their lives by *keeping His commandments!*

After belief and sincere, heartfelt repentance, the next step toward becoming a Christian is water baptism. Baptism is an outward symbol of our repentance of our old sinful, disobedient life—of our complete departure from our old sinful way of living—and of our willingness to obey God in every way.

Once you have taken these steps, then you are



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WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD members and their families at the Tucson Convention Center. Besides attending regular local weekly worship services, tens of thousands of members around the world gather for several days at similar facilities every autumn.

unconditionally promised the Holy Spirit after prayer and the laying on of hands by one of God’s ministers.

God has bound Himself to perform His part if you first perform yours. God says: “You *shall receive* the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It is an absolute promise of God to those He has called! You can ask God thereafter to direct and empower you, through His Holy Spirit, to lead a new life in conformity with His revealed Word—the Holy Bible.

The Spirit and God’s Church

1. Once we have truly repented, been baptized and have been begotten by God’s Holy Spirit, do we automatically become part of a “body”? I Cor. 12:13. What body is Paul talking about? Verse 27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18.

COMMENT: In I Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul has drawn an analogy between the human body and God’s Church. As we discovered in Lesson 10, in verse 13 he is speaking about being baptized—put into—the spiritual “body” of Christ, or Church of God, by God’s Spirit.

Therefore, “joining” a group that calls itself a church—having one’s name on the membership roll of some group—does *not* make one a member of the Church Jesus founded. We cannot become a part of the body of Christ by simply deciding to attend church services.

What determines whether or not a person is a member of the true Church of God is the *begettal*

of the Holy Spirit. Those who have not received God’s Spirit are simply not a part of the true body of Christ—they are not *real* Christians! (Rom. 8:9.) And God promises to give His Spirit *only* to those who truly repent of sin and are baptized (Acts 2:38; 5:32).

But after we are baptized and begotten by God’s Spirit—what then?

2. What did Christ commission His ministers to do for those He has put in His Church? Matt. 28:19-20; John 21:15-17; I Pet. 5:1-3. (Notice the last three words of each of the three verses in John 21 cited above.) For what *purpose* are God’s ministers to “feed” Christ’s “sheep”? Eph. 4:11-15.

COMMENT: God has set His called and chosen ministers in His Church to “feed the flock” so they may *grow spiritually*—“For the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ [the Church of God]: Till we all come in the *unity* of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* [fully mature, full grown] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

As mentioned in Lesson 8, it is the human father who begets children. He does not “bring forth”; the *mother* does that, later. After the father’s part, which initiates the process, there is always a span of time prior to birth. So just as a human mother feeds her begotten child within her womb, God’s children are nourished with spiritual food *within His Church*.

Spiritually, God’s Church is the “mother” (Gal.

4:26) of all who have been begotten by His Holy Spirit. Christ has given His ministers the responsibility to instruct, teach and counsel the members of the Church (Heb. 13:17). And as the human mother carries her unborn baby in that part of her body where she can protect it from physical harm, God's Church also protects the begotten children of God from spiritual harm, such as the false doctrines of false ministers.

Through this "feeding" process, in addition to personal Bible study and prayer, each Christian receives the spiritual nourishment necessary to grow spiritually until he or she is ready to be *born* at Christ's Second Coming as a *member* in the joyous, universe-ruling Family of God!

Finding the True Church

We have just seen that the true Church of God is that body of believers who have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this Church is a spiritual organism. And Jesus Christ is its head.

The true Church understands God's plan of salvation, and is fulfilling Christ's commission to preach the true Gospel as a *witness* to all nations. And as we also learned, the Church is nurturing the Spirit-begotten children of God whom He has put into it.

Knowing this, it becomes very important that you locate the true body of Christ. But how does one go about finding God's Church and His ministers? Just where is the Church God is working through today?

1. Are all ministers and churches that claim to be Christian part of the true Church of God, or are there *false* churches? II Cor. 11:13-15.

COMMENT: Since all of those who profess to be ministers of God are not what they claim to be, what, then, are some of the signs that would lead us to God's true ministers and the true body of Christ?

2. Would the true Church of God follow Christ by upholding God's Law? Matt. 5:17; 19:17-19; 28:19-20; John 15:10. Would that Church be striving to literally keep all the commandments of God? John 14:15; Rev. 3:7-8; 12:17. (Chapter 12 of Revelation personifies God's true Church as a woman.)

COMMENT: The true Church upholds God's Law. It recognizes that God set in motion a law that, if obeyed, will bring us every good thing. God's Church boldly proclaims that His Law is not done away, but has been spiritually magnified by Christ (Isa. 42:21) to cover every aspect of human activity.

The true Church understands that "Thy word is

a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). It recognizes that God's Law is one of His greatest gifts to mankind.

3. Would God's Church be attempting to discredit or devalue the Bible—relying on human traditions and ideas for its principal doctrines? Or would it deeply understand that *the whole Bible*—Old Testament and New—is the true Word of God? Luke 4:4; II Tim. 3:15-17; 4:2; Isa. 8:20.

COMMENT: The only "scriptures" accessible to Timothy were books of the Old Testament. God's Church believes all of the Bible has been inspired by God. The true Church uses the Old Testament, as did Christ and the apostles, and believes it is also a part of God's Word for us today. (Obviously, it must be understood in the light of the New Testament.)

We have briefly touched on only a few of the unique characteristics of the true Church Jesus founded. Others may be readily discovered by reading the literature offered on the back cover of this lesson. (Use the convenient card and envelope enclosed with this lesson to request this free literature.)

The Holy Spirit and You

Now let's be very specific as far as *you* are concerned. As most of you already know, God's ministers are within reach of all areas of the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and much of the rest of the world. So if you really desire to be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit—or if you have questions that need to be answered—write and let us know you would like to talk with a minister of the Worldwide Church of God in your area.

If you live in the United States and would prefer faster service, simply pick up the phone and dial this toll-free number: 1-800-423-4444. Students in Alaska may call 1-818-304-6111 collect. Be sure to mention you have completed Lesson 11 of The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Canadians may dial 1-800-663-2345, except in British Columbia, where the number is 112-800-663-2345. (Both numbers are toll free.)

Remember to mention the number of this lesson whether you write or call.

After you receive God's Holy Spirit, you will begin to sense a remarkably thrilling change in your mind—in your attitude and approach toward life. And as you grow spiritually, you will experience a steady growth in godly character, a new insight in your understanding, a rejuvenated zest for life and a fantastically happy outlook toward the future!

