

Human Beings, Who Are We?

## **Human Beings:**

*Who We Are According  
To The Bible*

By

Don Stewart

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### **Human Beings:** *Who We Are According To The Bible*

#### **Introduction**

In this book we will look at ourselves – the human race. Who are we human beings? Where did we come from? Is there any meaning for our existence? Does the Bible say that we here as a result of blind chance or have we been created by God? What's the answer?

There are other questions which need to be addressed. Is there an immaterial part of us as well as a material part or are we just made up of a body? If we are more than just a body, are we composed of body, soul and spirit or something else? These all-important issues will be dealt with as we look at the identity of humankind according to the words of Scripture.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### Question 1

#### What Are The Various Views As To The Origin Of Human Beings?

One of the most basic of questions we can address concerns our origin. Who are human beings? Where did we come from? Thousands of years ago the psalmist asked a similar question:

What is man that you are mindful of him? (Psalm 8:4 NIV).

Where, if anywhere, can we find the answers to these questions? Indeed, is there anywhere we can go to discover who we are? In fact, there are several possibilities. We can make the following observations.

#### **Anthropology – The Study Of Human Beings**

The study of humanity is called, “anthropology.” This comes from two words, “*anthros*,” means “human” and “logos” means, “the study of.” Therefore, an anthropologist is a person who studies all questions connected with the human race.

#### **Where Did We Come From?**

Human beings are born, they live, and then they die. This process has been going on for long ages. Back of all of this the questions are asked, “Where did humanity first originate? What exactly are human beings? Is there any meaning to life?

There are a number of answers that have been given to this crucial question as to our identity. We can summarize them in the following manner.

#### **Option 1: Human Tradition Outside Of The Bible**

All nations and peoples have some sort of traditional account of the origin of the human race. Yet each of these accounts differs; there is no consensus of opinion as to how the human race originated.

Furthermore, there is no objective evidence that any of these accounts may be true. We look in vain for some sort of final answer concerning our origin from human tradition.

#### **Option 2: Non-Biblical Religions**

There have also been answers given to this question by religions that do not accept the authority of the Bible. They have their own accounts of the origin of humankind. Once more, we find that the various religions differ among themselves as to the question of our origin as human.

There is no consensus on this issue. In addition, as is true with human tradition, there is no evidence that these accounts found in non-biblical religions are true.

#### **Option 3: Atheistic Evolution**

Modern science has its own idea of the origin and development of the human race. Their theory is known as atheistic evolution. While non-biblical religions and most human traditions argue for some type of creator of the human race, this is not the case with atheistic evolution.

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Indeed, according to atheistic evolution everything arose by blind chance or dumb luck. There is no absolutely no plan or purpose for the human race; our existence is merely due to a number of fortunate accidents taking place over millions of years.

### **Option 4: Theistic Evolution**

Atheistic evolution leaves people without any meaning to life and without any hope for the future. It is a rather depressing outlook. This has led some people to bring some type of God into the equation. Uniting God and evolution is known as “theistic evolution.”

Simple stated, while human beings are here upon the earth due to millions of years of the evolutionary process, there has been a God behind the process.

### **Option 5: Biblical Creationism**

A final possible answer is the biblical creation account. According to Scripture, we are not here by blind chance, neither are we here by millions of years of the evolutionary process. Adam, the first human was made by direct creation of God. The Bible says:

And the LORD God formed a man’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person (Genesis 2:7 NLT).

This describes an act of divine creation. Adam was formed by the Creator God. There is no evolution here. We have indeed been created by an infinite God and we have a purpose for our existence here upon the earth. Thus, God made human beings unique from everything else which He created. Therefore, we can only understand who we are and why we exist in light of the God of the Bible and His divine revelation to us. Without His explanation of these matters, we are in complete darkness.

This sums up the various views which humans put forth to describe our origins. In this course, we will concentrate on the biblical perspective. Elsewhere we have dealt with atheistic and theistic evolution and have shown the inadequacy of these particular positions.

### **Summary To Question 1**

#### **What Are The Various Views As To The Origin Of Human Beings?**

We human beings want to know where we came from. We want to know if we are here by blind chance or by some intelligent design. A number of answers have been given that attempt to explain our origin.

The history and tradition of the nations and peoples of the world gives a variety of answers to this subject. However, none have any objective basis for their belief. Furthermore, they disagree with one another as to the details. There is no reason to believe the answer is found here.

We also find that non-Biblical religions provide their own unique answers as to our origins. Yet, like human tradition, their answers contradict one another. In addition, there is no factual basis for believing any of these accounts may be true.

Modern unbelieving science provides the answer with the atheistic evolutionary theory. This depressing theory has the entire human race coming about merely as a result of blind chance. We have no purpose; we have no hope.

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Since atheistic evolution is a depressing way of viewing ourselves as humans there have been those who attempt to wed evolution with some sort of belief in God. This is known as theistic evolution. According to this perspective God was behind the evolutionary process.

Finally, there is the answer given in Scripture. We are not here by blind chance, neither are we here as a result of evolutionary forces guided by God.

Instead, human originated as an act of direct creation by a loving and caring God. This is the biblical view and it is the correct view. We are not a mistake; we have meaning, purpose and a destiny.

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### Question 2

#### Why Did God Create Human Beings?

The Scripture testifies to the fact that God did create human beings. The next obvious question is, “Why did he create us?” There are a number of observations which we can make.

##### **Nothing Is Directed Stated As To Why He Created Us**

To begin with, there is nothing directly stated in Scripture as to why God created the human race. Scripture merely states that He is the Creator and we are His creation. This being the case, we must be careful about any conclusions we make on this subject. Having said this, there are still a number of inferences we can draw from Scripture which should help us answer this question.

##### **1. We Can Have A Relationship With Creator**

First, it appears that God created humanity so that He could have a family or personal relationship with us and we could have a family or personal relationship with Him. He is our loving Father and we are His obedient children. We know that the Bible teaches that humanity is indeed able to have a personal relationship with the Creator.

While the Lord created us to have a relationship with Him, it must be emphasized that God did not create the human race because of any need on his part. He did not need us or our company. He needs nothing to exist for He is completely sufficient in Himself.

Therefore, His creation of humanity to have some sort of family relationship was not due to something lacking in Him.

##### **2. We Can Reproduce The Character Of God**

In the manner in which the Lord created us, we are able to reproduce the character of God to a certain degree. In other words, we can act like Him. Scripture says that we have been made in His image:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Genesis 1:26 ESV).

This means that we have certain things in common with God. Obviously, we can reproduce exactly the character of God because He is the infinite Creator and we are finite, created human beings. He is perfect and we are imperfect.

However, there are certain aspects of His character we are able to reproduce in a limited way because we have been made in His image. The ultimate goal of humans is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote the following to the Romans about our ultimate destiny:

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29 NLT).

Someday we will be like Him. This is the great promise of Scripture to those who believe.

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### 3. We Can Share In The Ruling The Universe

The Bible teaches that humankind will share the rulership of the universe with God. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians about this future rule of humanity:

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? (1 Corinthians 6:1,2 ESV).

What a tremendous privilege we will have! Christians will one day judge the world.

### 4. We Can Reproduce Offspring For His Glory

God also lets humankind experience creative powers in the sense that we can produce offspring in our likeness. The Bible says this is what occurred with the first human being, Adam:

This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man." When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth (Genesis 5:1-3 NIV).

Unfortunately, this was a sinful likeness that Adam passed on. In the same way, each of us passes on a sinful likeness to our children; they are born with the same sinful nature which we have.

This sums up some of the reasons as to why God created the human race. We again emphasize that none of these reasons is directly stated in Scripture. However, it does seem from a study of Scripture that these are among the reasons as to why God made humanity. Beyond this, we must remain silent.

#### Summary To Question 2

#### Why Did God Create Human Beings?

When God created the human race, He did it for a number of purposes. While none of these purposes are directly stated in Scripture there are a number of conclusions, we can apparently make by examining the totality of the teaching of the Word of God.

First, it seems that God wanted to create a being with whom He could have some type of family relationship with; He could be our loving Father and we could be His devoted children. This, however, was not because of any need which God had or anything lacking in His character. He needs nothing.

Second, it seems that God wanted to create a being who could act in the same way in which He acts. Of course, humans are limited as to how they can act like God. Nevertheless, to a certain degree we can reflect God's character in our actions.

Third, it seems that God wanted beings who could rule together with Him in the universe. While He is the Supreme Ruler, the Bible says He will grant rulership to those who have believed in Him. Finally, God apparently created the human race to reproduce offspring who would glorify Him.

Today the offspring of each of us is born with a sinful nature. However, because of the grace of God, and the gift of Jesus Christ, our offspring can become children of God through faith in Christ.

These seem to be some of the reasons as to why God created human beings though none of these are directly stated as such.

### Question 3

## According To The Bible, What Are Human Beings?

While there are various answers which the unbelieving world gives as to who or what are human beings, the Bible gives us clear understanding as to the nature of we human beings. We can make the following observations about our identity from looking at the biblical text.

#### 1. We Are Created Beings

First, human beings have been specially created by an infinite, personal God. We did not evolve by blind mindless chance. This is the teaching of the entire Scripture. For example, we read in Genesis:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26 NIV)

Scripture then says that God created the first two humans, male and female, in His image.

#### 2. The First Humans Were Specially Created

The first man, Adam, was specially made by God from the dust of the ground. The Bible explains it this way:

And the LORD God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person (Genesis 2:7 NLT).

This was a special creative act by God which brought forth the first man. It shows the care and concern the Lord had for this special being.

The first woman was then made from the man. Again, we read in Genesis about God's loving concern in making the woman:

So the LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place from which he had taken it. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam (Genesis 2:21, 22 NLT).

Once more, we have another special creative act of the Lord.

#### 3. We Now Reproduce By Natural Means

Since the time of Adam and Eve, each human being has come about through the union of a man and a woman; there has been no further direct creation by God of any human being. The divine plan of God is that humanity be fruitful and multiply. We read the following command:

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28 NIV).

Humanity fulfilled this command.

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### 4. We Have Been Wonderfully Made

The psalmist later acknowledged the fact that he had been wonderfully made by the Creator. He praised the Lord for this! He wrote:

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:14-16 NIV).

The psalmist realized that he was uniquely made; a created being who was formed by the will of an all-powerful, loving God.

### 5. We All Came From One Ancestor

In the New Testament, the same truths about our origins are taught. The Apostle Paul said the following to a group of people who had gathered in Athens:

From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live . . . For we too are his offspring (Acts 17:26,28 NRSV UE).

All the nations of the earth have descended from one ancestor: the man Adam. Consequently, the Scripture unanimously teaches that we human beings can trace our origin back to an original pair which was created by an infinite personal God.

### 6. We Are Dependent Beings

Human beings are not only created beings, we are also dependent beings. We are not self-existent as is God. We have to depend upon things outside of ourselves to exist. God does not. He needs nothing to exist. The psalmist recognized this when he compared us, the created, to the Lord, the Creator:

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers-- the moon and the stars you have set in place-- what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us? For you made us only a little lower than God, and you crowned us with glory and honor. You put us in charge of everything you made, giving us authority over all things-- the sheep and the cattle and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents. O LORD, our Lord, the majesty of your name fills the earth! (Psalm 8:3-8 NLT).

We are the created; He is the Creator. We depend upon Him for everything.

### 7. We Are Moral Beings

Human beings are moral beings. We can know the difference between right and wrong. God has given us commandments which we can follow. In the Old Testament, we find that Joshua, the leader of Israel, encouraged the people to follow the commandments of the Lord:

But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul (Joshua 22:5 NIV).

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This statement assumes we can know what commandments we are to obey. Indeed, Jesus said we can know whether or not God is speaking to us:

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own (John 7:17 NIV).

We can know whether something is from God or whether it is not; we can know right from wrong. God has given humanity this capacity.

### **8. We Are Intelligent Beings**

God has made the human race with the highest intelligence of anything that He created on this earth. We read the following in the Book of Job:

But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?' (Job 35:10-11 ESV).

Human beings are different than the beasts of the earth or the birds in heaven; we have been made wiser than all the creatures. We are indeed unique.

### **9. We Are Loving Beings**

God has made human beings as loving beings. God has given to each of us the capacity to give love and to receive love. John wrote about this. He emphasized that we humans love because God first loved us:

God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God, and he will stay one with us. If we truly love others and live as Christ did in this world, we won't be worried about the day of judgment. A real love for others will chase those worries away. The thought of being punished is what makes us afraid. It shows that we have not really learned to love. We love because God loved us first (1 John 4:16-19 CEV).

God is love. We are able to love because He first loved us.

