

the **REAL** HISTORY of the **TRUE** CHURCH

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Few indeed know the Bible reveals a great false church, deceiving millions, and a *true* Church of God, persecuted, yet enduring. Few know the real PURPOSE of the Church, who built it and why. Now we are warned of a forthcoming effort to deceive even this generation concerning who really built the present era of the true Church. Here is the plain truth.

Editor's note: We are printing here, serially, a new book by Herbert W. Armstrong with the same title as this article.

FIRST of all, let the true FACT be stated that Jesus Christ built the true Church of God.

It was founded by the resurrected *living* Christ, after his ascension to heaven. He has remained permanently the HEAD of it.

The questions, then, are WHY

was it built—what is its PURPOSE—by whom did Christ build it—and through whom has he built up the present era of the Church?

What is the Church? WHY does it exist? What is its PURPOSE? People in the Western world take the church as an institution for granted—they know not why! A large segment of millions flock to services Sunday mornings.

But WHY the Church?

But WHY? Just *what is the Church?* Is it a building with a sharply sloping roof, with a steeple atop pointing heavenward, a cross

on its facade? Do the members go to the church? Or does the local church assemble in a building or place?

Winston Churchill said before the United States Congress during World War II, "There is a PURPOSE being worked out here below." Does the Church have anything to do with that PURPOSE?

To understand what the world does not understand, we need to consider the world into which Jesus came when he said, "I will build my church."

He came into the same world in

which you and I live today. It's the same world, though it has undergone significant changes in two directions. Its technology, its materialistic science and production have awesomely increased, while conversely the complexity of its social, regulatory, governmental, judiciary and educational systems has tremendously expanded. It has produced appalling evils, unsolvable problems, human discontent, unhappiness and suffering. But all that is merely the expansion of human systems already functioning.

We cannot therefore understand the PURPOSE of the Church until we first understand the origin of civilization—the world into which Jesus came to build his Church. For indeed the Church *is* the Master Plan of the Eternal GOD for working out his PURPOSE here below. What was wrong that needed such a PURPOSE to be worked out?

Not God's Civilization

This world has been blinded from the truth about its very civilization and how it started. Many people assume this is GOD's civilization.

Actually it all started in the dim recesses of prehistory. A super archangel, the cherub Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-15), invisible but immortal and extremely intelligent, was very high in rank in the government of the universe. He was one of two majestic cherubs whose wings overspread the very throne of the supreme Creator God in heaven (Ezek. 28:14-15). At the creation of the earth, Lucifer was set on earth's throne to administer the government of God, in which he was adequately trained and experienced. Lucifer reigned over angels whose abode was then the newly created earth.

But, while still on the *inside* of God's universe-government, perfect in all his ways from his creation, Lucifer allowed vanity to corrupt him into covetousness, envy and rebellion. A spirit of competition entered him. He attempted to *take over* the government of the entire universe. He and his invading army of angels (II Pet. 2:4) swooped up to heaven in violent conquest to overthrow the Creator

God from his throne over the universe.

But they were cast back down to earth. Lucifer became Satan the devil, still on the throne of the earth, but no longer administering God's government. His angels became demons.

This angelic rebellion brought confusion, decay and darkness to the earth (Gen. 1:2). Then God (Ps. 104:30) in six days renewed the face of the earth (Gen. 1:3-25) for MAN (verse 26), created in God's own image, after the GOD-kind—with God's grand PURPOSE to be worked out here below of reproducing himself through MAN! That supreme PURPOSE provides that man shall be born, finally, into the very GOD Family! Yet the world seems never to have grasped that PURPOSE, or the incredible human potential!

Man was created with human spirit (Job 32:8, I Cor. 2:11, Rom. 8:16), which imparts the power of intellect to the human brain. Except for this, human brain is like animal brain. Man was created with power of mind, in the form and shape of God, yet, even as dumb vertebrates, of matter from the ground with only temporary existence.

Man, since rebellion entered his world, has been blinded as to what, and why he is—except for those to whom God has revealed this truth.

Civilization Is Founded

God is composed of Spirit. God is immortal, possessing life inherent—self-containing life. Man's life is animal life—temporary physiochemical existence. But immortal, self-containing life was freely offered the first created man!

That man was named Adam. But he was first made incomplete in two ways: he was of one gender only and to reproduce he needed another gender with him, so God made for him a wife, named Eve. Also his mind was incomplete, with the one human spirit. This gave him capability to acquire material knowledge—to deal with things.

But God's ultimate PURPOSE for him required a close relationship with his Maker, God, and also a workable, peaceful and happy rela-

tionship with fellowman. His mind therefore was incomplete as first created. For completion, another Spirit was needed—the Holy Spirit of God.

All this wonderful truth seems to have been missing from humanly taught knowledge. It is revealed in the incident of the forbidden fruit, explained in the second and third chapters of Genesis. WHY has this been ignored—misunderstood—misrepresented?

