

THE WORLD TOMORROW

Herbert W. Armstrong brings you the Plain Truth about today's world news and the prophecies of The World Tomorrow

God's Plan and Why Men Suffer Now

... that our generation has been living through. Why such terrifying world conditions as we face now? I've been asked that question more often than any other.

They put it to me this way, "If God is good, if God is love, if God is merciful, He wouldn't want people to suffer like they do on this earth, now would He? And if God is Almighty, if He has all power, He could stop it, He could prevent it, then why doesn't He? How does it come that God allows people to suffer as they do? Think of all the famine, the starvation over in China and places like that. Think of the fiendish, hellish tortures that have taken place during the wars and all the killing."

Well, now, my friends, I want to make plain to you things that you may never have heard or thought of before in your life. I want to answer this question very plainly and candidly. It's about time we begin to understand what's being worked out here below and it's the most wonderful good news that you ever head.

Now, in the first place, God is the Creator. How do I know that the God I believe in is greater than any other God, some idol god, the sun that has been worshipped or anything else? Well, the God that I believe in, the God that I know exists because I can prove it, is the God who created all those things. He created everything else that might possibly be called God. He is the Creator.

Now, God is the Creator not only of static matter, not only of this solid earth as we see it. God is the Creator also of force, of energy of all the laws that exist -- the laws of Chemistry, the laws of Physics, everything that we know that is a force that is in action. God not only created man, but He created Spiritual laws as well as physical laws to regulate man's life and man's happiness and we're subject to those forces and those laws. We don't seem to realize that.

Now, God created man in His image and for a purpose that almost no one seems to understand.

Did you ever stop to think and wonder why you were born? Do you think that you just happened? You're no accident. None of us is an accident my friends. We have been put here on this earth for a purpose. God is working out a purpose here below. Now, let's look into the Bible and see if we can find it because it's revealed. Here is the Word of God in this Book. Why is it that almost no one seems to understand? What is this purpose that God is working out? Why are we not concerned with it? Well, it's about time, my friends, that we begin to know some of these things.

Now, in the first chapter of Genesis, you read here beginning with the twenty-fourth verse God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind..." And incidentally, that word creature is in the original Hebrew in which Moses was inspired to write it because it was written originally in the Hebrew language. The word is nephesh in the Hebrew and that is exactly the same word that is translated soul in the second chapter and the seventh verse where it

says, "...man became a living soul." You might say then that the "living soul" after his kind, that is animals, think of it now, animals, the living soul after his kind, cattle and the creeping thing and the beast of the earth after his kind and it was so. Now, that is, after his kind -- the little puppy grows up in the precise image of its parent dogs and so on. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, that is, same form, same shape, same image after his kind, the cattle after their kind, everything that creepeth on the earth after his kind and God saw that it was so.

You know, we've never bridged the gap from one species to another, one kind to another -- it's reproduction after kind -- it always has been, it always will be as long as material, physical reproduction continues.

And now, the next verse: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." In other words, God said, "...after our form, our shape, our image." God is reproducing Himself. And the word for God here in the first chapter of Genesis is Elohim which is a uniplural, I've explained that before, more than one person -- God is a Family of Persons, God is a Kingdom of Persons -- the Kingdom of God is God. And God, the Kingdom, the Family of Persons is reproducing Himself. That's why God said, "Let us make man in our image..."

Oh, my friends, why don't we realize it? Why don't you hear that preached? Nobody seems to know it. It's right there in your Bible. It's all the way through your Old Testament; it's all the way through your New Testament. It's in the whole Bible. Yes, God is reproducing Himself!

Now, God has endowed man with powers that no animal possesses. God has given us a few of the real God powers, if we only could realize it. Do you know that an animal doesn't have a mind like humans have? An animal has a small brain. An animal has instinct as

if someone had thought out everything that the animal is to do under given circumstances. But man has a mind, my friends.

Now, an animal can't think, design, originate, plan and execute using free volition and then carry out and execute what it had thought out, designed and planned. A bird builds a nest, gophers dig holes, beavers build dams. But did you ever realize that one beaver dam is just like another? And that they have been the same from the beginning of the world and that when a bird builds a nest every bird builds the same kind of a nest that is the same kind of nest that its kind of birds have always built from the beginning of the world until now. They never build a different kind. No, it's instinct. Well, they can't think out a different kind. They can't plan, can't plan it a different way and layout a plan and a blueprint like an architect does with a different design like man does, for instance, when he builds a house. We have been given a lot of the powers of God and I think we just don't realize it. Thank God, He limited our powers, however, because well, look at how we've misused what God has given us and what we might have done if God had just given us more power.