### **10. We Are Social Beings**

Finally, human beings are social creatures. Before Adam fell, God declared the following:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (Genesis 2:18 NRSV UE)

Eve was brought to Adam to complement him; to be his partner from the very beginning. The entire story of the Bible emphasizes our social need. Indeed, it is based upon two communities of people: Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. Ultimately believers will dwell together with the Lord in the New Jerusalem.

### **Ultimately Humanity Exists Because Of God Alone**

One final thing must be emphasized about the human race. From beginning to end, the Bible emphasizes that humanity exists because God has made us. Whether it may be through the initial creation of Adam and Eve or through the process of human birth by which the rest of us have come about, we exist because of the will of God. This comes through loud and clear in the Scripture.

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### God Created All Of Us

For example, we read in Malachi about the fact that God created us all. The prophet wrote the following to the people:

Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? (Malachi 2:10 NIV).

In one sense, as the Creator, God is the Father of every human being. James emphasized that each of us have been made in God's likeness. He wrote the following about the tongue:

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness (James 3:9 NIV).

Again, this assumes God has created us all. Peter told the believers to trust the God who had made them. He put it this way:

So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you (1 Peter 4:19 NLT).

This further emphasizes the truth that God is the Creator: When Paul wrote to the Romans, he spoke in the following way of the unbelievers who do not acknowledge God as their Creator:

Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen (Romans 1:25 NLT).

They rejected the truths from their own Creator.

### Jesus Believed We Were Created

Finally, we have the words of Jesus. He endorsed the Genesis account of creation when speaking to the religious leaders on the subject of divorce:

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female (Matthew 19:4 NRSV UE).

Jesus believed that God created the first humans. As God Himself, He would certainly be in a position to know the truth of the matter.

Therefore, from the biblical account, we find that we are here as a result of the will of God. It is He who has created us all. We have not made ourselves neither are we here by blind chance. We have been designed by a loving, all-powerful Creator. This briefly sums up what the Scripture says about our identity as human beings. It is clear that the humanity is God's special creation.

### Summary To Question 3 According To The Bible, What Are Human Beings?

Each of us is born without any clear understanding as to exactly who we are as human beings. Many people attempt to provide answers to this nagging question. Who are we?

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Happily, the God of the Bible has explained who we are as human beings. For one thing, the Bible tells us that human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God. In other words, we did not evolve.

Therefore, we have a purpose for our existence since we are not here by blind chance or are some type of cosmic mistake or accident. We have been designed.

Though created by an all-powerful God, humans are dependent beings. This means we have to depend upon things outside of ourselves to exist.

We need such things as oxygen, food, and water to exist. Humanity is not self-existent like the Creator God who has no needs. We are needy creatures.

God has also made humans as moral creatures knowing the difference between right and wrong. This is another distinction of the human race. We know the difference between good and evil.

Humans have been created as intelligent beings who can think and reason. We can make legitimate choices. We can choose to do good or choose to do evil.

The Bible teaches that we humans are loving beings; we have the capacity of give and receive love. This also reflects the character of God.

Furthermore, Scripture emphasizes that humanity exists because of the will of God. Whether it may be the direct creation of Adam and Eve or the natural birth process by which the rest of us have appeared, every human being exists because God willed us to exist. He is in control of all processes.

Thus, Scripture emphasizes the truth that we have all been made by God.

Humanity, therefore, is not in the dark with respect as to who we are because the Creator God has made these things clear to us. We know who we are and why we exist because He has told us so.

## Question 4

### **In What Sense Are Humans Made In The Image Of God?**

The Bible makes it clear that human beings are different than anything and everything else which the Lord has created. We are the crown or high point of His creation. Only human beings have been made in the image of God.

In the Book of Genesis, after we are told God has made all other things on the earth, we are informed that humanity was formed last. The Bible says:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26 NIV).

Human beings were to have dominion, or rule, over every other created thing. This is because humanity alone has been made in the image of God. It is clear that Scripture says we have been made in the image of God. But what does this mean? In what sense are we in His image?

While the Bible does not ever give us a definition of the image of God, we can make a number of observations from Scripture about what it means to be in God’s image. By looking at what the Scripture says about this subject we can make a number of conclusions.

#### **1. It Is Used Of Christ**

This phrase image of God is used of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:3,4 NIV).

Paul wrote to the Colossians using the same description of Jesus:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15 NIV).

Obviously, we cannot equate Jesus being “the image of God” with ourselves who have been made in God’s image. Jesus is the Creator while we are the created. He is the image of God while we have been made in God’s image. We must keep this distinction in mind.

#### **2. We Can Be Renewed In The Image Of Christ**

Paul told the Colossians that our new self can actually be renewed in the knowledge of the Creator. He wrote as follows:

And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:10 NIV).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

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In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:10 NLT).

We now have a new nature because of our belief in Christ. This new self is in the image of the Creator.

### **3. It Is Our Christian Destiny To Be Like Him**

We also find that Scripture says that our destiny as believers is to share the divine image through our union with Jesus Christ. Paul wrote the following to the Romans:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29 NIV).

In some sense, we are going to be conformed to the image or likeness of God the Son. John emphasized that we shall be like Christ:

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is (1 John 3:2 NRSV UE).

Paul wrote about this again to the Corinthians. One day, we are going to be like Him. When this occurs, we will bear his image:

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:49 NIV).

This is our destiny.

Given these above truths it is therefore important that we understand exactly what it means to be made in the image of God.

### **The Things We Have In Common With God**

To say that humankind was made in the image of the God of the Bible simply means that God and us, have many things in common. When God created the human race, He gave us such things as personality, choice, emotions, morality, and creativity. This is usually how the image of God is understood.

#### **1. We Both Have Personality**

God, as well as human beings, has what we call “personality” or “personhood.” That is to say we can both think and communicate as rational beings. Each has personal identity that is separate from other rational beings as well as from all non-living things. Furthermore, the human race, like God, also has the ability to communicate with other rational beings. This is one trait we have in common with God.

#### **2. God And Humans Have Choice**

A second common characteristic between God and the human race is choice. Both God and humankind are beings that have the ability to make choices, to choose; though God does not have the ability to choose evil.

Neither God nor humanity are programmed or forced to make any choices. This freedom of choice was given to humanity by God Himself and thus humankind is responsible for the choices we make.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### 3. We Are Both Emotional Beings

Humankind and God both have emotions; we are emotional beings. For example, each of us can give love and we can receive love. God, as well as humanity, can be angry. In addition, both humankind and God have the capacity to feel and express emotions. These are common traits that both God and humanity share.

### 4. A Moral Sense Of Right And Wrong

Humankind and God both have a moral sense of right and wrong. Each knows and understands the difference between good and evil. The God of the Bible, however, does not have the capacity to choose evil while humanity does.

### 5. Creativity

Another attribute that God and humankind have in common is creativity. The Bible says God created the universe and everything within it. Human beings are also creative, having been given this ability by God.

This sums up some of the things God and humanity have in common.

### It Is Not A Physical Image

There are those who have contended that it is a physical image in which humanity has been made. We do find that the word image is used in the sense of a physical image in describing Adam's offspring. We read in Genesis:

When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth (Genesis 5:3 NRSV UE).

Does this mean we look something like God? Does He have a body like ours? The problem with this perspective is that God by nature is spirit. He does not have a physical image. Jesus Himself said:

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24 NRSV UE).

This being the case, we need to look elsewhere in our understanding of the image of God.

### The Image Has Been Affected By The Fall

The image of God in each of us is marred; sin has taken its toll. While humanity was initially created in God's image and likeness, sin has distorted that image. As a race, humanity has fallen from their original perfection.

### We Are Still In God's Image

Though the image of God in human beings has been marred, it has not been totally lost. Indeed, the phrase image of God is used of fallen humanity. We can cite the following examples.

After the flood, the Lord gave the following commandment concerning those who took the life of another person:

Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind (Genesis 9:6 NRSV UE).

Humans who kill other humans are to pay with their own life. This passage emphasizes that humans, though sinful, are still made in God's image. This reflects who we are after the Fall of humanity.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

The same truth is found in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about man being made in God's image:

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:7 NRSV UE).

Again, this describes us after the Fall.

James wrote about the misuse of the tongue. It can be wrongly used to curse those which have been made in God's image:

Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against those who have been made in the image of God (James 3:9 NLT).

This indicates the image of God is still within us. Consequently, in some sense, we have been made like God. As human beings we can reflect His holy character.

### **Summary To Question 4**

#### **In What Sense Are Humans Made In The Image Of God?**

The Bible says that humans have been made in the image of God. There is a question, however, to the exact meaning of "God's image." Scripture never defines what it means. While some believe it refers to a physical image this is not the case since God, by nature, is spirit and as such has no physical image.

There are several things we do know. To begin with, Christ is said to be the image of God. In this sense, it likely refers to the fact that He is God Himself. Humans are not in the image of God the same way as Jesus Christ is.

Next, our destiny is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Scripture says that one day we will be made like Jesus. Since we are created beings and He is the Creator this does not mean there will be an exact correspondence; we will not become gods. What it does seem to mean that our character will be perfected like the character of Christ. We will be without sin.

Exactly what constitutes the image of God is unclear but we can observe what we have in common with the Creator. First, God and human beings have personality or personhood. We have a distinct identity from other personal beings.

Second, both God and humans have the ability to make choices. God, however, can only choose to do good while we humans have the choice between good and evil.

Third, humans, like God, have emotions. We can each love and we can hate. While God's emotions are perfect ours are imperfect. Yet, we do possess similar feelings.

There is also a moral sense of right and wrong which God and humans have in common. God, of course, has a perfect sense of this while our sense is still imperfect.

Finally, both God and human beings have the capacity to create. Indeed, the Creator of all things bestowed on humanity the ability to craft new things.

Today, the image of God in each of us is a fallen image. Sin has marred its original perfection. However, Scripture states that even in our fallen state we still bear His image in some sense. After the Fall, human beings were still spoken of as being made in the image of God.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Indeed, when God made a covenant with Noah after the flood, he said that one who takes a human life must pay with their own life because humans have been made in God's image.

The New Testament also acknowledges that we still bear the image of God. This being the case, we should recognize that as human beings we have infinite worth to God.

We are the only creatures in the entire universe which were made in His image; the only creatures that can truly reflect His character albeit in a limited way. Consequently, we should see ourselves as beings which are very special.

## Question 5

### What Does The Bible Teach About The Unity Of The Human Race?

The Bible makes it clear that all human beings, no matter what their nationality, color of skin, or gender, are all part of one unified race made in the image of God. Humankind, in that sense is a family. We can make the following observations.

#### 1. God Made Everything After Their Own Kind

The Bible plainly teaches that we are here as a result of “special creation.” This means that God made each creature uniquely of “after its kind.” We read in Genesis:

So God created great sea creatures and every sort of fish and every kind of bird. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:21 ESV).

The Lord created the various kinds of animals, fish, and birds, and then left them to develop and progress. The distinction between the human race and the animal kingdom is revealed in the way the Lord created the first two humans. Scripture says:

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7 NIV).

Adam, the first man, was specifically formed by the Lord Himself. Eve, the first woman, was also formed by the Lord:

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22 NIV).

Woman, like Adam, was specially created. This separates humanity, the crown of God’s creation, from the animal kingdom. We are a different “kind” of creature than the animals.

The New Testament also acknowledges this. Paul emphasized that humans are different than animals, birds, and fish. He wrote:

For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish (1 Corinthians 15:39 ESV).

Consequently, Scripture is consistent in its teaching about the uniqueness of human beings.

#### 2. We Are The Consummation Or High Point Of God’s Creation

Humanity was consummation or the high point of God’s creation. In the Book of Genesis, we read the following about the last of God’s creative works:

So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said: Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth (Genesis 1:27,28 CEV).

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

After God had created everything else, He made human beings as the crown of His creation. Scripture says we are made in His image or likeness. This is not true of the animal kingdom. The Lord then commanded the man and woman to multiply; to fill the earth with their offspring.

### **3. We Have All Descended From An Original Pair**

The commandment of God to be fruitful and multiply was fulfilled. Adam and Eve conceived children and their children conceived children. The human race began to multiply and fill the entire earth.

The Scripture, thus, makes it clear that all humankind came from this original pair of human beings. The Apostle Paul said the following to a crowd in Athens:

From one man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live (Acts 17:26 CSB).

God made an original pair of humans, Adam and Eve. From these two people the entire human race has descended.

### **4. The Main Purpose Of Humans Is For The Glory Of God**

God created humanity for His glory. This was His purpose in creating us. Isaiah the prophet records the Lord saying the following:

All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them (Isaiah 43:7 NLT).

The chief end to humanity is to glorify God according to Scripture. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31 NRSV UE).

We are to glorify God in all things. This is why we were created.

