

The Nature of Man

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”
(Genesis 1:27).*

Man was created in the image of God, without sin and holy. However, he was given a commandment from God with the option of disobeying the commandment. As is painfully obvious all around us, man used free will to his own detriment. He sinned against God when he ate of the fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17; 3:6) and thus defiled the whole creation.

It was not the fruit that defiled the creation, but rather it was the disobedience that accompanied it. As a result of this sin, God cursed the universe he had created (Genesis 3:17–20). Modern day physicists call this curse the Law of Entropy or the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law says that all systems run down or deteriorate without additional outside input. This law includes biological, geological, and sociological systems among others, and it is universally accepted by science and easily demonstrated. Yet it is diametrically opposed to evolution. It is final proof that evolution past a certain point is impossible! Modern science, for all its claims to rigorous demands for facts and truth, has chosen to accept the impossible rather than admit to a Creator to whom it would then be answerable. That is why the Bible admonishes us to:

*“. . . keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen”
(1 Timothy 6:20–21).*

I. Man Was Created With Free Will

“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” (Genesis 3:22–23).

Man was given the right and the responsibility to make moral choices. Adam made a very poor choice which has affected the whole creation. The price for sin is eternal damnation, but God has graciously devised a plan whereby we might be redeemed back to Him through the shed blood of Jesus Christ who became our Savior. Many theologians have attempted to prove that man does not in fact have free will. They argue that God has chosen from the beginning who He will redeem and who He will not redeem. This comes from a few verses that seem to indicate “foreordination” or “predestination” (see for instance John 15:16; Ephesians 1:3–5, 10–11). There are a number of verses, however, that indicate that God had “foreknowledge” of who would accept salvation and who would not (Romans 8:29–30; 1 Peter 1:1–2). In the face of the vast number of verses that indicate free will, it is most logical to presume that the few verses in dispute actually refer to the foreknowledge of God rather than to predestination.

The position taken by those who believe in predestination also fails in an examination based on simple logic. If God has already chosen who will be saved and who will not, there is no reason for us to carry out the great commission of going into all the world to preach the gospel. The elect persons will be saved regardless of our actions. Thus, much scripture is negated or at least trivialized. Also, the whole process of going through this life becomes a shameful sham. In such a case, a just God would simply bring to life his chosen people and prevent the unchosen from coming into existence. Why should He create masses of hopeless victims? Predestination is a hopeless, futile position.

A. Free will in the garden

Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1–3

B. Free will in the Promised Land

Josh 24:15; Judges 5:7–8

C. Free will in the New Testament

John 8:36; Romans 10:13

II. Man: In the image of God

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

As we have seen in Lesson 5, God is a trinity with a Body, a Soul, and a Spirit. When He created man, He made us in His image, that is, with a body, a soul, and a spirit. However, only the body and soul of man are products of creation. The spirit was not created. The Bible is quite clear that God gave us a part of His Spirit. We are not told very much about how our spirit relates to our body and soul and this has been the source of much conjecture. We do know that it is our spirit that communes with God’s Holy Spirit as we saw in Lesson 7. We also know that in some way it is uniquely our spirit. Yet, even though it is our own spirit, it does not appear that any man’s spirit ever goes to hell. This experience appears to be unique to the body and soul of a “lost” or unsaved person.

A. The body in life

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21).

The biblical term for the body is the “flesh.” It is identified with the solid state of matter. The body will do anything to satisfy its urges, regardless of its effect on anything or anyone else. It has self-awareness and reacts to situations to its own benefit only. Christians who live “in the flesh,” whose soul primarily seeks to satisfy the flesh, are said to be “carnal” (1 Corinthians 3:3; Romans 8:5–7).

1. The body is basically evil

The body tends always only to evil. It is only through the workings of the soul and spirit that any good can come out of it.

Romans 7:14, 18, 21, 23–25; 1 Corinthians 3:3

2. The body is primarily controlled by the will (in the soul) and secondarily by needs and ‘drives’ to satisfy hunger, tiredness, sex, etc.

James 4:1–2

3. The body is operated by the brain

Romans 7:23–24

Thus, when the body’s cells need oxygen, the brain immediately operates the respiratory system to provide it. On the other hand, the will (soul) may override the drive to breathe and make the body hold its breath.

B. The body at death

1. The body initially turns back to dust at death

Genesis 3:19; Job 34:15; Psalms 103:14

2. The body of the lost is resurrected just before, and goes to hell right after the Great White Throne judgment

Matthew 5:29–30; 10:28; Revelation 20:11–15

3. The body of the saved is changed (glorified) and either raptured or resurrected to “ever be with the Lord”

*1 Corinthians 15:50–55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18;
Revelation 20:4–6*

C. The soul in life

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).

The soul in the Bible is sometimes identified with the liquid state of matter within a man, specifically with the blood (Genesis 4:10; 9:4–6; Psalms 72:14). It is what energizes the body, making it a living organism rather than just a machine (1 Samuel 1:15; Job 30:15–16). Except for certain reflexive reactions, the soul is in complete control of the body. The soul is the residence of all our passions and affections. It takes great joy in pleasing the flesh, often to its own detriment. It does however, have the capacity to reason and the will to choose between right and wrong, good and evil, wise and foolish, and so on. The soul has a world- or social-awareness, and makes choices based on balancing its desire to gratify the flesh and its desire to interact with its’ environment in its best interest.