Well now, the next point that I want you to realize and it's not commonly known at all, is this. The first chapter of Genesis, my friends, is telling us only of a material, a physical creation, not of a spiritual creation. Man is the clay model. God merely made the clay model to begin fashioning something that God has in mind.

Now, in the second chapter of Genesis, the seventh verse we learned what God made man out of. God is a Spirit. You read that over in the fifth, or the fourth chapter, rather, of John. But He didn't make man out of Spirit. "...the Eternal God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life..." And that word breath is the same Hebrew word that speaks of the breath in the nostrils of animals all the way through. And man became a living soul. It doesn't say that man has a soul, but man is a soul. And

animals are called souls a number of times here in the first chapter of Genesis as I mentioned just a moment ago.

Now, the third chapter of Genesis in the nineteenth verse, notice here, "In the sweat of thy face," said God to man, "shall thou eat bread, til thou return unto the ground..." Now, He didn't say until your body returns unto the ground, He said, "til thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken..." He's speaking to the conscious man! "...dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return."

Yes, my friends, we're just the clay model. But God is the great Potter. Now, notice over here in Isaiah. I think I've called your attention to this before -- the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah and the eighth verse. "But now, O Eternal, thou art our father; and we are the clay, thou art our potter; we are all the work of thine hands."

Not so long ago, I was in one of the great potteries, one of the great potteries of the world over in England where they make some of the very fine bone china and the beautiful vases and things of that sort that we see a great deal of here in the United States because they do a tremendous export business into the United States. And I noticed a man who was a potter making vases and things like that with his hands. I talked with him for a while. He said that it took him thirty years to learn how to do it. He was a master craftsman. It was very interesting. Yes, he was a master potter. But the clay, I noticed, had to be of just a certain right thickness. It had to be plastic too, so he could move it and bend it. It had to give and to move in his hands. Now, if it was too stiff, he couldn't use it. If it was too thin, he couldn't do anything with it. It had to be just right. Well, that's the way we have to be, plastic, yielding in the hands of God just as that clay yielded in this man's hands.

Now, God made us free moral agents. And God made us so that we can resist, we can stiffen up and harden up against Him or we can accept Him and we can yield. Now, God made us so that we must

choose on that point and God is not going to do anything with us if we resist. So then actually my friends, what are we? Just what are we? We are then an unfinished piece of God's workmanship and God has not completed this piece of workmanship -- the human being. We are an unfinished piece of God's workmanship.

Creation, my friends, was not completed back in the time of the Garden of Eden and the creation of Adam and Eve. It was only begun there. That was the material, the physical creation and God was then only beginning His real creation which is the spiritual creation of creating something spiritual out of man who has been made mortal out of the dust of the ground.

Now, we were born, all of us, from Adam. Adam was not in the spiritual image of God as most people seem to think he was. He lacked God's perfect spiritual character. He wasn't made of the same substance of God. Adam was made of dust of the ground, sixteen elements out of matter but God is composed of spirit -- God is Spirit. Well, now then, I wonder if you ever happen to notice over here in I Corinthians the fifteenth chapter in the New Testament and the forty-fifth verse what is revealed here about being in the image of God. Now, look verse forty-five, I Corinthians fifteen -- this is the resurrection chapter. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul..." And that word soul merely means the breath or the life of animals. Animals are called souls too in the first chapter of Genesis, believe it or not, in your Bible.

Now, continuing, "...the last Adam [meaning Christ] was made a quickening spirit." Now, that is Christ. He was made a quickening spirit by a resurrection from the dead. And that word quickening in the King James or Authorized Version language always means energized or made immortal, spiritual like God. So Christ in His resurrection was made a quickening spirit. In other words, He is God by a resurrection from the dead.

Now, continue, verse forty-seven, "The first man is of the earth, earthy...", not of spirit, not heavenly, not anything like that, but of the earth, earthy. But, "...the second man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven" and He is God.

Now, again, verse forty-nine, "And as we have born the image of the earthy..." That is, made out of the earth or the dust of the ground, sixteen elements of matter composed of matter -- that's the way we've been born -- that's what we are. Listen now. "...we shall...as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall," that is we meaning Christians -- those who are converted, "shall also bear the image of the heavenly." So far as composition is concerned, my friends, we have only been bearing the physical image, not the spiritual, but we're in the form and shape of God, but we can receive His Spirit, His character and bear His image spiritually. God is reproducing Himself. Oh, I wonder if you can begin to realize that wonderful truth.

And so now, what is God? God is perfect spiritual character, that's what He is. Now, God has all power. But what God is, my friends, is perfect spiritual character. And character is something that cannot be automatically created by fiat. It just cannot be. Neither can character be inherited as a matter of hereditary from father to a child.

