

Nature of Man

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2.16-17).

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15.22).

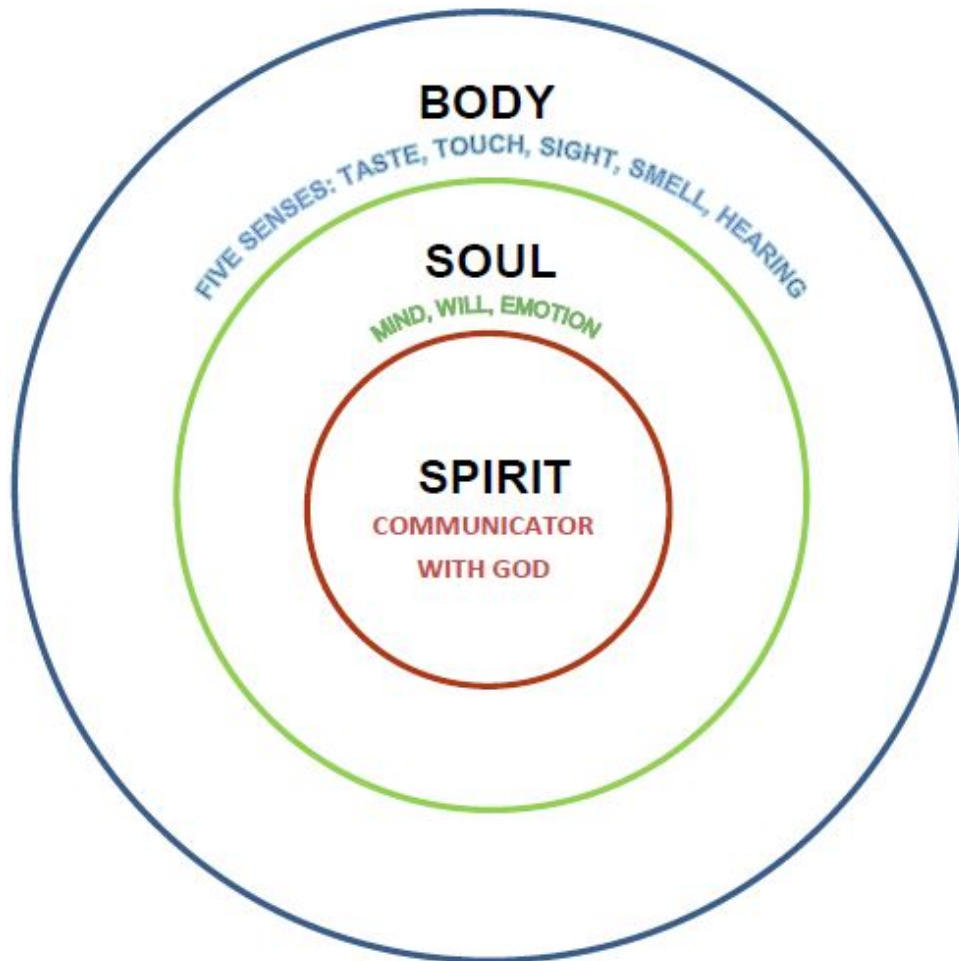
God created man in His own image. This made Man unique among all of God's creations. This is not said of angels, much less of any other of God's creatures. We are special!

²⁶ *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* ²⁷ *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1.26-27).*

What Is Man?

This article is about anthropology or what makes man man. God created man as a tripartite being, composed of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5.23; Hebrews 4.12). Man had the potential to live forever by eating from the Tree of Lives, (עץ החיים, Genesis 3.22). God gave man a body with five senses: taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing to perceive and enjoy the external world. God gave man a soul composed of mind, will, and emotion. Through mind man can reason, through will, he can choose, and with emotion, he can appreciate the perceptions of his mind and senses. Lastly, God gave man a human spirit through which he could communicate with and appreciate God.