The soul of a lost person will often yield to the prompting of the conscience which is a function of the spirit. However, in the final analysis, the soul is also in complete control of the spirit. The soul of the Christian differs from the soul of the lost. It also attempts, at the spirit’s urging, to live by godly principles where these differ from its affections or the body’s desires.

Another way of stating this would be to say that the brain and the mind are both under the control of the will. Thus, the brain or the mind may know or desire something but not have the ability to use this knowledge or satisfy this desire.

As we have stated, the soul also controls the spirit. The hierarchy of the Godhead is: Father (the Soul), Son (the Body), and Holy Ghost (the Spirit). The Son and the Holy Ghost are both subject to the Father and therefore we may say the Body and Spirit are both subject to the Soul. It is no different for man who is made in the image of God.

John 14:24–26; 16:13–15; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Ephesians 1:17

1. The soul is the battleground between good and evil—between body and spirit

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members (the brain seeking to satisfy the needs and urges of the body), warring (in the soul) against the law of my mind (the spirit seeking to please God), and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:22–23).

*Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:15, 19, 22–23; 8:1; 1 Peter 2:11;
2 Peter 2:8*

2. The soul is primarily controlled by the heart, or desires and secondarily by the body and spirit

Proverbs 23:7; 10:20; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 10:9–10

3. The soul is operated by the will

Romans 10:13

Thus, the heart says “because I want to skydive, I will do thus and such to obtain it.” The body will say “I am afraid of getting hurt” while the mind (spirit) may say “this is a foolish and unnecessary risk.” If the desire is weak, the body or spirit may prevail. However, if the desire is strong, the will can overcome the objections and force the issue in favor of the soul.

D. The soul in death

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezekiel 18:20).

1. The soul of the lost person goes to hell
Psalms 16:10; 86:13; Proverbs 23:13–14; Matthew 10:28; Acts 2:31
2. In this age, the soul of the saved person goes to a place in heaven, usually paradise and there waits for the resurrection to be reunited with the glorified body
Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:2–4; Revelation 2:7; 6:9–11

E. The spirit in life

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Galatians 5:17–18).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–25).

The spirit is identified with the gaseous state of matter in a man, specifically the breath of man. It attempts to influence the soul for good. This is difficult in a saved person and much more so in a lost person. It produces emotions such as remorse or guilt in the soul. The spirit has a God-awareness that is denied by the unrepentant soul (Romans 1:8–19). It is only through the salvation offered by the Lord Jesus Christ that the spirit can gain a true foothold in the soul in this life. Every person must have this spiritual rebirth to be complete and fully alive (John 6:63). The spirit produces a desire to do the “right thing” in the soul.

1. The spirit is good

The spirit of man, unlike other created beings, was given to him out of God's Spirit (Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 42:5; Psalms 104:29–30; Titus 3:5). That is why man is the only thing on Earth with a conscience. The spirit's function is very limited without the influence of the filling of the Holy Spirit of God. A man is said to be spiritually dead if he is unsaved.

Ephesians 2:1, 5; John 3:3–6

2. The spirit is primarily controlled by the will (in the soul) and secondarily by the Holy Spirit of God

1 Corinthians 2:12

God asks us to wilfully reverse this order when we are saved.

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [the will satisfies the body] is death; but to be spiritually minded [the will satisfies the spirit] is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:5–7).

We **must** come to the place where we make our will subject to the will of God to become useful and effective Christians. This is **not** something that just happens. It is the result of a willful decision in our soul. We do this by immersing ourselves in the things of God. We need to spend time every day reading the Word of God and in prayer. We need the fellowship of the saints. We need to listen to God-honoring music. We need to be under the preaching of a godly man. These things will allow the Holy Ghost to dictate what will be on our mind.

*Philippians 3:15; Titus 2:11–13; 3:8; Ephesians 6:10–18;
James 1:8; 4:8*

3. The spirit is operated by the mind or “heart of hearts”

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind [spirit] I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [body] the law of sin” (Romans 7:25).

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:9–10).

We all have a place within us, in our “heart of hearts,” where we recognize that which is right or true. We may desperately want to believe that a thing is true or right and go so far as to live and act as if

it were. But, if it is in fact not true or right, we know this in our heart of hearts. Thus, a person's heart tells him (or her) that it is all right to cheat on his spouse for many good reasons. But at some level beyond his heart, he knows that he is ultimately in the wrong. The seat of this understanding is in the mind.

The mind is the part of man that is renewed in the process of regeneration of the spirit which brings salvation (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23). In the process of regeneration, our spirit is forever joined to the spirit of God and therefore to the spirits of all other saved people. We become, in essence, one spirit.

“But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:13; Ephesians 2:22; 4:3–4

However, there is something within us that can impede this unity.