### **5. Any Discrimination Toward Humans Is Wrong**

Because we are all part of the human family, made in the image of God, it is wrong to discriminate against someone who is who has different physical characteristics, speaks a different language, comes from a different class of people, or who has a different economic status. Every human being is valuable to God no matter who they are or where they come from. This is true because we have all been made in the “image of God.” We are special; we are not merely an advanced animal.

Thus, from the totality of Scripture we find that the human race is one; we are a unity. Furthermore, each and every human being has infinite worth because he or she has been made in the image of God.

### **Summary To Question 5**

#### **What Does The Bible Teach About The Unity Of The Human Race?**

According to Scripture, the human race is unified. In other words, there is only one human race. Indeed, the Bible says that God made everything after its own “kind.” This includes humanity. We are a distinct creation of God.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

The origin of every human being ultimately goes back to the first couple, Adam and Eve. This is further evidence of the unity of the human race as each of us can trace our ancestry back to this original pair.

Thus, while humans may have a number of different physical features, we are still one people. This cannot be stressed too strongly! We are one race: the human race. This being the case, we conclude that any type of discrimination, based upon physical characteristics, is wrong. Each and every human being is valuable to God no matter what he or she looks like or where they may come from.

Thus, human race is, therefore, one.

## Question 6

### What Are Humans Beings Made Up Of?

What constitutes a human being according to the Bible? Is it only the body? Is it something invisible? There have been a number of different views that Christians have proposed from their understanding of the Scripture.

The main ones include: (1) humans are made up of two parts: body and soul or spirit (2) humans are made up of three parts: body, soul, and spirit (3) humans are multifaceted - made up of many parts.

#### **Option 1: Dichotomy: Body And Soul Or Spirit**

One view says that humans are made up of two parts: a body and a soul or spirit. This view makes no distinction between the soul and spirit. Those who hold this view are known as dichotomists which means, “cut in two.”

#### **Option 2: Trichotomy: Body, Soul, And Spirit**

There is also the view that humans are made up of three parts: a body, a soul, and a spirit. This view makes a distinction between the soul and the spirit. It is known as trichotomy. The word means, “cut in three parts.”

#### **Option 3: Multifaceted View**

The multifaceted view does not limit humanity to body and soul or body soul and spirit. It assumes humans are much more than this. This view holds that all humans are made up of body, soul and spirit but they are also made up of other things such as mind, conscience, heart, and will.

There are good Bible-believers who have held each of these three views about the nature of human beings.

#### **Does It Really Matter?**

One question which arises concerns the importance of this discussion. Does it really matter how many parts we are made up of? Some people feel that it is rather childish to get into heated discussions about this issue.

Everyone admits that we human beings are made up of different parts; we have a material part and an immaterial part. The material part will perish but the immaterial part will last forever; it is made for eternity.

Although we know that we humans are made up of something material and immaterial, we are not quite certain how to break down or further identify these parts.

#### **The Soul And Spirit Are Invisible**

In addition, while there may be some distinction between our soul and spirit, as far as we are concerned, there is no way to distinguish them. They are invisible to us and beyond our comprehension. In other words, there is no observable distinction between them. This being the case we should not attempt to try to understand what the Bible has not explained to us.

Therefore, while the question may have some value, we should be careful not to make this too much of an issue since the Scripture does not. Consequently, as we examine this issue, we need to put it into proper perspective.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### Scripture Emphasizes Our Unity

There is one final thing. The Scriptures emphasize the unity of the person, not the different parts. Indeed, many of these terms used in Scripture, such as spirit, soul, heart, body and mind, are, in context, referring to the entire person. They are not singling out one particular part.

Thus, it is best if we concentrate on the total person no matter how many individual parts we may or may not have.

### Summary To Question 6

#### What Are Humans Beings Made Up Of?

From Bible-believing Christians there are three basic views with respect to the makeup of human beings. They are as follows.

Some see humans as consisting of two parts: body and spirit. This is known as the dichotomy. We each have a visible physical form, or body, as well as an unseen form, a spirit. This perspective sees no distinction between the soul and spirit.

Others believe humans are made up three parts: body, soul, and spirit. This position is known as trichotomy. This point of view differs from dichotomy in that it makes a distinction between the soul and spirit. While both parts are invisible and non-material, Scripture, they contend makes a distinction between them.

There is also what is known as the multifaceted view. This perspective assumes humans are made up of much more than body, soul, and spirit. This would include the mind, heart, conscience and will.

Each of these three views can find support among Bible-believing Christians. The Bible, however, does not specifically give an answer to this question. We do know that we are made up of the material, the flesh, and the immaterial, the spirit. The flesh perishes but the spirit lasts forever.

Beyond that there is some question as to exactly how to break down and identify the individual parts. Since we are speaking about invisible entities, we cannot really know the answer. Therefore, we should be careful how forceful we wish to hold any one particular point of view on this subject. While it may make for an interesting discussion, ultimately there are certain things about this issue which we are not able to know. We need to accept that fact.

Furthermore, we find the real emphasis in Scripture is upon the total person, not the individual parts. We should follow the lead of the Word of God and have the same emphasis.

## Question 7

### **Are Humans Made Up Two Parts: The Body And The Spirit/Soul? (Dichotomy)**

A popular view with respect to the nature of human beings is that we are made up of body and soul. This is also called the dichotomy or the “two parts view. This view holds that the spirit and soul are the same; there is no distinction between them. Those who hold this position usually bring up the following points.

#### **1. We Are Made Up Of Material And Immaterial**

No matter what position a person takes, everyone who takes the Bible seriously agrees that Scripture makes a distinction between our material and immaterial features. We have a body, the material, and a soul, or spirit, the immaterial.

Dichotomists say that there is no distinction made between the immaterial parts, the soul and the spirit. They are merely two different words which mean the same thing. They make their arguments as follows.

#### **2. The Terms Soul And Spirit Are Sometimes Used Interchangeably**

We find that on a number of occasions in Scripture, the “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably. We can give a number of examples. Jesus spoke of His soul being troubled. John records Him saying the following”

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27 NRSV UE).

Later, however, we read of His *spirit* being troubled:

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me” (John 13:21 NIV)

Soul or spirit in each of these cases, stands for His entire person, the life principle. Consequently, we see that the two terms, in these instances were used interchangeably.

This being the case, it is argued that we should not make a distinction between the two. Both the terms spirit and soul are used to describe the immaterial part of humans.

#### **3. The Body And Soul Are The Whole Person**

Jesus said the “body” plus the “soul” equals the whole person. We read the following words of our Lord in Matthew’s gospel:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (Matthew 6:25 NRSV UE).

We find the word translated “life” in this context is the Greek word *psuche*, the usual word for soul. Therefore, the soul and the body are spoken of interchangeably in this verse. In another instance in Matthew we read:

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28 ESV).

Here we find humans basically divided into two parts: body and soul. The body is the material and the soul is the immaterial.

### **4. The Soul And The Spirit Are Used Synonymously For Death**

Death can be referred to as the departing of the soul or of the spirit. In one instance, death is called giving up of the soul or the departing of the soul. We read in Genesis of the departing of the soul of Rachel, the wife of Jacob.

As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin (Genesis 35:18 NRSV UE).

In another instance, death is spoken of as giving up of the spirit. Scripture says:

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last (Luke 23:46 NIV).

Again, we find the soul and spirit used synonymously.

### **5. The Dead Are Both Spirits And Souls**

Those who have died are called both spirits and souls. In Hebrews we read:

And to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Hebrews 12:23 NRSV UE)

Yet in the Book of Revelation it calls those who have died "souls." The Bible says:

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held (Revelation 6:9 NKJV).

This is another example of the terms soul and spirit being used interchangeably.

### **What About Passages That Seem To Teach Trichotomy?**

While some passages seem to make a distinction between soul and spirit the fact that they are used synonymously should cause us to see them as the same immaterial entity. Indeed, the portions of Scripture which are used to support trichotomy do not have to be understood in that manner.

Therefore, from the point of view of the dichotomist, the best way to view ourselves as human beings is to see us as having two parts: the material and the immaterial, the body and the spirit or the soul. Any further distinction is not necessary.

### **Are We Dichotomous Or Two Parts Before Salvation Then Trichotomous Or Three Parts Afterward?**

There is one final issue which must be addressed. There have been those who have argued that humans are made up of two parts, body and soul, before their salvation but they receive a third part, a spirit, when they become believers. Thus, they receive an extra element upon belief. However, there is no biblical basis for this.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

True, the believer receives the Holy Spirit upon belief in Jesus Christ, but we cannot say that He is to be added to our nature; we do not possess God as part of ourselves when we believe in Christ.

Thus, when all the facts are in it seems that dichotomy best explains the biblical view of the makeup of human beings.

### **Summary To Question 7**

#### **Are Humans Made Up Two Parts: The Body And The Spirit/Soul? (Dichotomy)**

How many parts do humans consist of? Some feel it is merely two parts: the body and the soul or the body and the spirit. The body is the material or visible part while the soul, or spirit, speaks of our entire immaterial or invisible part.

Those who hold to humans being composed of body and spirit rather than body, soul, and spirit are called dichotomists which mean “two parts.”

Dichotomists argue that the terms soul and spirit are often used interchangeably in Scripture; they are two different ways of describing the immaterial part of the person.

Indeed, a number of examples can be found where the two terms are used simultaneously. In one instance Jesus said that His “soul” was troubled while at another time the Lord said His “spirit” was troubled. In these cases, the words are used interchangeably.

There are numerous other examples of this in the Bible. The dead are sometimes called “souls” while at other times they are referred to as “spirits.”

Given this evidence, many people conclude that the terms soul and the spirit are used to indicate the same thing; the unseen part of us.

Furthermore, the passages which supposedly make a distinction between the soul and spirit do not conclusively prove there is a difference between them. They do not have to be interpreted as referring to two distinct immaterial parts which humans possess.

Therefore, it is argued, that we should not make a fine distinction between the soul and spirit since Scripture does not make this distinction.

## Question 8

### Are Humans Made Up Of Body Soul, And Spirit? (Trichotomy)

While many people believe that humans are made up of only two parts, body and soul, there are those who believe that humans are actually tripartite; made up of body, soul, and spirit. They are called “trichotomists” meaning, “three parts.”

#### The Case For Trichotomy

The case for trichotomy is as follows. First, there are biblical passages that are used in support of trichotomy or three parts for humans. We read the following in the Book of Hebrews:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrew 4:12 NASB 2020).

This seems to teach that “soul and spirit” can be “divided.” This being the case, we should not assume they speak of the same thing.

In another instance, the Apostle Paul wrote the following ending to his first letter to the Thessalonians:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23 CSB).

This passage also implies there is difference between the soul and the spirit. While both are immaterial and invisible, they are not the same entity.

#### The Differences Between Soul And Spirit

If there is a distinction between the soul and the spirit then what are the differences? What exactly are the ways in which they differ?

While trichotomists hold to a distinction between the soul and spirit not everyone explains the distinction in the same way. Some say that the “spirit” is that part of humanity that spiritually relates to God; it is our spiritual being. The “soul” on the other hand, is that which relates to our emotional being.

#### The Soul Refers To Self-Awareness

The soul is also linked to our self-awareness. Under this definition animals have souls because they are aware of their own existence. Whatever the case may be, trichotomists believe Scripture makes the distinction between soul and spirit. The psalmist wrote:

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar (Psalm 42:5,6 ESV).

Thus, the self-awareness of the soul is not limited to human beings. Animals have a self-awareness that they are living creatures. What separates us from the animals from the human race is the spirit; an ability to commune with the living God.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

These are some of the arguments used by those who make a distinction between the soul and the spirit.

While they might not be able to explain the exact differences between soul and spirit, there is a difference between the two.

### **Summary To Question 8**

#### **Are Humans Made Up Of Body, Soul, And Spirit? (Trichotomy)**

A popular view with respect to the makeup of human beings is to see us as consisting of body, soul, and spirit. Those who hold this perspective are called trichotomists. Those who argue for this position do so as follows.

First, there are a number of passages in Scripture that mention these three specific features of human beings. Therefore, the Bible makes a distinction between the soul and spirit. While there may be some portions of the Bible that link soul and spirit there are other passages which do not.

This perspective sees the soul as the awareness that we are living, consciousness beings. In that particular definition, animals are said to have souls. The one thing that does separate human beings from the animal kingdom is the spirit; the ability to know God. This is what makes human beings unique from the rest of God's creation.

## Question 9

### What Is The Multi-Faceted View Of Humanity?

While many Christians hold to the view that humans are either made up of soul and spirit or body, soul, and spirit, there is another view that see humans as multifaceted. According to this view, humans are made up of much more than body, soul, and spirit. This includes the heart, mind, will, and conscience. The evidence is as follows.

#### **The Various Immaterial Parts Of Humans Apart From The Soul And Spirit**

The Bible does not limit the immaterial nature to soul or spirit. Indeed, there are other terms which are used to describe that part of us which is unseen and non-material.