The entire founding of man's civilization has lain hidden in this incident of the forbidden fruit. What if—yes, *what if* Adam had eaten of the tree of LIFE? The theologians and religionists seem never to have asked—or answered—that question.

Before the first created man and woman were two symbolic trees. One was the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil." This tree produced the forbidden fruit. That tree (Adam did not eat an apple) represented *knowledge*. To take *to himself* this knowledge production (of good and evil—of right or wrong)—would result in death. The other tree was the tree of LIFE—immortal, inherent life. But it, too, represented KNOWLEDGE. How do we know?

Because immortal LIFE is today offered to the called Christian. And how does he obtain it? Not all at once, instantaneously, but by first receiving the very Spirit Adam lacked—the Holy Spirit of God. When one receives the GIFT of God's Holy Spirit, he becomes merely a begotten child of God. And the Spirit of God *opens the mind* to UNDERSTAND the spiritual Word of God—the Bible!

Man needed *spiritual knowledge* for fellowship with his Maker, as well as for contact with fellowman. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of a sound mind—the Spirit by which the mind is enabled to comprehend—to UNDERSTAND—spiritual knowledge as revealed through God's Word (I Cor. 2:9-14).

Placed before the first created man, father of the human family, were two very special trees in the garden of Eden, symbolic of tremendous meaning. The man was required to make a choice. One symbolic tree represented LIFE—

self-containing life inherent—immortality. The other, DEATH!

The tree of LIFE symbolized the gift of God's Holy Spirit, the begetting of eternal LIFE. The forbidden tree was called the tree of "the KNOWLEDGE of good and evil." When Adam disobeyed God and ate the fruit from that tree, he TOOK TO HIMSELF "the knowledge of good and evil"—that is, potential SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE!

Understand at this point. God had created man with a mind capable of acquiring and utilizing material knowledge—the knowledge to work with matter—with things! This knowledge he could acquire on his own. But he had not been created with a mind that could discern, by itself, right from wrong—that is, SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE!

The one human spirit created in man—and born in all humans since—can acquire physical, material knowledge. But it is unable of itself to discern spiritual knowledge. And spiritual knowledge can be imparted *to* the mind *ONLY BY GOD!*

Adam, in *taking to himself* the "knowledge of good and evil"—that is, potential SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE—limited himself to material knowledge only. WHY? Because the one human spirit in man is not the faculty that sees, hears, smells, tastes or feels. The physical brain sees through the eye, hears through the ear, smells through the nose. And human man is LIMITED IN KNOWLEDGE to that which may enter his brain through these five physical senses!

Adam, father and progenitor of the human family, had chosen self-produced humanly acquired knowledge and death. He lived 930 years and he died. All his children subsequently died after a temporary physiochemical existence! And so, at that time, "the foundation of the world," Christ, the Lamb of God was slain (Rev. 13:8). That is, it was set by God at the foundation of the world that in due time Christ should come and die to pay the penalty for human sin.

It was also decreed that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

It was then that God shut up the "tree of LIFE"—that is, the Holy Spirit, from mankind until after Jesus Christ, the second Adam, had come and paid the penalty of human sin in man's stead.

How Civilization Was Built

God did not shut himself off from man, however. God even appeared to or communicated with Cain, Adam's first son and the first murderer. God called out the Hebrew slaves from Egypt and communicated with them en masse at Mt. Sinai. He gave them his spiritual law—but, not having the Holy Spirit they neither comprehended it nor obeyed it. Lacking the Holy Spirit of God, they neither understood spiritual truths nor obeyed them.

However, God did make one necessary exception, for the ultimate foundation of his Church! He did reveal truths to his prophets, for the writing of the Holy Scriptures, the very written Word of God!

Much of the Church of God is based on the writings of the prophets, and they, with the apostles, became the foundation of the Church, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).

Now consider the building of this world's civilization, and the world into which Christ came to build his Church.

With the Holy Spirit shut off from man, the human family started building its own world, influenced and swayed and deceived by Satan. *ALL* have been deceived by Satan (Rev. 12:9). Perhaps man did not realize it. Satan is a spirit being, invisible to humans.

Without the spiritual perception of God's Spirit, man does not recognize spirit beings or truths as existent. Yet Satan has been the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) working *in* and deceiving humans in a manner not realized.

Ideas are transmitted through the air by radio and television waves and ultimately appear in the form of audible words and visible pictures. Does it, then, seem strange or impossible that Satan has transmitted attitudes, impres-

sions, motives and impulses inaudibly and invisibly into human minds whose human spirits are tuned automatically to Satan's wavelength?

It is thus that even infants under one year old, when the teaching of whom is neglected by human parents, are being instilled subconsciously, by satanic broadcast, with selfishness and resentment of authority. Satan doesn't neglect them.

So, as man began to expand in numbers on the earth, *taking to himself* the knowledge of relationships with others, man, swayed by Satan, began building his own system of society. He built his own concepts of human GOVERNMENTS, utterly contrary to the government of God.