Original Creation



Man's Original Nature

God placed Man into a perfect environment. The whole earth belonged to man with the exception of the fruit of one tree. God warned Adam of the consequence of disobedience:

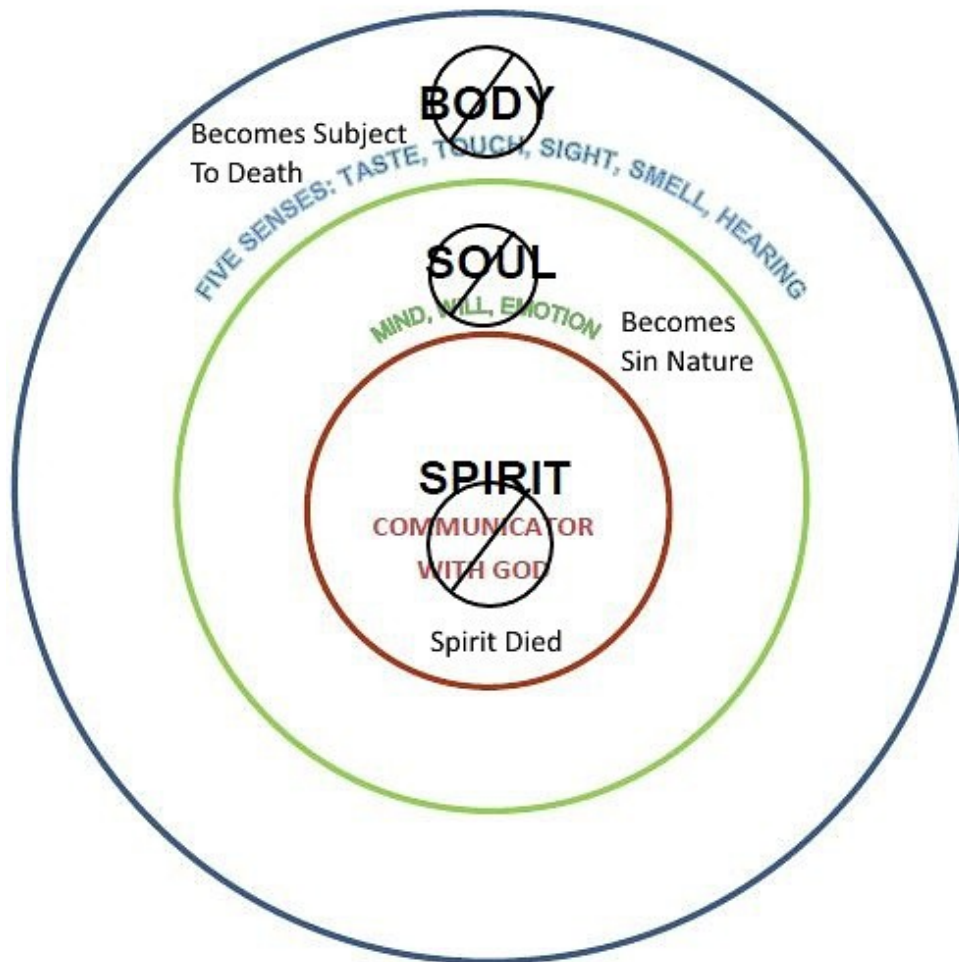
¹⁶ *The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die"* (Genesis 2.16-17).

Adam failed the test. Physical death did not occur when he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but spiritual death occurred immediately. The Hebrew phrase אדם חַי וְקַי אדם

literally means, "dying, you will die." Adam's spirit died the instant he ate but his body lived for 930 years (Genesis 5.5). A similar construction, מותו ימות, is found in Numbers 26.65. God told the generation of Jews whom He rescued from Egypt they would die in the wilderness because they refused to trust Him to take possession of the land He had promised Abraham. They did not die as soon as God spoke these words; they died over a course of 40 years.

Man's Fallen Nature

We sin because we are sinners. That is our nature as a result of Adam's disobedience. Just as a good tree produces good fruit, a sinner produces sin. The great reformer, William Tyndale, conveyed this truth with his statement, "an adder is hated not for the euill it hath done but for the poyson that is in it." Our nature cannot be changed through moral effort. We do not have this ability.



Man's Nature After Disobedience

The apostle Paul provides us with almost all our doctrine about what happened as a result of Adam's disobedience. His writings give us insight into the human condition and why things continually go wrong with us. Paul wrote the Romans:

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come (Romans 5.12-14 cf. Ephesians 2.1, 5).