As we examine these particular terms, we will note that there is some crossover between them.

#### **1. Heart**

Humans are described as having a heart. This rarely refers to the physical organ inside of our chest. Depending upon the context, the heart may speak of our innermost being, our intellectual abilities or our ability to choose. Jesus said:

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile you; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile you (Matthew 15:19-20 NIV).

In this context, the heart refers to our innermost being. Paul spoke about believing in Christ with the heart. He wrote the following to the Romans:

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (Romans 10:9-10 NIV).

This seems to be a reference to our intellectual ability. The writer to the Hebrews used the heart to refer to the right to choose:

God again set a certain day, calling it "Today." This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7 NIV)

In this context, the heart refers to the will; the ability to choose. What we see from these references is that the term "heart" is used in a number of ways to describe an immaterial aspect of us.

#### **2. Mind**

The Bible notes the each of us has a "mind." Scripture contrasts the minds of the believers and the unbelievers. Believers are to be clear-minded and self-controlled. Peter wrote:

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray (1 Peter 4:7 NIV).

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

While the mind of the believer has been redeemed the mind of the unbeliever is darkened in sin. Unbelievers have a depraved mind. Paul wrote to Timothy:

These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they don't tell the truth. To them religion is just a way to get rich (1 Timothy 6:5 NLT).

The mind of the unbeliever is hostile to God. Scripture says:

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot (Romans 8:7 NRSV UE).

Those who do not believe in Jesus mind, or think upon, earthly things. They do not set their thoughts on things above as believers.

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things (Philippians 3:19 NIV).

The mind can be used to think about God.

### **3. Will**

The Bible speaks of our ability to choose our own will. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and emphasized how they used to live before they came to know the Lord:

In which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:2-3 ESV).

The Ephesians like the rest of us were ruled by their own selfish desires before becoming believers in Christ. They, like us, chose to sin. They exercised their will.

### **4. Conscience**

Finally, there is the conscience. This is the ability to know right from wrong. Paul wrote of those who consciences have lost all feeling; they have been seared:

They will also be fooled by the false claims of liars whose consciences have lost all feeling (1 Timothy 4:2 NLT).

The conscience is another biblical description of the immaterial part of us.

Thus, the multi-faceted view sees us as more than body and soul or body, spirit, and soul. Indeed, Scripture describes us as having a heart, mind, will, and conscience. The fact that these other terms are used to describe the immaterial part of us makes this evident.

### **The Unity Of The Entire Person Is Stressed**

It is again necessary to point out that Scripture views humans as a unity. While there are different terms used to describe us, such as body, soul, spirit, heart, and mind, these descriptions are simply different ways of looking at the one person.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

For example, while the word soul is sometimes distinguished from the body, it commonly refers to the entire person. Therefore, as we attempt to come to conclusions about how many parts humans are made up of, we must always remember that Scriptures see us more a united being. Consequently, this is the way in which we need to view ourselves rather than dividing us up into a number of parts.

### **Summary To Question 9**

#### **What Is The Multi-faceted View Of Humanity?**

The multi-faceted view of humanity sees each of us as being made up of many immaterial parts. In other words, we are made of much more than the traditional idea of body and soul or body, soul and spirit. Scripture speaks as well of humans as having a heart, mind, will and conscience.

Generally speaking, the heart speaks of our intellectual abilities or our ability to choose. The mind refers to our thought processes. The will refers to our ability to choose while our conscience is that part of us that reminds us of what is right and what is wrong. This is how the Scripture describes the immaterial part of each of us.

Therefore, they do not limit our makeup to merely two or three parts. Rather we are made of many different parts; we are multi-faceted. We, however, again stress that the Bible sees human beings as a unity; one being rather than a number of composite parts.

Thus, these terms which the Bible uses, body, soul, spirit, mind, and heart, are simply different ways of looking at the one person. Scripture emphasizes the unity of the person; we are not a bunch of separable parts.

## Question 10

### Do Humans Need An Earthly Body To Exist?

Scripture tends to view human beings as a unity though it does make the distinction between our body and spirit. While the Scripture sees us a unified being, it is also important to note that the body is not absolutely necessary for our continued existence after this life is over. Scripture speaks of an existence we may have apart from our earthly bodies.

#### 1. The Soul Can Exist Apart From The Body

Jesus talked about those who could kill the body but not the soul. Matthew records Him saying:

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28 NRSV UE)

We are not to fear those who can merely kill our human bodies because our ultimate survival is not dependent upon this body remaining alive. Instead, we are to fear the One who can destroy both the human body and our soul. Thus, we have a clear distinction between the body and the soul. The body dies but the soul survives.

In another instance, Jesus said the following to the criminal who was dying next to Him on the cross:

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43 NIV).

While the body of the criminal would soon no longer function, there was a part of him which would survive physical death. Again, survival is not dependent upon the human body. This speaks of our continued existence apart from having a human body. Thus, the body is not absolutely necessary for our ultimate survival.

In Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) both of these people survive after the death of their earthly bodies. Though the body of the rich man is buried he exists in a conscious state in a place of torment. While we are not told what happened to the dead body of Lazarus, we find that he too continues to exist though he is in a place of bliss.

This further illustrates the truth that our earthly body is not necessary for our continued survival once this life is over.

#### 2. Believers Wait For The Resurrection At The Return Of Christ

Between the time of our physical death and the resurrection of the body believers are in an intermediate state. Only at the return of Christ will we receive a resurrected body. While there may be a disembodied state between death and resurrection, this is not God's ideal for us.

The Apostle Paul spoke of the hope of a new body, a heavenly body. He wrote:

For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down-- when we die and leave these bodies-- we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long for the day when we will put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will not be spirits without bodies, but we will put on new heavenly bodies (2 Corinthians 5:1-3 NLT).

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

The ultimate goal is that we will have a glorified body at the return of Christ. Paul also wrote of this hope to the Philippians:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians 3:20,21 NIV).

Therefore, while Scripture views humans as unified beings made up of different parts, the body is not essential to our survival after this life. Indeed, our essential being will survive after this life apart from an earthly body.

### **Summary To Question 10**

#### **Do Humans Need An Earthly Body To Exist?**

While it is necessary for humans to have an earthly body to exist in this world, our continued existence is not dependent upon our earthly form. Scripture does make the distinction between our mortal or earthly bodies, which will die, and our spirits or souls, which will exist eternally.

Jesus said we are not to fear those who can only kill the body but not the soul. Here we find a distinction between the body and the soul.

To the criminal dying next to Him on the cross, Jesus promised paradise that day. Though his body would be dead, his spirit or soul would be with the Lord that very day. Again, there is the essential truth that the spirit survives death.

In His story of the rich man and Lazarus, both of these men are in a conscious state after they have died. In other words, there is continued existence for each of them though their bodies are dead.

While there may be a time when our spirit or soul is separated from our earthly bodies this is not God's ideal. The hope of the believer is a new body, a resurrected body. This we will receive when the Lord returns.

Consequently, though the Bible sees humans as unified beings there is an unseen part of us which will survive death. This being the case, our earthly bodies are not necessary for our continued survival beyond this life.

## Question 11

### When Is The Individual Human Soul Created?

The Bible says that God is the Father of Spirits. We read the following in Hebrews:

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? (Hebrews 12:9 NKJV).

This seems to indicate He is the Father of all spirits.

The Bible also says that the first man, Adam, was created from the dust of the earth. He then received his spirit or soul when God breathed the breath of life into him. At this point he became a living soul. The Apostle Paul compared the creation of Adam to that of Christ:

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:45-47 ESV).

Adam’s spirit or soul was breathed into his body directly by God. We now look at those who have existed since Adam. How are their souls created? When is the individual human spirit, or soul, created?

#### The Issue Explained

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them the ability to procreate; to reproduce offspring. Their offspring not only had the same type of body as they had, but also something immaterial was passed on to each new human, a spirit or soul. The question, therefore, is how this immaterial part was passed on from parent to child.

#### There Are Three Main Views

Though our physical body will return to dust, there is an immaterial part of us that will continue on. The Bible refers to this as our “soul” or “spirit.” Does the Bible tell us when this immaterial part of us is created? Is it at conception? Was it before conception? Was it at birth or some other time? There are three basic views to this question.

#### Option 1: Preexistence Of Souls

The theory of preexistence states that all souls were created as angels at the beginning of time. This happened before the creation of any matter. The heavens, earth, and humanity had not been created when these souls were made. At some point these souls sinned. They were punished by given human bodies and were sent to earth until they could be restored to their former angelic state. Historic Christianity has never held this position and there is absolutely nothing in the Bible to support this view.

#### Option 2: Creationism

The theory of Creationism believes that the body alone is propagated by human means but that God directly creates the soul at the moment of conception. The soul receives its sinfulness not because it is created, but by its contact through the human body. Scripture emphasizes that the soul comes from God but the body from our earthly parents. Since the soul is not material it could not be transmitted by natural means.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### **Option 3: Traducianism**

The word Traducianism comes from the Latin word *traduco* which means “lead, bring across or over.” This view holds that God created the first human soul when He made Adam on day six of creation, He made him with an immortal soul.

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7 NRSV UE).

Eve was also created with an immortal soul. Since that time, the individual soul with his sinfulness is propagated by natural means. This view explains the corruption of the human race, for the Bible says Adam bore a son in his own likeness:

When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth (Genesis 5:3 NRSV UE).

Furthermore, God’s creation was finished on the seventh day and since that time He has not created anything new.

Orthodox Christians hold either the Creationist view or the Traducian view. We will examine the case for each of these three views in the next few questions.

### **Summary To Question 11**

#### **When Is The Individual Human Soul Created?**

God is the Father of all spirits or souls; ultimately, they derive from Him. Adam was directly created by God which included giving him a spirit or soul. Eve was also directly made by the Lord. Since that time human beings have been born after the natural union between a man and a woman. Each one of us has a spirit or a soul. When are these individual human souls created?

There have been three major ways in which the creation of the individual soul has been traditionally understood.

First, is the idea of preexistence of souls. It maintains that that all souls were created as angelic spirits at the beginning of time. Due to some sort of rebellion among the spirits, as a punishment, they were sent to earth in human bodies. While popular, this is not a biblical view.

Creationism hold that God creates a new soul each and every time a human being is conceived. The soul is given by God at some time between conception and birth. Many Christians hold this perspective.

Another popular view is known as Traducianism. It believes that each soul is somehow passed on by natural means from parents to children. Just exactly how this occurs is not known.

Creationism and Traducianism are held by Bible-believing Christians while the pre-existence of souls, as mentioned, has no biblical support whatsoever. It actually contradicts Scripture.

## Question 12

### Does The Bible Teach The Preexistence Of Souls?

The doctrine of the preexistence of souls holds to the idea that the soul of each human being existed before they were conceived. This theory is expressed in a number of different ways.

#### **The Theory Explained**

Sometimes it is taught that at the beginning of creation, God created the souls of all spirits-beings who will ever exist. This occurred before God created the first man, Adam.

At that time, He created angels as well as the spirits of all of those which will eventually become human beings. After this initial creation these bodiless souls were punished for some type of bad behavior.

Sometimes it is attributed to a rebellion against Him. Their punishment for this sin included being placed in physical bodies until they could be properly disciplined to return to their purely spiritual existence. The bodies which we now presently possess have come into existence by the normal course of physical propagation.

Therefore, the physical part of us, our bodies, had no previous existence before God created Adam. This means that all of us had some type of conscious existence before we were born but it was not in a body.

#### **Is There Biblical Support For Preexistence?**

Sometimes the Bible is used to support this idea. For example, we read in Jeremiah about the Lord knowing Jeremiah before he was born:

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:4-5 ESV).

The fact that the Lord knew Jeremiah before he was born is used to argue that Jeremiah has some type of conscious existence. It is also contended that Jesus' disciples believed that a man who was born blind was being punished for sins in a previous existence:

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. "Teacher," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it a result of his own sins or those of his parents?" (John 9:1-2 NLT).

This supposedly gives further evidence that we have lived in a previous life. The Apostle Paul also testified that he was chosen from birth:

But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace (Galatians 1:15 ESV).

Again, this is seen as evidence of some type of pre-existence of Paul by those who argue for the pre-existence of souls.

#### **Jesus Christ Pre-Existed**

We know that Christ existed as God the Son before He came to earth. John wrote:

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1-3 KJV).

There are those who argue that since Christ pre-existed before He became a human being, it is consistent with the Bible to assert that all of us had some type of pre-existence.

Some say that this doctrine gives genuine hope to humanity for life after death. If we were alive as conscious souls before we were born, this certainly lends support to the hope that there will be conscious life after our death. This is why the human heart has a longing for unending existence.