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

This thing that makes us have to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit is the possibility of a change of mind. The will changes the mind which in turn affects the unity of the Spirit. The will can not directly change the unity of the spirit, but rather must go through the medium of the mind. Thus, the mind operates the spirit.

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:27).

For this reason we are exhorted over and over to preserve the unity of the spirit by controlling our mind, or more correctly, by wilfully giving control of our mind over to the Holy Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:23; Philippians 1:27; 2:2, 5; 1 Peter 3:8

F. The spirit in death

1. The spirit of the lost person goes back to God

Ecclesiastes 3:21; 12:7; Job 34:14–15

2. The spirit of the saved person integrates with the Spirit of God forever from the moment of salvation

John 17:20–21; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:17; Ephesians 2:22

III. Fallen Man

God told Adam while he was yet in the Garden of Eden that in the day that he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would surely die. This promise came true for two parts of the trinity of Adam, and indeed for all mankind. Adam ate of the fruit of the tree and his spirit was immediately cut off from its close relationship with the Spirit of God. The Bible indicates that lost men still possess a spirit (Job 34:14–15; 2 Chronicles 24:20; 36:22; Ezra 1:1), so it was in the sense that death is separation from God, his spirit “died.”

In addition to the fact that his spirit “died” immediately, Adam determined the maximum lifespan for any human body. The Bible establishes a special meaning for the word day in a number of places. According to Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8, God considers a day to be the same as a thousand years for certain prophetic purposes. In light of these verses, it is interesting to look at the pre-flood life spans of the men listed in Genesis 5. Seven of the first nine men listed in this chapter lived 895 years or longer, but none of them exceeded 1000 years. Adam died at 930 years old. Thus Adam, who had been created to live forever, succumbed to the curse that God placed on the creation within the “day” in which he sinned.

After the fall of man in the garden, God immediately instituted a plan to redeem back to Himself anyone who was willing. God had already set the payment for sin as eternal damnation, separation from God forever (Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4). This would start immediately following the natural death of each person and be finalized after the Great White Throne judgment. The price for remission of sins is the shedding of the blood of each person (Hebrews 9:22). The problem created by this was that once a person had shed his blood, he was dead and had no further opportunity to establish a right relationship with God. He was already separated from God in hell. It was for this reason that God took on Himself the form of a man. He lived a sinless life on Earth, and then shed His own blood on the cross to make atonement in the place of anyone who would establish a right relationship with Him through His Son. Following this, He descended into hell in our place. But hell could not hold Him. He defeated death and hell and rose from the dead, assuring that He could defeat death for us (Ephesians 4:9–10; Revelation 1:18).

Since that first sin, man has always been divided into two camps. One camp desires a proper relationship with God, while the other seeks only self serving interests. This has been true throughout the various ages of history called dispensations. (These are ages in which God has dealt with man in

different ways, giving him a variety of ways to return to Him.) In each age, or economy, people have been classified under different terminology, but the net result has always been the same. Some “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25), while others chose to enjoy the pleasures of sin. Some chose life while others chose death (Deuteronomy 30:19).

A. Before the law was given to Moses

1. The righteous sought God

Genesis 7:1; 18:22–23

2. The wicked sought to please self

Genesis 13:13; 38:7

B. After the law

1. The Jews or Israel—under the law

Deuteronomy 26:16–19; 30:15–20

2. The Gentiles—lawless before God

Jeremiah 14:22

C. Since Christ

1. The saved by grace

Ephesians 2:8–9

2. The lost—unrepentant, no sincere attempt to please God

Luke 19:10; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4

D. At all times—two families

“The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one” (Matthew 13:38).

1. Family of God

Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:6–7; Ephesians 3:14–15; 1 John 3:1–3

2. Family of man (or Satan)

John 3:8–10; 8:42–44

IV. The Millennial Man

During the soon-to-come one thousand year reign of Christ on Earth, man will undergo a new experience in a new dispensation. This millennium will start immediately after the Tribulation, the time when most of the people on Earth will die under the judgments of God. The Devil and his host will be chained in hell during this time (Revelation 20:1–3; Jude 6). The great deceiver and tempter of mankind will be removed. Additionally, God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ will sit on His throne in Jerusalem from which He will rule the world with a rod of iron. Any infraction of the law will be met with swift and just punishment. The Earth will be subdued, the environment cleaned up, and crime non-existent. It will return to the state enjoyed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And yet, for all this, some men will still rebel against God.

A. The King will rule righteously

Psalms 2:6–12; Isaiah 11:4–5

B. There will be no dangerous conditions

Hosea 2:18; Isaiah 11:6–9; 35:7–10

C. People will enjoy long, healthy lives—probably like before the flood and possibly like in the Garden where mortal man could live forever

Isaiah 25:8–9; 35:3–6

D. Crime will cease

Psalms 2:8–9; Isaiah 11:9; Revelation 12:5

E. All the Earth will be habitable making a very large population by the end of the Millennium possible

Isaiah 35:1–2; 40:4–5; Zechariah 14:10

F. A final purging will still be needed. Many men will rebel against the King when Satan is released at the end of the Millennium.

Revelation 20:7–9