Through human-devised and Satan-swayed GOVERNMENT, humans began regulating human lives. Humans began and developed a system of EDUCATION by which an adult generation seeks to brainwash, instill, inject into the minds of coming generations their concepts, ideas, opinions and supposed knowledge.

Humans developed their own system of economics, business, industry, commerce. They developed their own systems of RELIGION, created their own concepts of God—and to this day *not one* organized religion except God's true Church knows WHO and WHAT God really is! Humans developed their own social customs and systems.

Thus CIVILIZATION was produced actually by Satan, using humans as his pawns!

God's way of life is based on LOVE—outgoing concern for the good and welfare of others, and love above all toward God who IS LOVE! The world's civilization was built on the contrary way of GET—of vanity, covetousness, envy, jealousy, competition, strife, violence, rebellion against authority.

And *that* is the world into which Jesus Christ was born.

Remember God's ultimate PURPOSE is to reproduce himself in and through MAN—to create in MAN God's own holy, righteous spiritual and perfect CHARACTER! But all

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REAL HISTORY

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mankind had gone astray. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way . . ." (Isa. 53:6)—contrary to the way of God's CHARACTER.

How, then, get humanity back? **HOW** carry out the divine PURPOSE?

The Purpose of the Church

How could God have offered salvation to the children of Adam and Eve? Satan had broadcast and inoculated their minds during infancy with the attitude of SELF-centeredness. Before they were old enough for conversion (as Christians know it), they had already sinned, and incurred the DEATH penalty.

None could be reconciled to God and receive his Holy Spirit until their death penalty had been paid for them! Therefore it was pre-arranged for the Word, who also was God, to be born of a human woman, to become Emmanuel (God with us), God in human flesh—both man and God. He, tempted in all points like the rest of us, never sinned. Though he did not incur the death penalty, he paid it—for YOU and for me—for all humanity!

So, in God's Master Plan for working out his PURPOSE, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22) by a resurrection. Judgment was not yet passed on the deceived in Satan's world. But it was appointed for men once to die, and after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27). All who ever died shall be made alive by resurrection (I Cor. 15:22-24; Heb. 9:27).

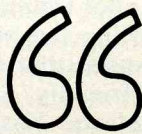
But HOW was Jesus Christ to become SAVIOR—to save all lost humanity? Just dying for us was not enough. God's CHARACTER had to be built into us. God performed an act of creation in Adam. That was a PHYSICAL creation! It began with the first Adam. But the SPIRITUAL creation began with Jesus Christ. The true Christian will "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"

(Eph. 4:24). We become a NEW CREATION. So God's spiritual creation is still in progress!

Now WHY the Church? What is its PURPOSE? It is God's means of working out his PURPOSE here below—his overall PURPOSE! That NEW CREATION—that SPIRITUAL CREATION—started with the Church of God!

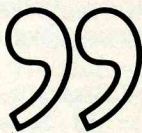
How the Church Was Started

Notice now how Jesus started the Church. First, after being baptized himself—after being tempted in the



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supreme temptation by Satan, and overcoming Satan—Jesus started by CHOOSING 12 disciples. A disciple is a learner—a student being taught. Jesus was the teacher.

Even these disciples were still carnal. Yet he said that when they received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit would bring to remembrance all that he had taught them—and then, with the Holy Spirit, they would UNDERSTAND!

These disciples were not the Church. They and the prophets preceded and became the foundation of the Church.

Jesus used these 12, taught in advance, to form the foundation and to teach and rule the Church.

The disciples were not volunteers. They were chosen. Those in the Church are ALSO CHOSEN! Jesus said emphatically, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . ." (John 6:44).

In the same way, God has chosen the CHURCH to become disciples—students—learners—starting not only a new Spirit-led life and way of living in themselves, but also to "grow in grace, and in the KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). The repentant, believing Spirit-led Christian must BE TAUGHT SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. He is being converted—that is, *changed!* From carnal to spiritualmindedness. From this world's way of living to GOD'S WAY OF LIFE!

As the disciples were a foundation for the Church, so the Church is a foundation for the KINGDOM OF GOD, to be reestablished on earth at Christ's return in POWER and GLORY. He will reestablish the GOVERNMENT of God through the FAMILY OF GOD, then to become the KINGDOM OF GOD.

The Church was assigned a dual commission: 1) to carry Christ's Gospel of the KINGDOM OF GOD to the world *for a witness* (NOT to convert the world at this time); and 2) to "feed the flock"—instruct the Church as the members GROW in spiritual knowledge and character.

At Christ's glorified return to earth, the dead in Christ will be resurrected, and the living in Christ instantaneously changed from mortal to immortal, and all shall rise to meet the returning Christ in the air and to reign and rule with him in the KINGDOM OF GOD!

Satan shall then be removed for a thousand years. The Church will then BE the KINGDOM or FAMILY OF GOD. We shall be kings AND PRIESTS, reigning ON THE EARTH (Rev. 5:10).

But, looking into our time today, what about the Church TODAY? By whom and THROUGH whom did Christ build up the present era? That modern history will be covered in a succeeding number. □