### **Response: The Doctrine Does Not Come From Scripture**

While Bible verses are sometimes cited to advocate this particular view, it does not derive from Scripture. Indeed, the reasons upon which people promote the idea that souls pre-existed are not biblical.

In fact, many who hold this perspective also believe the non-biblical doctrine of reincarnation or the transmigration of souls. Transmigration of souls is the idea that we go through a succession of lives moving from a simple life-form to eventually become a human being.

#### **1. The Idea Of Preexistence Is Not Biblical**

A number of things can be said in response to the idea that the souls of each and every one of us preexisted before we were born.

First, there is nothing in Scripture that teaches any of us had some sort of existence before we were conceived. Biblical passages which contradict this view are either ignored or allegorized. This doctrine does not come from the Bible.

#### **2. The Supporting Passages Do Not Teach This Doctrine**

Furthermore, the passages that are cited to support this idea teach no such thing.

##### **God Knew Jeremiah, Jeremiah Did Not Know God**

Scripture says the Lord *knew* Jeremiah before he was born; not that Jeremiah knew anything.

##### **The Man Was Not Born Blind Because Of Some Sin Of His**

The man who was blind from birth was not born this way because of the sin of his parents or because of some sin he committed in the womb. Jesus made that clear when He answered the disciple's question about why this man was born blind:

Jesus answered. "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins "He was born blind so the power of God could be seen in him" (John 9:1-3 NLT)

According to our Lord, this man was born blind so that God could receive the glory.

##### **The Lord Called The Apostle Paul From His Mother's Womb: Paul Did Not Exist Before That Time**

In the case of Paul, the only thing the Scripture says is that Paul was called by God from his mother's womb. There is nothing taught or hinted at that Paul existed before that time.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### 3. Why Is There No Memory?

If we pre-existed before becoming human, then why don't any of us have a recollection of this? Since there will be memory in the next world of this life, why wouldn't we expect to find memory of a previous life if we have actually lived one? There is no memory because there was no previous life.

### 4. Original Sin Is Denied

The idea of pre-existence denies the doctrine of original sin while acknowledging that sin exists. It contradicts the biblical explanation for sin coming into this world, the sin of Adam and Eve. Paul wrote the following:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned (Romans 5:12 NLT).

However, if the doctrine of pre-existence is true, then sin must have existed before Adam was created. All of these facts illustrate the simple truth that the idea of the preexistence of souls is not a biblical doctrine but rather a teaching which is contradictory to Scripture and thus should not be believed.

### Summary To Question 12

#### Does The Bible Teach The Preexistence Of Souls?

One explanation of the origin of the human soul is the doctrine of pre-existence. It is usually stated in this manner. At the beginning of creation, before the Lord made the earth, He created an immense number of angelic spirits. These spirits rebelled. Their judgment for this rebellion was the placing them into a human body. Therefore, when each human is born, the body is joined to a pre-existing spirit.

This perspective explains a number of things. It tells us why humans are sinful. Each of us has sinned in our existence as bodiless angelic spirits. Furthermore, it gives us hope for the future. Since each of us experienced life before we were conceived in this world, we should expect to experience life in the next world.

There are several biblical passages which are sometimes cited to justify this belief. The Lord said He knew Jeremiah before Jeremiah was formed. Jesus' disciples asked if a man born blind had sinned to cause himself to be blind from birth. The Apostle Paul said that he was separated from his mother's womb for the work of God. These are some of the reasons as to why people believe in the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls.

The idea that souls somehow preexisted before they were conceived in the womb is a popular belief but it is not a biblical doctrine. There are a number of reasons as to why this is so.

First, Scripture nowhere teaches that any of us had some type of existence before we were conceived. The references to Jeremiah and Paul speaks of the Lord's knowledge of them; not their knowledge of Him or anything else.

In the case of the man born blind, Jesus actually rebukes His disciples for their belief that this man had sinned before birth to cause his blindness.

In addition, this belief contradicts the doctrine of original sin. Sin entered into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. There is no indication that there was any sin in the human race before that time.

Furthermore, our hope for the future does not lay in the fact that we have lived as bodiless spirits before our conception. Our hope is based upon the clear teaching of the Word of God. We do not need some possible past existence to give us hope.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

There is something else. If we have existed as bodiless angelic spirits before we were born then why don't we have any recollection of this? Scripture teaches that in the next life we will have memory of this existence on earth.

This being the case, we should expect to have some memory of our existence as spirits before we entered our human body. But we have no remembrance of this.

Furthermore, we know that Jesus remembered His pre-existent state. He was well-aware that He existed before He became a human being. Again, then why don't the rest of us remember we had a bodiless existence before we came into this world?

Therefore, the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls is not a biblical doctrine and should not be embraced by Bible-believing Christians.

## Question 13

### Does God Create A New Soul For Each Person? (Immediate Creationism)

One of the popular views with respect to the creation of the human soul is known as “immediate creationism.” This view maintains that God creates a new soul for each human being at the moment they are conceived. The arguments for this perspective can be summed up as follows.

#### 1. The Argument From The Origin Of The Body And The Soul

Scripture makes a clear distinction as to the origin of the body and the origin of the soul. In Genesis, we read the following about the creation of Adam the first man:

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7 NIV)

The body of Adam was made from the earth or the ground, while his soul or spirit came directly from God Himself. This distinction is found throughout the entire Scripture.

Thus, the body and the soul are not only represented in Scripture as different substances, but they also as having different origins. Furthermore, they have different destinies. The writer of Ecclesiastes stated:

The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7 NIV).

The body shall return to the dust while the spirit goes back to God, the One who created it. Here the human soul is represented as different from, and higher than, that of the human body. This truth is consistently found throughout Scripture. Zechariah the prophet wrote:

The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him (Zechariah 12:1 ESV).

Note that the Lord formed the spirit within humans. While this is true of the spirit, it is not true of the body. Isaiah the prophet records God saying something similar. He put it this way:

Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it (Isaiah 42:5 NASB 2020)

These words are consistent with the Genesis account of creation. God breathed into Adam the breath of life indicating the origin or source of the soul is God Himself. This is in contrast to the body which was formed from the already created earth.

This is why He is called “the God of the spirits of all mankind.” In the Book of Numbers, it says:

But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, “O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?” (Numbers 16:22 NIV).

However, the Bible never says that He is God of the *bodies* of all humanity.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Therefore, we find a different relationship to God with respect to the soul and the body. The body is made from the earth while the soul is created from heaven. We read in Hebrews:

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! (Hebrews 12:9 NIV).

There is an obvious contrast here between those who are the fathers of our bodies, our parents, and the Lord who is the Father of our spirits. Our bodies are derived from the union of our earthly parents while our souls are derived from God Himself.

The conclusion is clear. Our bodies come about through natural means while the soul is a special creation of God.

### **2. The Argument From The Person Of Jesus Christ**

Another argument for immediate creationism comes from the Scriptural doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ. As all agree, Jesus was truly human with a genuine human nature. He was born of a woman, an actual descendant of King David. The Bible says that He was in all points made like we are, yet He without sin. Nobody doubts this.

Yet if our sinful human nature is passed on through conception then it seems that we must conclude that Christ also had a sinful human nature since all humans are partakers of the original sin of Adam.

What is true of all other humans must be true of Christ since He was fully human. One cannot affirm that all humans are born with a sin nature because the sin nature is passed along at birth but then deny Christ had a sinless nature.

If we humans are all guilty because of Adam's sin because we are part of his essence then Christ must also be guilty of sin. This seems to be the logical result of saying that our human nature is passed along to us at conception.

### **The Problems With This View**

The problem with this view is the Scripture does not teach that the soul is the higher creation and the body is the lower creation. God creates them both. God directly created the body of Adam and Eve as the Scripture clearly says:

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature (Genesis 2:7 ESV).

While He may have used pre-existing materials, the body is no less a creation of God as is the soul or the spirit.

Eve was created from the body of Adam. Genesis says the following about her creation:

And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man (Genesis 2:22,23 ESV).

Elsewhere Scripture indicates God is the Creator of the body. The psalmist wrote the following:

You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt (Psalm 139:13,14 CEV).

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Again, the body is seen as no less a creation of God as the immaterial spirit.

### **Is God The Creator Of Sin?**

There are other problems with this view. If God created the soul at birth, this would seem to make God the Creator of sin seeing he would have to create a soul that would immediately become sinful. Yet, the Bible says that God is not the Creator of sin.

The idea of immediate creationism, while held by many people, does not seem to be the best explanation as to the difficult question of the origin of the soul.

### **Summary To Question 13**

#### **Does God Create A New Soul For Each Person (Immediate Creationism)**

There are some Christians who believe that God creates a new soul when each person is conceived. According to this view, only the body is generated by our human parents. This theory is known as immediate creationism or simply creationism.

Those who argue for creationism do so for a number of reasons. First, they make the distinction between the body and soul based on the creation of Adam. Scriptures says his body was made from the dust of the earth, existing materials.

However, his soul was created directly by God. Thus, the body had an earthly origin while the soul had a heavenly origin.

Furthermore, the Scripture says that our bodies return to dust but our spirits or souls go back to God. Thus, our destiny is consistent with our origins. The body goes to the ground while the soul goes to God.

As is true with the example of Adam, so it is with the rest of us; our bodies are different from our souls. The bodies are temporary but our souls are eternal. As Adam's soul was directly created by God so are the souls of the rest of us.

There is also the matter of the human nature of Jesus Christ. If one argues that both the body and the spirit come about through natural means then it seems logical that Christ must have had a sinful nature. Since Christ was fully human and a descendant of Adam then He too must have inherited Adam's nature if it is passed along by birth.

There are a number of problems with this view. First, it makes a distinction between the higher and lower parts of a human being. This is something that the Bible does not do. God is the Creator of the body as well as the soul. Furthermore, it would seem to make God the author of sin since He creates a new soul for each human born and joins the soul to a sinful body. This being the case, we need to look for a better understanding of the origin of the soul.

## Question 14

### Is Each Soul Passed On At Conception (Traducianism)

A very popular view with respect to the origin of our souls is known as Traducianism. Traducianism holds that the entire human race was created, “in Adam.” After that time every new body and soul come about as a result of natural reproduction. There is no such thing as God creating a new soul or spirit each time a person is conceived.

The main arguments which are given for the traducian point of view can be summed up in the following manner.

#### **We Were All In Adam**

The Bible says that the entire human race was in Adam when Adam sinned. Paul wrote the following to the Romans:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given, they all died anyway-- even though they did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. What a contrast between Adam and Christ, who was yet to come (Romans 5:12-14 NLT).

Adam, the first human, was our representative in some sense. His sin brought death to all of us. Indeed, Scripture says that Adam had children in his likeness.

This is the history of the descendants of Adam. When God created people, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.” When Adam was 130 years old, his son Seth was born, and Seth was the very image of his father (Genesis 5:1-3 NLT).

Unfortunately, this likeness or image was a sinful image.

#### **Our Sin Nature Was Transmitted By Our Parents**

The Bible says that parents transmit the sin nature to their children. The psalmist wrote about the fact that he was born a guilty sinner:

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me (Psalm 51:5 NRSV UE).

The psalmist also noted that the wicked are evil from birth. He put it this way:

Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies (Psalm 58:3 NIV).

When Jesus spoke to the religious leader Nicodemus, He contrasted the flesh, or the human nature, with the spirit, or the spiritual nature:

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6 NRSV UE).

The fleshly or human nature is that which we are all born with. It is a sinful, fallen nature; a nature which cannot please God.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Paul emphasized this same truth when he wrote to the Ephesians. He stated the biblical truth that each of us was born with an evil nature:

All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else (Ephesians 2:3 NLT).

The psalmist also said.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:13-16 NIV).

Since the sin nature is passed along by birth it seems to follow that the soul or spirit is also passed along in the same manner. In addition, Scripture says that God made every nation from one man; we inherited everything from Adam:

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live (Acts 17:26 NIV).

These arguments have led many to believe that the doctrine of traducianism is the best way of understanding how the soul or soul is passed on to each of us. Ultimately, there is some mystery in this process and it is best that we do not come across as too dogmatic or certain as to exactly how all of this occurs.

### **Summary To Question 14 Is Each Soul Passed On At Conception (Traducianism)**

Traducianism teaches that each soul is passed on at the time of conception. The parents, therefore, transfer their sin nature to their children.

According to this view, every human being was, "in Adam" when Adam first sinned in the Garden of Eden. Therefore the invisible part of each of us is passed on naturally or at our conception.

Contrary to creationism, there is no supernatural creation of individual human souls each time a new life is conceived.

While this seems to be the most consistent way to understand how each of us are born with a spirit or soul there is no clear biblical explanation as to how this occurs. This should keep us from being too certain about how this mysterious process works.