Now, what is perfect character, because God is perfect character, what is perfect character? Character, perfect character, is the ability of a separate entity and it must be a separate entity; (you're not a character unless you are a separate entity) the ability then of a separate entity to come first to the knowledge of the truth and of the right as opposed to the wrong; and secondly, the ability to make the decision and to choose the right instead of the wrong; and thirdly, the will and the self-discipline to do the right instead of the wrong. Perfect knowledge: ability to go the right way instead of the wrong. Now, God is the perfect Character. God has all knowledge. God

always chooses the right. God never does wrong. We were put here to build character until we become like God. Animals have instinct, but animals do not develop character. Now, character involves such characteristics as love and patience, humility, tolerance, mercy, wisdom, initiative and right doing through free choice.

So, God of necessity made man the...well, so to speak, the clay model. He made man a free moral agent so that man must make his own decision. God has decreed that we must decide. He doesn't force us to obey Him or come under His Government at all. Now, there could be no character any other way. And to do that God had to allow man to do wrong. Now, get that. In order to fulfill His purpose, God had to allow man to be able to do wrong.

Now, Adam chose the curse and death. And so, God drove him out of the Garden of Eden and set angels with a flaming sword pointing in every direction, "Lest he go back and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever [and gain eternal life]..." You read of that in the third chapter of Genesis verses twenty-two to twenty-four.

Now, of course, the tree of life was a symbol of the Spirit of God which gives Eternal Life. Man, really, my friends, is an egg. That's what we are. And the Spirit of God is the impregnating life of God Almighty that can come into us and beget us as a child of God. Beget us then a...and beginning within us a spiritual life that later we're to be born a Spirit being. I wonder if you can comprehend that.

You know, Jesus Christ was a son of God and the only begotten son of God in His mortal human life. But He was the begotten son of God in the sense that He was a human, He had no human father; He had a human mother. But He is now a born son of God in the sense that He is Spirit, He is Divine, He is God by a resurrection from the dead. Now, I hope you get that wonderful, that great distinction that He is the first born of many brethren, one of which, my friends, can be you!

Well, Adam rejected that Tree of Life back in the Garden of Eden and that's why that salvation could not come until Jesus Christ came and qualified and made it possible to send the Spirit of God after His ascension to Heaven.

Now, character, as I have said, must be developed by experience. It can't be created automatically. Experience requires time. And so God set apart a total of seven thousand years to carry out His purpose. Now, the first six thousand years as there were six days of material creation are for man's material way of going contrary to God, if man would choose that way, which he has done and then there's going to be a one thousand year day -- that is the typical millennial Sabbath, so to speak, of Spiritual rest when Jesus Christ is coming to rule this earth God's way and rule it with a rod of iron so that the whole world is going to be ruled God's way and will be full of the knowledge of the Eternal God.

God's Law, my friends, is love. God's way is the way of love. And love is...well, love is always away from self, not toward self. Never lust or anything of that sort, but love is away from self toward others. Jesus said that "it is more blessed to give than it is to receive."

Now, that doesn't mean actually that we're not to love ourselves either because the great law is that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. You don't need to worry about loving your own self; you're going to do that anyway. You just can't do anything else and the law is that you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, the opposite way then is lust and greed and that's all toward self -- vanity. And it leads to the system in this world -- competition and strife, yes, the getting way, the accumulating, the taking way! So, we do have rather taking ways in this world. And that, my friends, is the cause of wars. Now, why does God allow war and human suffering? There's the cause right there. That's why we have war. We have competition. Everything is competition in this world.

Everything is carried along on the selfish, the getting basis, greed and vanity -- that's what man is doing.

Now, in order to prevent wars today, my friends, God Almighty, I wonder if you realize this, God would have to, well, in the vernacular of modern language, He would have to cram His religion down our throats. Because it's our way in violation of the law of God, the law of love that is causing war, that is causing human anguish and human suffering and it's because God had to allow it to let us have our own way in order to fulfill His purpose. The only way that God could stop it would be to stop the cause. He would have in effect to cram His religion down our throats, down the throats of all humanity. There wouldn't be any free moral agency. Then there wouldn't be any character and God's purpose could never be fulfilled. That's why God allows wars and that's why, my friends, God allows suffering; to prevent it would be to prevent the very purpose that God is working out here below.

Do you know that man learns by suffering? Did you ever hear of anyone learning that the stove was hot by putting his finger on it? Well, we do learn by experience and do you know that Jesus Christ learned by experience? I wonder if you realize that. Turn over very quickly to Hebrews the fifth chapter, the eighth and the ninth verses. Hebrews five, verses eight and nine. "But though he were a Son, yet learned he," that's Christ now, "yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered. And being made perfect..." Oh, my friends, did you know that Jesus Christ was made perfect and by suffering? "...he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him..." Yes, obedience is in that too.

