

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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WHAT IS MAN?

The question asked in the title of this study is certainly Biblical. It is one of great importance, but very few who call themselves Christians have ever given it any consideration. Yet, it is one that must be asked and answered if we expect to understand anything the Bible declares concerning us, concerning our resurrection, and our destiny.

The Psalmist asked, "**What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?**" (Psa. 8:4); and the Apostle Paul repeated the same question in Hebrews 2:6. Today, it seems that when this question is asked, the world and the church springs into action with a ready-made cliché for an answer. "**Man,**" they say, "**is a tripartite being composed of a body, a soul, and a spirit,**" hurriedly pointing to 1 Thess. 5:23 where "spirit, soul, and body" are mentioned together in the benediction that closes that epistle. From this supposedly impregnable fortress they call upon all who think otherwise to lay down their arms and meekly surrender. However, before we do, and face the firing squad for having resisted the edicts of orthodox theology, we would like to ask a pertinent question.

Why do they pass so quickly over Luke 10:27 and make the seven-league jump to 1 Thess. 5:23? If they had hesitated for a moment and meditated upon the Luke passage, they would have seen how simple it would be to prove from one isolated text that man is a **quadripartite** being composed of four parts: "**heart, soul, strength, and mind.**" Why do they begin their studies with the eight hundred and thirty-third reference to the soul in the Word of God? Does not their action indicate that they selected the passage which seems to say what they already believed and passed by all others that would seem to contradict it? Furthermore, did they set themselves to find an

honest interpretation of 1 Thess. 5:23 in order to find out what Paul said and why he said it?

It is my conviction that neither Luke nor Paul was presenting truth in regard to what man is, and the use of 1 Thess. 5:23 for this purpose reveals that they who do so have applied themselves to Scripture for the sole purpose of proving a predetermined and foregone conclusion. If we take the elements of these two passages (Luke 10:27 and 1 Thess. 5:23) and link them together, we will have heart, soul, strength, mind, spirit, and body. This is enough to show that these words are expressing various aspects of a man, and they are not dealing with his constitution.

If we are going to enter into possession of the Biblical answer to the question, "What is man?" we must go to the words of his Creator, the One Who is best able to inform us of the work of His house. When He first spoke concerning man, He declared that it was his purpose to make him in His Image and after His Likeness (Gen. 1:26), a statement which has troubled many who pay little attention to the exact words used in a divine communication. They think that "image" means "shape" and that "likeness" means a "look-alike." The truth is that the Deity had an Image (See Col. 1:15) and a Likeness, and man was created in this Image and after this Likeness. However, the point to be noted here is that it was a man, a human, or as most would be inclined to say, a human being.

In the Biblical revelation, three great classes of beings are set forth: human beings, angelic beings, and spirit beings. The human being, having been made in the Image and after the Likeness of the Deity, is positively the highest order of all created beings. Man is not an angelic being and he never becomes one. In fact, for a human being to become an angelic being or spirit would be a positive loss, a step downward. We are human by birth, we are human in life, we will be human in death, and we will be human in resurrection. Any idea that human beings by any process ever become angelic beings or spirit beings is entirely foreign to the Word of God.

In Genesis 2:7 we find the first and the most important statement in the Word of God concerning the nature of man. There the Creator tells us of the creature that He made: "**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.**"

Here we have a direct statement concerning the subject we are considering. It is not the complimentary close of an epistle from which we must draw inferences. It is cause for thanksgiving that it is so simple and direct, and that no serious objections can be raised concerning its translation. It has been rewritten by many who have tried to harmonize it with the Platonic theory of man's nature, but the Hebrew wording has withstood all assaults. This passage tells us how man was made, it tells us of what he was made, and it tells us what he became, and what he is. It is the testimony of the Maker in regard to the work of His hands. And it cannot be denied, that the Maker of man is the One best able to inform us as to the nature of that which He made. All who receive this testimony can rest assured that they are in possession of and are believing the Truth of God.

Since Genesis 2:7 is the earliest and fullest account that God has given concerning the nature of man, his passage demands our close scrutiny. It should be noted carefully that we are told the LORD God "formed man." It was a human being He formed. This can be received and believed, or it can be twisted and altered to fit some human opinion. It was not a soul, it was not a spirit being, it was not an angelic being that God formed. It was a man. It was not a habitation or a house for man to move into. It was not a garment to cover a man. It was a man.