## Question 15

### What Is The Soul?

One of the recognizable words that the Bible uses is the word “soul.” While the term is familiar to most of us there is some question as to its precise meaning. What exactly is the soul? How should we understand the meaning of this word from its use in Scripture?

#### The Term Is Used In Number Of Ways

There is no single definition of the word translated “soul;” it is used a number of ways in the Bible. Indeed, the Hebrew word translated soul in the Old Testament, as well as the Greek word used in the New Testament, has various shades of meaning. It is essential that we understand this. If not, much confusion will arise.

We find that the word soul is used of people in general but it also may refer to animals. Furthermore, it is often used interchangeably with the term spirit. On other occasions, it may be used to refer to the mind, emotions, and the will. Therefore, we find that this term has a variety of possible meanings. We can illustrate this with the following examples.

#### The Word Soul In The Old Testament

We will first look at the Old Testament in our examination of the word soul. The word translated soul is the Hebrew word *nephesh*. We will find that this word has a number of meanings.

##### 1. The Word Soul Can Mean Life

The Hebrew word *nephesh* can mean “life.” Adam was created as a living soul:

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 KJV).

In this context, it speaks of the life Adam was given.

##### 2. It Is Used Of Persons In General

The word soul is sometimes used in a general way of human beings. We read of this in Genesis where it says the following:

He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people [souls] he had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:5 CSB).

Here the Hebrew word refers to people in general. This is a common usage of the term.

##### 3. It Is Used Of A Corpse

While the word *nephesh* usually signifies life, the term is also used of a corpse! We read of this in the Book of Numbers:

He must not go near a dead body [nephesh] during the time he consecrates himself to the LORD (Numbers 6:6 CSB).

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It also says in Numbers:

Some people in Israel's camp had touched a dead body [nephesh] and had become unfit to worship the LORD, and they could not celebrate Passover. But they asked Moses and Aaron (Numbers 9:6 CEV).

In each of these instances, the usual Hebrew word for soul, *nephesh*, is actually referring to one who is dead.

### 4. It Is Used Of Things Human Beings Desire

The Hebrew word translated "soul" is also used for things which human beings desire. For example, it refers to the desire to have possessions such as animals. The King James Version says:

And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household (Deuteronomy 14:26 KJV).

Modern translations usually replace the word soul with the term "heart" such as we find with the New American Standard Bible:

And you may spend the money on whatever your heart desires: on oxen, sheep, wine, other strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household (Deuteronomy 14:26 NASB 2020).

In this instance, soul or heart speaks of the deep desire within a human being for these possessions. In another instance, the word translated "soul" is used of the desire for a sexual relationship. We read of this in Genesis:

And his soul [Shechem] was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob; he loved the maiden and spoke tenderly to her (Genesis 34:3 NRSV UE).

Again, we have the word used for a human longing or desire. We also find the word used for a desired human friendship, such as the friendship between David and Jonathan. Scripture says the following about them:

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul (1 Samuel 18:1-3 ESV).

The longing for a human friendship is described by the Hebrew word *nephesh*, soul.

### 5. The Term Is Used Of Animals

The term is not limited to humans. Animals are also said to have a soul. Indeed, the Hebrew word *nephesh* is sometimes used of animals and is variously translated "soul," "living creature," or "spirit." For example we read in Leviticus:

These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing [*nephesh*] that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground (Leviticus 11:46 NIV).

In this sense of the term it refers to both humans and animals; beings that are alive and are aware of their surroundings. This usage separates humans and animals from the plant world which has no such understanding.

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### 6. God Uses Soul To Refer To Himself

Interestingly, on several occasions, the Lord refers to Himself with the term “soul:”

I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you (Leviticus 26:11 NKJV).

Elsewhere in Leviticus it says:

I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you (Leviticus 26:30 NKJV).

In Isaiah, we again find this usage of soul:

Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1 NKJV).

In these instances, the use of “soul” by the Lord is another way of speaking of Himself. In other words, instead of using the word “I” He used the term “soul.”

### 7. It Is Used Interchangeably With Spirit

We find that the word soul is used interchangeably with the spirit. When a child was raised back to life under the ministry of Elijah it is said that the soul or life was restored:

Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived (1 Kings 17:22 NKJV).

The New International Version translates it this way:

The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life [nephesh] returned to him, and he lived (1 Kings 17:22 NIV).

When Jesus brought Jairus’ young daughter back from the dead, the Bible says her “spirit” returned to her:

But he took her by the hand and called out, “Child, get up!” Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat (Luke 8:54,55 NRSV UE).

Thus, the terms soul and spirit can be used interchangeably. In the case of Elijah, the soul returned to the child while in the miracle with Jesus it was the spirit which returned. This illustrates how these terms can be used interchangeably.

This is a brief summation of the various uses of “soul” in the Old Testament. As can be readily seen, the word has many shades of meaning.

### The New Testament Usage

The Greek word translated “soul” in the New Testament is *psuche*. This is where the English word, “psyche” is derived. As is true with the Old Testament, we find the word is used in a number of different ways. We can make the following observations.

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### 1. It May Refer To The Entire Person

Sometimes the word translated soul refers to the entire person. For example, we read the following about what occurred on the Day of Pentecost:

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41 NASB 2020).

In this context, “souls” refers to the three thousand people which believed. The Book of Acts also says the following in another place:

We were in all two hundred and seventy-six persons [souls] in the ship (Acts 27:37 NRSV UE).

Again, we find the word used of the entire person. Peter wrote how this present world-system wars against our human soul. He put it this way:

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul (1 Peter 2:11 NIV).

There is a struggle going on between this unbelieving world and our souls. In this instance, soul refers to our entire person.

### 2. The Soul Can Refer To The Immaterial Part Of Humans

In the New Testament, the word soul can also refer to the immaterial part of humans. Jesus said the following to the people of His day:

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28 NASB 2020).

In this instance, soul refers to that non-material or deathless part of us that will live forever. It is distinct from our body.

### 3. It Can Refer To Those In The Intermediate State

The New Testament also uses the term soul to denote those who have died but have not gone before the Lord in judgment; those in the intermediate state. We read of this usage in the Book of Revelation:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (Revelation 6:9 NIV).

These people who have died, but have not yet received their resurrected bodies, are called souls under the altar.

### 4. God Uses It To Refer To Himself

As is true in the Old Testament, the Lord uses the term “soul” to refer to Himself. We read the following words of the Lord in Matthew:

Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles (Matthew 12:18 NRSV UE).

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The writer to the Hebrews quotes the Lord saying:

But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him (Hebrews 10:38 NRSV UE)

Again, this term is used instead of the personal pronoun “I.” In addition, we should note that both of these passages are quotations from the Old Testament.

### 5. It Is The Soul Which Is Redeemed Or Saved From Sin

The New Testament emphasizes that God redeems the soul of the individual from sin. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way:

But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul (Hebrews 10:39 NKJV).

James said it is the Word of God which is able to save our souls. He put it this way:

Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21 NRSV UE).

Peter said that the end of our faith was the salvation of our souls:

Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls (1 Peter 1:9 KJV).

The soul is saved, or redeemed, by the Lord.

### 6. The Souls Of The Flock Are Looked After

The writer to the Hebrews also stated that the appointed leaders of the church are to watch over the souls, or the lives, of the people:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing-- for that would be harmful to you (Hebrews 13:17 NRSV UE).

Peter said that ultimately it is the Lord Himself who oversees our soul:

For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:25 NIV).

The Lord Himself is the Shepherd or Overseer of our souls.

This briefly sums up what the Scripture has to say about the soul. As we can observe, the word translated soul covers a multitude of meanings. This being the case we need to be careful what conclusions we draw from the usage of the term in a particular context.

### Summary To Question 15 What Is The Soul?

The word soul is a difficult term to precisely define because it is used in the Bible in a number of different ways. Therefore, we must be extremely careful when we talk about its meaning.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

In the Old Testament the word translated soul can mean such things as the total person, a corpse, the deep desires of a human, and even an animal. Sometimes the word is used interchangeably with spirit. In a few instances the Lord describes His “soul:” another term for His own self. With such variety of meanings, we must look at each context to determine what is meant.

In the New Testament we find a similar variety of usages. Soul can refer to the entire person or the deathless part of the person which exists beyond this life. It may refer to those in the intermediate state; they have died but have not yet received their new bodies which are made for eternity. As was true in the Old Testament, in a couple of instances God describes the feeling of His “soul.”

The New Testament also speaks of the “soul” being saved or redeemed from sin. We also find the “souls” of the believers are looked after by their appointed overseers, the shepherds or pastors. Ultimately, we are told, it is the Lord Himself who looks after all of our “souls.”

From this brief survey of the term “soul” we truly find it used in a wide variety of ways. This being the case we should show the utmost care in coming to conclusions about the meaning of the word when we meet it in Scripture. The context must be the deciding factor as to its meaning.

We cannot take its meaning in one context and then apply it to another context unless this is what the writer clearly meant. Many problems in biblical interpretation have occurred because people have made that mistake. We should not be guilty of this error now that we know the word has a number of possible meanings.

## Question 16

### What Is The Human Spirit?

The Bible speaks of something called the “human spirit.” Paul wrote about this in his first letter to the Corinthians:

For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:11 NRSV UE).

What is this human spirit? What do we know about it? We can make the following observations from Scripture.

#### 1. The Spirit Is The Immaterial Part Of Humans

The human spirit is an immaterial part of human beings. The Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek word *pneuma* can both refer to that invisible part of human beings.

#### 2. It Is Different From Soul

The spirit is different from the soul. The soul can designate the entire person – both the material and the immaterial. The spirit, on the other hand, refers to only the immaterial part. Human beings are not said to be a spirit rather the Bible says that each of us has a spirit.

#### 3. It Is Not The Holy Spirit

There is a difference between the human spirit, which everyone has, and the Holy Spirit who comes into the life a person when they become a Christian. Only believers have the Holy Spirit residing within them. Unbelievers as well as believers have a human spirit.

#### 4. It Originates From God

The Bible says that the human spirit originates from God. We read of this in the Book of Numbers which says:

They fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one person sin and you become angry with the whole congregation?” (Numbers 16:22 NRSV UE).

The Book of Hebrews says that God is the Father of the human spirit:

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! (Hebrews 12:9 NIV).

Ultimately, the existence of every spirit can be traced back to the Lord.

#### 5. It Is The Center Of Various Traits

The Bible uses the word spirit to refer to the center of a number of human activities. Scripture gives the following examples.

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### **There Is A Spirit Of Jealousy**

Jealousy is sometimes spoken of as a spirit. We read of this in the Book of Numbers:

And if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself (Numbers 5:14 NRSV UE).

Jealousy is spoken of metaphorically as a spirit.

### **The Spirit May Be Contrite Or Crushed**

The spirit can become sorry when a person realizes their sin. The psalmist says that the Lord is close at hand to those who have a contrite or crushed spirit:

The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18 NKJV).

The NIV translates it this way:

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18 NIV).

We can be brokenhearted in our spirit.

### **The Spirit Can Think**

The spirit is said to think and understand. We read the following in the Book of Isaiah.

And those who err in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction (Isaiah 29:24 NRSV UE).

The spirit is spoken of as having some sort of understanding.

### **The Spirit Remembers**

The spirit can remember. The psalmist wrote:

I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit (Psalm 77:6 NRSV UE).

The spirit has memory.

### **We Can Be Upset In Our Spirit**

A person can be upset in their spirit. Indeed, the New Testament records that Jesus Himself was troubled or upset in His spirit. The Bible says.

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me" (John 13:21 NRSV UE).

Therefore, the human spirit can be troubled.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

This sums up what Scripture has to say about the human spirit. As we can readily observe the spirit is an important part of our internal makeup.

### **Summary To Question 16** **What Is The Human Spirit?**

The Bible speaks of the human spirit. In Scripture, it does not refer to the entire person but rather the immaterial part of each one of us. Every human being has a spirit. This spirit of humanity is unique to the human race.

Sometimes the spirit is spoken of as distinct from the soul. The soul can refer to the entire person while the spirit only speaks of the immaterial part.

The human spirit is also different from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is God Himself; the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

While each believer possesses a human spirit, only believers have the Holy Spirit.

## Question 17

### What Does The Bible Mean By The Heart?

The Bible has much to say about the human heart. Indeed, the Hebrew word translated heart occurs over six hundred times in the Old Testament and about one hundred and twenty times in the New Testament. In both testaments, the term heart speaks of the center of physical and psychological life. We can make the following observations.

#### **It May Refer To The Physical Organ**

Rarely does the Bible use the term “heart” to speak of the physical organ. We do find it used in this manner when the death of Absalom, son of David, is recorded:

Joab said, “I’m not going to wait like this for you.” So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree (2 Samuel 18:14 NIV).