Adam's fall affected not only himself—body, soul, and spirit—but the whole human race. The soul was ruined and became a sin nature (Romans 7.18, 21). Paul described our fallen nature as “our old man,” (παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) in Romans 6.6. The “old man” is a “body of sin” (Romans 6.6). Paul's term “sin,” ἁμαρτία, in these passages, is best understood as “sin nature.” His term “flesh” is a synonym for this old nature (Romans 7.14, 25; Galatians 5.16-17) as is “members of one's body” (τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν) in Romans 6.13, 19, 7.5, 23. Our “old nature” held us in slavery to sin (Romans 6.6, 17, 19-20, 7.14; Galatians 5.1) reigned as king (βασιλεύω) over us (Romans 6.12), and had dominion (κυριεύω) over us (Romans 6.14). Our old nature or flesh is incapable of obeying God or pleasing Him (Romans 8.7-8). Indeed, when confronted by the Law, which God gave Israel to show them right and wrong, the old nature rebels against it. Thus, in practice, the Law actually increases sin (Romans 7.7-10).

Man's Restoration after Salvation

While we have no ability to change our nature by our moral efforts, God can. God can change, as someone has said, “our want to.” God is not interested in reform. He makes us new. He gives us a new nature. Tyndale wrote, “when He buildeth he casteth all downe first. He is no patcher.”

Paul taught that when one believes his gospel (Romans 2.15, 16.25, 1 Corinthians 15.1-4) a person is saved. Salvation is immediate, ongoing, and future. Theologians use the terms justification, sanctification, and glorification to describe this salvation package. Other terms: justification, redemption, reconciliation, expiation, propitiation describe the nature of our salvation from God's perspective. The Scriptures also use terms such as adoption, sealed, baptized to describe how God identifies the believer with Himself as a result of faith.

Justification	Past (when one believes)
Sanctification	Present (life until death)
Glorification	Future (death and resurrection)

When a person believes the gospel he becomes God's forever and God gives him eternal life (Romans 5.21, 6.22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2.16; 1 Timothy 1.16; Titus 1.2, 3.7). When one believes the gospel, his human spirit, dead on account of Adam's fall is made alive. At the moment of trust, God also indwells us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. He comes to indwell us forever (Ephesians 1.13-14; Romans 8.9, 15-16; 1 Corinthians 3.16). The Holy Spirit is God's "pledge" or "down payment" to us (2 Corinthians 1.22; Ephesians 1.14) as a promise of future blessing. Paul used the word ἀρραβών which was used for "earnest money."

This is all wonderful news. Unfortunately, however, not all is good news. We still retain our old nature. It still exists and rebels against God. This is why Christians sin. Paul described this condition in his letter to the Galatians:

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³

gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5.16-24).

Paul described his own experience of these two natures in his letter to the Romans. Paul wrote:

¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin (Romans 7.14-25).

Paul wrote how to achieve victory in the Christian life:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Romans 8.2).

The way to victory during God's process of sanctification is the same way that we have victory in justification: by faith. Paul wrote the Galatians:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh (Galatians 5.16).

and

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5.24).

How does one "crucify the flesh?" By faith. To the Romans Paul wrote:

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace (Romans 6.11-14).

By faith one "reckons" or "considers" oneself dead to sin. This is the way we can experience victory in the Christian life. In this same passage Paul taught that when Christ died, we died by virtue of the fact that believers are "in Christ" and have been identified by God in Christ's death. Being identified with Christ in His death means that God has also identified the believer in Christ's resurrection.

Thus,

⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin (Romans 6.5-7).