Many there are who insist that it was not a man that God created but only a body. And while we freely admit that it was a body, yet, God says it was a man; and this is what we must believe. God could have said "body," but He did not do so. He had the word for "body," but he did not use it. He used the word "man," and that is exactly what He meant.

We are also told in this passage that God formed man of the dust or soil of the ground. He was not created out of nothing. God used material, and this was soil. This truth is emphasized and enforced by the words God used in Genesis 3:19: **"till you return unto the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and unto dust you shall return."** (RSV)

In view of this divine testimony, it is plain that, that which God formed from the dust was the man. It is useless to deny this and insist that man was something else - something not made of soil. If we do this, we break with the Word of God in its opening chapters; and this throws us out of harmony and into conflict with all the rest that God has spoken. If man refuses to be taught by the Word of God in Genesis 2, any further study will be of doubt-

ful value. If he rejects God's earliest statement concerning man, he will have to rewrite and twist all later statements. Let us believe God! He says He formed "man" of the dust of the ground. This is the truth, and he who believes it is believing God's Truth.

But, alas, there are many who do not believe this. The Platonic view of man's nature has been so thoroughly incorporated into Christian theology that, to many, Plato's view of man is thought to be just as much a part of divine revelation as is the birth of Christ in Bethlehem and His death upon the cross of Calvary.

According to Plato, man was not formed out of the dust of the ground. Man, to him, was a soul, which for some reason, had become united to a body. This soul, he held, was the real and true man; and its union with the body was considered by him to be a great calamity. He regarded death as a positive blessing, inasmuch as it freed the soul from its undesirable union with the body. The idea of Plato that the soul is the real and true man is one that has pervaded Christianity to the very core, and this has been the foundation of an amazing amount of false doctrine.

It is from God's Word, from its first use of the word "soul" (*nephesh*), that we learn that "the soul" is something that man became. As originally created, he had only a bodily phase or aspect; but by a further act of God, he became a living soul. Thus, the Biblical Truth is not that man has.. a soul, but that he is a soul, and that he became this by the divine act of inbreathing life into the man.

There are many who will make no attempt to understand the meaning of the words used in the above statement. They will deliberately stumble over the distinction of "having" and "becoming." But in order to help those who earnestly desire to know, a further explanation and illustration will be given.

Since the man that God had made became a living soul by a further act of God, it is evident that the word "soul" describes an aspect or an attribute of the man. Consider the following illustration. I am fundamentally and basically a man, a human being; but in one aspect of my being, I am a husband. I was not always a husband, but I became one when I took to myself the woman who has been my wife for more than a half century. In another aspect of my life, I am a father, something which I became when our daughter was born. I became a grandfather when our daughter became a

mother. Yet, all the time I remain a man, for only a man can be these things. And it should be noted that there is no way that these aspects of my being can be separated from me and exist apart from the one who is them and who displays them. If I die, the husband, the father, and the grandfather will die with me. All these are founded upon a living man, and they cannot exist apart from him.

Even so it is with the many phases of man that are set forth in the Word of God such as heart, soul, strength, mind, spirit, and body. And while it is common to speak of man having these things, no definition is ever given of this wealthy being called man who possesses them. If they follow the Platonic idea that the true man is a separable soul, then they are saying that the soul has a soul. I do not believe that a single logical statement can be made of man unless it presupposes a body. It was a man that God made from the soil, and no subsequent addition of the breath of life that made man a living soul can be said to supersede and become the true man. It is an absurdity to suppose that any of man's aspects such as spirit or soul can, apart from the body, be a man.

Thus, from the Word of God, we learn what man was when created and what he subsequently became. He was earth; and while beautifully fashioned, he was as lifeless as any clump of earth. However, into this lifeless earth, God breathed the breath of life. This made man a living soul, and this he remained until that breath of life went back to the One Who gave it. "**And all the days of Adam were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died**" Gen. 5:5). And there is nothing but resurrection that will ever remove him from this condition.

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