We find another example of this usage in Second Kings. In explaining the death of Jehoram the Bible says the following.

And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart, and he sank in his chariot (2 Kings 9:24 NRSV UE).

Consequently, there are passages in Scripture when the term heart speaks of the actual organ of the human body.

#### **It Is The Center Of The Inner Person**

The majority of references in the Scripture to the heart refer to the inner person. The word is used in the following ways.

##### **1. The Center Of Emotional Life**

The heart is the center of a person’s emotional life. The following passages illustrate this.

#### **The Heart Can Love**

The heart can love. We read about this in the Book of Deuteronomy:

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV).

This reference to the heart seems to emphasize the emotional aspect of each of us.

#### **The Heart Has Its Desires**

The Bible says that the heart has its own desires. The psalmist wrote:

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires (Psalm 37:4 NLT).

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This is a further illustration of the heart referring to our emotional life.

### **Our Hearts Can Be Bitter**

Scripture warns us that the heart can become bitter. The psalmist wrote.

When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart (Psalm 73:21 ESV).

In this case, the psalmist spoke of being wounded in his innermost being. The Christian Standard Bible translates it this way.

When I became embittered and my innermost being was wounded (Psalm 73:21 CSB).

The heart, therefore, can be embittered.

### **Our Hearts Can Be Glad**

The heart can be glad. We read in psalms:

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart (Psalm 104:14,15 ESV).

Isaiah wrote of something similar. He spoke of the gladness of the heart.

You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel (Isaiah 30:29 ESV).

The heart can rejoice; it can be glad.

### **Our Hearts Can Be Sorrowful**

The heart can also be sorrowful. We read about this in the Book of Nehemiah. His heart was sad because of the state of the destroyed city of Jerusalem and the temple:

So the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid (Nehemiah 2:2 NIV).

Paul wrote about the sorrow he had in his heart for the nation Israel. He put it this way in his letter to the Romans.

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart (Romans 9:2 NIV).

His heart was sorrowful for their unbelief of Jesus. All of these examples show that the term translated "heart" can refer to the center of the emotional life of a human being.

## **2. It Is The Center Of Intellectual Life**

The heart is not only used as the center of our emotional life, it is also used of the center of a person's intellectual life. We can give the following examples.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### **Our Heart Can Consider Things**

The heart can consider things. It can contemplate:

Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you (Deuteronomy 8:5 NIV).

In this context, heart may be another word for our mind. The Contemporary English Version translates it this way.

So keep in mind that the LORD has been correcting you, just as parents correct their children (Deuteronomy 8:5 CEV).

Therefore, heart can be another term for mind.

### **Our Heart Can Know God's Word**

The heart can have knowledge of God's Word. The psalmist wrote.

I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you (Psalm 119:11 NRSV UE).

The heart can know God's truth.

### **Our Heart May Be Deceitful**

The heart is deceitful. Jeremiah warned us about this when he wrote:

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV).

This is such an important truth. As fallen human beings we can be deceived by what we may think it right.

### **Our Heart May Be The Source Of Evil Thoughts**

The heart can be the source of evil thoughts and actions. Jesus told the people of His day about where evil originates:

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him unclean (Matthew 15:19,20 NIV).

In these words of Jesus, the heart may be referring to our total person or to our intellectual awareness.

### **The Heart Has Its Own Intentions**

The heart has its own thoughts and intentions. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way:

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 NIV).

Thoughts and attitudes are attributed to the heart.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

In these examples, the heart is likened to the center of our intellectual abilities.

### 3. It Is The Center Of The Will

The term heart may also refer to the center of the human will. The following examples illustrate this biblical truth.

#### The Heart May Become Hardened

The heart can be hardened to God's truth. We read the following in the Book of Exodus:

But when Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he hardened his heart. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had predicted (Exodus 8:15 NLT).

Pharaoh's heart, or will, grew hard. He didn't want to hear the things of the Lord. The writer to the Hebrews wrote of people "hardening their hearts:"

Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7 NIV).

This illustrates that our will may act contrary to the Lord.

#### The Heart Can Be Turned Against Someone

The heart can be turned against someone. We read in Exodus:

Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (Exodus 14:5 NKJV).

Many modern translations use the word "mind" instead of "heart" when describing the act of Pharaoh. For example, the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition says:

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" (Exodus 14:5 NRSV UE).

Here we have a change of heart, or change of mind, on the part of the Pharaoh.

#### The Heart May Seek After Something

The heart, we are told, can seek after something. In Deuteronomy, it says the following:

From there you will search again for the LORD your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him (Deuteronomy 4:29 NLT).

This is another illustration of the desires, or will, of the heart. From these examples we find that the heart can make its own choices.

### 4. It Is The Center Of Spiritual Life

The heart is also spoken of as the center of our spiritual life.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### **The Heart Should Be Circumcised**

Scripture says the heart should be circumcised. Paul wrote the following to the Romans about the need of the circumcision of the heart:

He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God (Romans 2:29 NRSV UE).

The idea of a circumcised heart is a heart that is obedient to the things of God. It is a heart which submits to His truth. The heart can also be uncircumcised.

Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all those with shaven temples who live in the desert. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart (Jeremiah 9:26 NRSV UE).

In the Book of Acts, we read:

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you (Acts 7:51 NRSV UE).

An uncircumcised heart is a heart which acts contrary to the Lord.

### **We Are To Believe In Jesus With The Heart**

Human beings believe in Jesus Christ with their heart. Paul wrote the following to the Romans expressing this truth:

For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved (Romans 10:9,10 NLT).

It is with the heart that a person believes in Jesus, the center of our spiritual life.

### **The Heart Of The Believer Is To Be Pure**

The heart of the believer in Jesus Christ is to be pure. We read the following command that the Lord gave to Timothy.

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5 NIV).

We need to show our love from a heart which is pure and a conscience which is good. This should be the goal of each and every Christian.

The writer to the Hebrews gave the same emphasis. He put it this way:

Let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22 NLT).

This is essential. We need to fully trust the Lord with hearts that are true.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

This sums up what the Scripture has to say about the heart. As can be seen, there are many important truths we can learn when we examine what God has to say about this subject.

### **Summary To Question 17**

#### **What Does The Bible Mean By The Heart?**

While there are times the Scripture uses the term heart to refer to the human organ there are other instances when the meaning is not to be understood literally.

In a non-literal sense, the heart refers to the center of many things. This includes our emotional life, our intellectual life, our human will, and our spiritual life. The context must determine the exact usage.

## Question 18

### What Does The Bible Mean By The Term Mind?

The mind is where we reason, where we make decisions. It decides the various courses our lives will take. Scripture uses the term, “mind” when describing the characteristics of human beings. However, the word is only used in New Testament. The idea of mind in the Old Testament is usually found under the term, “heart.” The word “brain” is not found in the Bible.

Scripture speaks of the mind of both believers and unbelievers. From the Bible, we can conclude the following about the mind.

#### 1. **There Is An Unsaved Mind**

All of us are born with a sin nature. The Bible says that sin has affected every part of our being. This includes our mind. When the Scripture speaks of the mind of the unbeliever it has nothing good to say about it. From an examination of God’s Word, we can make the following observations about the mind of the unbeliever.

#### **Their Mind Is Depraved**

Unbelievers are said to have a depraved mind. Paul wrote the following to the Romans about this:

And because they thought it was worthless to acknowledge God, God allowed their own immoral minds to control them. So they do these indecent things (Romans 1:28 God’s Word).

Their mind is immoral.

#### **Their Thinking Is Futile**

The mind, or thinking, of unbelievers is futile. Paul describes the unbelievers in the following way to the Ephesians:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking (Ephesians 4:17 NIV).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

As a follower of the Lord, I order you to stop living like stupid, godless people (Ephesians 4:17 CEV).

Godless people are not characterized by right thinking.

#### **The Minds Of Unbelievers Are Blinded By Sin**

The mind of unbelievers has been blinded by sin. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the satanic blindfold which is over the minds of unbelievers. This blindfold keeps them from seeing Jesus Christ:

If there is anything hidden about our message, it is hidden only to someone who is lost. The god who rules this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, who shows what God is like (2 Corinthians 4:3,4 CEV).

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Sin blinds their minds to the truth of God.

### **The Mind Is Corrupt And Darkened**

The mind of unbelievers is called corrupt and darkened. When Paul wrote to Titus, he made this point clear:

Everything is clean to those who are clean. But nothing is clean to corrupt unbelievers. Indeed, their minds and their consciences are corrupted (Titus 1:15 God's Word).

The mind of the unbeliever is also said to be darkened. Paul stated this when he wrote to the Ephesians. He put it this way.

They can't understand because they are in the dark. They are excluded from the life that God approves of because of their ignorance and stubbornness (Ephesians 4:18 God's Word).

This is a sad evaluation of the mind of the lost.

### **The Unsaved Person Lacks Mind To Understand God**

The unbeliever does not possess the critical faculties to understand the things of God. In his letter to the Romans, Paul explained the state of those who do not know God:

There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God (Romans 3:11 NKJV).

Unbelievers do not seek God neither do they understand His ways.

## **2. The Mind Of The Believer**

The Bible also has much to say about the mind of the believer. Contrary to what is said about the mind of the unbeliever, the believer has the chance to serve and worship the Lord with his or her mind. Scripture says the following.

### **We Have The Mind Of Christ**

The Bible says that believers now have the mind of Christ. We can see things as Jesus saw them. Paul wrote the following to the Philippians encouraging them to think the thoughts of Christ:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5 NRSV UE).

This shows we have the capability of thinking God's thoughts. The Apostle Paul also urged two women at the church in Philippi to be of the same mind in the Lord. He wrote:

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord Philippians (4:2 NRSV UE).

This is what separates the believers from the unbelievers. Unbelievers have minds which are darkened and depraved while believers have the mind of Christ.

### **Our Mind Is To Be Renewed**

The believer has a mind that is being renewed. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to the church at Rome:

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1,2 NRSV UE).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-- the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is (Romans 12:1,2 NLT).

The mind of the believer needs continued renewing or transforming. In this way, we can understand God's will for us. It is not possible for mind of the unbeliever to be renewed.

The unsaved person must first turn to Christ for forgiveness of sin before anything positive can occur between them and the Lord.

### **We Are To Love God With Our Mind**

The mind of the believer is to be used in loving God. In answering the question about the greatest commandment, Jesus gave this answer.

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37 NRSV UE).

Believers are to love the Lord with their entire mind. We are not to stop thinking or live our lives by blind faith.

We also find that the mind of the believer is important in our spiritual maturity. On the day of His resurrection, the Bible says that Jesus opened the minds of His disciples so that they could understand the Scripture.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45 NRSV UE).

Therefore, our minds are capable of grasping the truths of God. We are to use our mind in this manner. Paul also wrote about the possibility of the mind being able to understand spiritual things. He said the following to the Corinthians:

For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying. Well then, what shall I do? I will do both. I will pray in the spirit, and I will pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will sing in words I understand (1 Corinthians 14:14,15 NLT).

The mind can become fruitful, or understanding, in the things of the spirit. Therefore, it should be used. There is nothing unspiritual about the believer thinking or using his or her mind.

### **The Mind Is Used To Resolve Questionable Issues**

The believer is also to use his or her mind when deciding questionable issues. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to the Romans.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds (Romans 14:5 NRSV UE).

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We are to think; to use our mind to weigh and evaluate issues. When matters are unclear, we are to use the mind which the Lord gave us to come to a proper understanding of what is right and what is wrong.

### **Our Minds Must Be Clear To Think**

Clear thinking is important. Consequently, anything that keeps us from thinking clear should be avoided. Peter wrote.

Therefore, your minds must be clear and ready for action. Place your confidence completely in what God's kindness will bring you when Jesus Christ appears again (1 Peter 1:13 God's Word).

Our minds need to be clear so we can think God's thoughts.

### **The Mind Understands The Will Of God**

The mind of the believer is also crucial in understanding the will of God. Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians:

So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord wants (Ephesians 5:17 God's Word).

We can understand what the Lord wants for us.

### **Every Thought Should Be Taken Captive By Christ**

The Bible says that every thought of the believer needs to be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

And all their intellectual arrogance that oppose the knowledge of God. We take every thought captive so that it is obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5 God's Word).

Our thoughts should be upon Him. He should be the center of our thought-life:

This sums up what the Bible has to say about the term mind. As we have noted, it is essential that we think God's thoughts. Our mind has been given to us to glorify the Lord. We should make it a priority to use it for His glory.

### **Summary To Question 18**

#### **What Does The Bible Mean By The Term Mind?**

We reason and think with our mind. It is where decisions are made and where our life is directed. The word translated "mind" comes from the New Testament. When the Old Testament speaks of the mind it is under the category of the heart.