Now, will you notice the same thing in the second chapter and the tenth verse that Christ learned, and that He learned obedience by what He suffered. Experience, my friends, develops character either good or bad. And if we're going to have good character, it comes

through experience. If we develop bad character, and man has done that of course, because all have sinned which is to go contrary to God's way, God's Law that would produce peace and all of that. Well, God provided for that too. Because God so loved this world, that He gave His only begotten son that we can repent, we can come to Him and have all the evil and all of the sin forgiven, we can be given a new and a clean start. Receive God's Spirit and let the Power of God come into us and clean us up and make us what we ought to be.

Now, Job understood all of this. Turn back to Job for just a second. Job asked here in the fourteenth chapter, the fourteenth verse, you can remember that easily, Job 14:14, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days," answered Job, "of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." Now, he was speaking of a resurrection when he was going to be changed in a resurrection. "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee..."

And do you know that Jesus said, "...the hour is coming when all that are [where?] in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life..." Well now, Job said, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee..." And now here's the point I want you to notice, my friends, the last part, "...thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" -- the last part of that fourteenth verse. In calling him from the grave and a resurrection, Job said God will have a desire to the work of His hands! Job knew that he was an unfinished piece of God's workmanship. Yes, man is the work of God's hands.

Now, I want you to notice quickly in Ephesians in the New Testament the second chapter and the tenth verse, "For," it says here, "we are his workmanship..." We, of course, mean Christians in New Testament language. "...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...", yes, being created, spiritually created in Christ Jesus, what

unto? "...unto good works..." Not very many people believe that today, do they, my friends. "...unto good works, which God before hath ordained that we should walk in them." Yes, in good works. That's in the New Testament.

Yes, the physical creation took place in six days and the spiritual creation only began there and it's still going on today. That's the purpose of your life. It's to learn that very lesson, to repent of your wrong ways, your sins, to accept Christ as your saviour and to start on the way that is the way of character, the way of good, righteous, holy, spiritual character, the way of God, and that you can become the very born son of God.

And so it is as you read here in I Peter or rather II Peter 3:18 that we are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And as Jesus Christ Himself said, "we must overcome." And He promised that the overcomers are to reign and to rule with Him. Only those that overcome and grow in this life after they do repent and after we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and after we have received His Holy Spirit and are walking by His Spirit -- "He that overcometh," said Jesus, "and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them [the nations] with a rod of iron..." And then again in Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh," Jesus said, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne..." He is going to rule the entire world and we, my friends, if we qualify, are going to rule with Him. We're going to be kings and priests with Him. He was the Firstborn of many brethren -- the firstborn of many brethren. You, my friends, can be one of those brethren.

Now, Jesus went to Heaven. Jesus was glorified. We are to be glorified together with Him. Did you ever read that in your Bible? We're to be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, that is at the Second Coming of Christ, if we're then alive.

And if not, the dead in Christ are to rise first, and to meet Him in the air, changed to immortality, to be like Him. And it says in another scripture, made like unto His glorious body. Yes, made like Him and He is very God!

I don't think that your mind can grasp what I've just told you, my friends. It's something for you to think over. God help you to understand. It's something for you to study in your Bible, in a new and a different way from a new concept altogether because your Bible is full of it.

You know, for six thousand years we've been going contrary to God's ways; that's why we have wars, that's why God is allowing war, my friends. Now, that six thousand years, that God allotted for man to go his own way is almost over. We're coming to the place where man would destroy human life from off this planet. And God is soon going to intervene, my friends. He is going to send Jesus Christ to this earth to save us from ourselves and to rule the world. That, my friends, is the glad, the happy time that is coming after we have learned a few more lessons. Well, God speed that day.

Well now, my friends, let me tell you about the most important thing in your life, right now. You know we have available for you now the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. You can study this Ambassador College Course in your own home, by correspondence.

Let me tell you just little, real quickly, about this correspondence course.

Now in lesson one, it starts out -- Why Study the Bible? Why should you want to study the Bible? Why is the study of the Bible such a dull, uninteresting, irksome task to most people done if at all only as a duty out of a fear of a harsh God? Well, in this study, my friends, you'll come to really see that God is love, not a harsh stern God and

that God wants every one of us to be happy, to enjoy life to the very full.

Why don't you enroll then for this correspondence course. And there's no charge, no tuition, whatsoever. I'll just be happy to send it to you. The textbook is your Bible. All this can do is just open up the way and point it out to you and show you how to study your Bible so you can understand it.

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