Man's Nature After Resurrection

The Bible provides little information as to what the believer's life will be while he awaits resurrection. Normal human life is composed of body, soul, and spirit. Upon death, the body dies and the soul and spirit leave the body and go to be with the Lord. Soul and spirit will not become united with a resurrection body until the body of Christ, the Church is complete. When it is, God will resurrect all members of the body of Christ. This event is known as the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15.20, 51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4.13.18). What we do know is that when we died we go to be with the Lord who already views us as being with Him (Ephesians 1.3). Paul wrote the Corinthians:

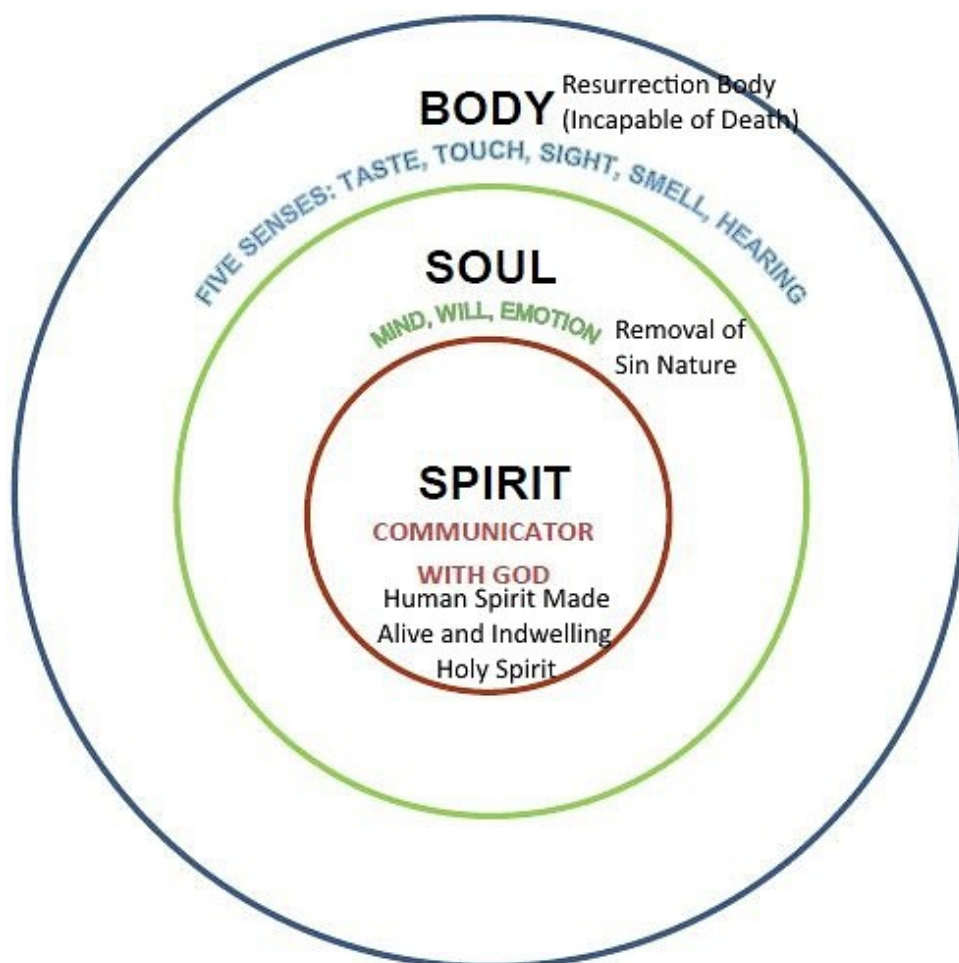
⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight— ⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5.6-8).

The good news is that our Adamic, fallen nature will not be with us forever. God has promised we will be resurrected—changed (1 Corinthians 15.51-52; 2 Corinthians 5.1-5; Philippians 3.20-21). At that time we will receive a new, eternal body. Our old nature, the “flesh” is inseparably

linked to our present bodies. We cannot become free from the old nature as long as we have our present bodies.

The great hope for believers is the Rapture. Paul called it the “blessed hope.” Thus, he wrote Titus:

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2.11-14).



New Nature of Man After Salvation

Conclusion

Despite Adam and Eve's great failure those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ have hope. No hope exists for man outside of Christ. Those who have believed Paul's gospel (1 Corinthians 15.1-4) have eternal life and the hope of resurrection and freedom from sin. The believer will share in Christ's inheritance as a joint-heir (Romans 8.17). Indeed, what God has prepared for the believer is incomprehensible. Paul wrote,

"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM" (1 Corinthians 2.9).

©2012 Don Samdahl. Anyone is free to reproduce this material and distribute it, but it may not be sold.