When the New Testament speaks of the mind it refers to more than our brain. The word brain is not found in Scripture. The Bible has things to say about the mind of both believers and unbelievers.

The unbeliever has a mind which has been totally corrupted by sin. The Fall of humanity caused the mind to be antagonist to God. Nothing good is said about the mind of the unbeliever.

Indeed, it is called darkened, depraved, and it is characterized by futile thinking. The mind of the non-Christian cannot understand the things of God because it has been blinded by sin.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

While Scripture says the mind of the unbeliever has been darkened by sin the mind of the believer has been renewed by Christ. Indeed, believers have the “mind of Christ.”

Paul told the Philippians to have the same mind or attitude which Christ had. This means we have the possibility of thinking the thoughts of Christ. Indeed, Paul urged believers to “renew their mind” by not being conformed to the thinking of this present world-system.

The Bible also says that we are to love the Lord with our entire mind. Again, this illustrates how the mind of the believer is different from that of the unbeliever. Believers should have a clear mind so that they can know the will of the Lord.

The mind of Christ is one of the many great things the Lord has provided for believers. We are no longer in darkness but rather now we are in the light. We should use this “mind” Christ has given us to honor Him with our entire being.

## Question 19

### What Does The Bible Mean By The Term Flesh?

A common term we find in Scripture is, “flesh.” What exactly is meant by this term? Since it is often used in a negative way in the Bible does it have the idea that the body is evil? What does the Scripture say?

There are a number of observations we need to make about this term. In doing so, we will clear up several misconceptions.

#### 1. It May Refer To The Outer Skin Of The Body

Sometimes the term flesh refers to the outer skin of the human body. Jesus used it in this manner when describing his resurrection body:

Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have (Luke 24:39 NIV).

Therefore, it can have a literal meaning of the outer part of our body.

#### 2. It Can Refer To The Entire Person

At times, the word flesh refers to the entire living creature, whether man or beast. We find it used this way by Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians:

For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish (1 Corinthians 15:39 NRSV UE).

This illustration makes the distinction between humans and other life-forms. There is indeed a distinction between us and them. The writer to the Hebrews wrote about Jesus in the days of His flesh:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear (Hebrews 5:7 NRSV UE).

In this instance, this term refers to the days in which Jesus was upon the earth, the time of His earthly ministry.

#### 3. It Is Used Of Immaterial Nature Of Humans

The term flesh is also used of the non-material nature of human beings. It is that part of our nature that is opposed to God.

#### 4. Both Believers And Unbelievers Have This Fleshly Nature

It is important to realize that the Bible says that both believers and unbelievers have this immaterial part of them known as the “flesh.” When one becomes a Christian the flesh, or old sin nature, does not disappear. Paul acknowledged this when he wrote:

For I know that the good does not dwell within me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do the good lies close at hand, but not the ability (Romans 7:18 NRSV UE).

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Paul reminded the Corinthians they were acting or behaving in the flesh or with the old sinful nature:

For you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? (1 Corinthians 3:3 NRSV UE).

Paul spoke of the fleshly mind which characterizes unbelievers. He stated it in this manner to the Colossians:

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind (Colossians 2:18 NASB 2020).

This refers to a mind characterized by sinful thoughts or desires. Peter wrote about those who indulge in the flesh:

Especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority. Bold and willful, they are not afraid to slander the glorious ones (2 Peter 2:10 NRSV UE).

Obviously, there is nothing good to say about these people. John wrote about the enemies which the Christian now faces. One of them is “the flesh:”

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world (1 John 2:16 NASB 2020).

The lust or desire of the flesh is one of the main enemies which the Christian faces. These desires belong to this evil world-system rather than being the desires of God the Father.

### **5. The Flesh Or Old Nature Wars Against The Spirit Of God**

The flesh is at war with the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote about the flesh and the spirit battling one another:

For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want (Galatians 5:17 NRSV UE).

Therefore, the flesh can refer to the old sin nature which still exists within everyone, including Bible-believers.

#### **Summary To Question 19**

#### **What Does The Bible Mean By The Term Flesh?**

The term flesh is used a number of different ways in Scripture. Sometimes it is used in a literal manner; it refers to the outer part of the human skin while at other times it is used of the entire person.

The Bible also uses the term flesh in non-literal way. In these instances, it refers to that immaterial part of us that is at war with God. This is also called our old man or our old nature. It is one of the enemies of the Christian.

While both Christians and non-Christians have this fleshly or sinful nature the Christian can gain victory over it through yielding ourselves to Jesus. This is something we must do if we want to live a successful life.

Therefore, the term flesh is used in both a negative and positive way in Scripture. This being the case, the context must determine the meaning of the term.

## Question 20

### According To The Bible What Is The Human Conscience?

One of the key elements in the makeup of human beings is the conscience. What exactly is the human conscience? How does it relate to the other characteristics we have as humans? We can make the following observations.

#### 1. Human Beings Have Been Made In God's Image: This Includes A Conscience

Only human beings have been made in the image of God. The first chapter of Genesis tells us that God made humanity in the Divine image:

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth." God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:26-28 NET).

The image of God is an intellectual and moral image. In many ways we reflect God. This includes our sense of right and wrong. Through the conscience, God has built this into each and every one of us an idea of good and evil, right and wrong. This is true for every human being.

#### The Conscience Is The Inner Witness Of What We Should Do And Should Not Do

The conscience can be defined as the inner witness inside each of us that tells us what we should and should not do. It is important that we make a distinction about what our conscience does do and what it does not do. Our conscience does not teach us what is right and what is wrong.

To the contrary, the conscience merely reminds us of what we have been previously taught concerning right and wrong. This being the case, a person can actually do something wrong or sinful with a clear conscience because they are committing this particular act in ignorance.

Consequently, the conscience is a reminder of what is right and what is wrong; it is not a teacher of these things.

#### 2. Our Conscience, Our Inner Awareness, Tells Us That God Exists

The Bible says that God has revealed Himself to each person through his or her conscience. Paul wrote to the church at Rome about how the Gentiles, or non-Jews, are convicted by their conscience:

When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them (Romans 2:14,15 NRSV UE).

These verses show that the Lord has placed knowledge of Himself within the heart of each human being. Humanity knows intuitively the difference between good and evil, right and wrong because someone greater than them has put it there.

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Furthermore, they know from their conscience that they will ultimately be held responsible for their behavior.

Scripture says that both Jews and Gentiles will be held responsible for what has been revealed to them. The Jews, who have received the written Word of God, will be judged accordingly.

The Gentiles, however, have not been given a written Word from God. They will be judged on a different standard. Their judgment will be based upon an unwritten law—that which is written on their hearts. Their own conscience will act like a prosecuting attorney. It will make it clear they are guilty before God because of their sin. Therefore, all are without excuse. Paul explained to the Romans why God judged the Gentiles.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. . . For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done (Romans 1:24,26,28 ESV).

Though they knew about God, they chose not to honor Him. The Old Testament prophets often spoke of God's judgment on the Gentile nations. We find that this was case even though these nations did not have the special relationship with Him as did the nation Israel. Their conscience was sufficient testimony to God's existence.

### **3. The Conscience Has Been Corrupted By Sin**

There is something else. Our conscience is fallible because it has been corrupted by sin. The Bible speaks of the conscience of humans as being weak. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled (1 Corinthians 8:5-7 NIV).

Paul also spoke of consciences that were seared. He wrote the following to Timothy:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:1-2 NIV).

Because the human conscience has been marred by sin, people seek other ways to worship God that He does not accept. They build temples, shrines, and worship idols in an attempt to please God. Yet their efforts do not glorify God. Paul wrote:

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things (Romans 1:20-23 ESV).

God cannot be glorified through these types of human efforts to worship Him.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Therefore, while each human being has a conscience, this conscience is continually disobeyed. Human beings know how they are supposed to behave because of the conscience that God has given them. Furthermore, they are unable to get rid of this conscience that He has placed inside them. However, because of sin, they consistently violate their conscience. They know what they are supposed to do but they do not do it.

### **Paul Followed His Conscience When Persecuting Christians**

The Apostle Paul is a prime example of something who was following his conscience in persecuting Christians. He believed he was doing the right thing but his belief was out of ignorance:

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day” (Acts 23:1 NIV).

Again this demonstrates it is possible to do something with a good conscience and still do the wrong thing.

### **The Conscience Is The Heart In The Old Testament**

The term conscience is only found in the New Testament. There is no Hebrew word which describes the conscience. Instead, the Old Testament describes the functions of the human conscience with the term, “heart.” We cite the following examples:

Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul’s cloak (1 Samuel 24:5 NRSV UE).

In this case, David’s heart is his conscience. Indeed, some modern translations replace the term heart with the term conscience. The New International Version says.

Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe (1 Samuel 24:5 NIV).

This translation more properly reflects the meaning of the text. Another example of this use of the term heart can be found in the Book of Job. Job spoke of his heart not being a reproach:

I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days (Job 27:6 NRSV UE).

Again, modern translations replace the term heart with the word conscience. The New Living Translation puts it this way:

I will maintain my innocence without wavering. My conscience is clear for as long as I live (Job 27:6 NLT).

Here again in Job we find the term heart used for conscience. Job was emphasizing his conscience was clear.

### **The New Testament And The Conscience**

As mentioned, the term conscience is only found in the New Testament. We can make the following observations about how this term is used with respect with unbeliever as well as to the believer.

#### **1. The Conscience Can Be A Good Guide For The Unbeliever**

For the unbeliever, the conscience may be a good guide. We read how the religious leaders were convicted by their own conscience when they brought to Jesus the woman found in the act of adultery:

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Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst (John 8:9 NKJV).

Their conscience convicted them of their sin.

### 2. The Conscience May Lead Unbeliever Astray

However, the conscience may only seem to be a good guide to the unbeliever; it actually can lead someone astray. This was true in the case of the Apostle Paul. He persecuted Christians with a clear conscience because he believed he was doing the work of the Lord.

We find this true today among those who persecute and kill Christians because their conscience tells them it is the right thing to do. It reminds them what they have been taught; Christians are evil.

The problem, of course, is that their conscience is not telling them the truth! It is only reminding them of the wrong things they have previously learned. It is important that we understand this distinction.

### The Conscience And The Christian

The New Testament has much to say about the conscience of the Christian. It can help the believer live according to biblical truth. The Bible has the following to say.

#### 1. Believers Are To Obey The Government Out Of A Good Conscience

The Bible says the conscience helps the believer obey the governmental authorities under which they live. Paul wrote the following to the Romans:

Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience (Romans 13:5 NIV).

Our conscience reminds us that all governments are ultimately under the control of God.

#### 2. The Conscience Tells Us How To Endure Suffering

The conscience tells us how to deal with suffering. This is especially the case when we are suffering wrongfully. Peter wrote:

For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully (1 Peter 2:19 NKJV).

The conscience helps us deal with our suffering and grief; something which Christians should expect will occur if we are truly serving the Lord.

#### 3. The Conscience Of The Weaker Christian Must Be Considered

The stronger believer needs to deal properly with the conscience of the weaker believer. Paul gave the following example to the Corinthians concerning the conscience of these people:

However, not all Christians realize this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. It's true that we can't win God's approval by what we eat. We don't miss out on

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anything if we don't eat it, and we don't gain anything if we do. But you must be careful with this freedom of yours. Do not cause a brother or sister with a weaker conscience to stumble. You see, this is what can happen: Weak Christians who think it is wrong to eat this food will see you eating in the temple of an idol. You know there's nothing wrong with it, but they will be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been dedicated to the idol. So because of your superior knowledge, a weak Christian, for whom Christ died, will be destroyed. And you are sinning against Christ when you sin against other Christians by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong (1 Corinthians 8:7-12 NLT).

The weaker believer cannot, in good conscience, accept certain things. The stronger believer must appreciate this and allow for it.

### 4. Our Conscience Shows Us The Depth Of Our Spiritual Commitment

The conscience of the believer reveals the depth of their spiritual commitment. The Apostle Paul said that his conscience, along with the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, revealed his unending sadness for the lost people of the nation of Israel:

In the presence of Christ, I speak with utter truthfulness-- I do not lie-- and my conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm that what I am saying is true. My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief (Romans 9:1,2 NLT).

The fact that the nation was spiritually blind as to the identity of Jesus as their Messiah was a constant source of sadness to the conscience of Paul. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the clear conscience he had toward them:

We can say with confidence and a clear conscience that we have been honest and sincere in all our dealings. We have depended on God's grace, not on our own earthly wisdom. That is how we have acted toward everyone, and especially toward you (2 Corinthians 1:12 NLT).

He had a clear conscience in his entire dealings with the Corinthians. He also wrote:

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 4:2 NIV).

In this instance, his behavior toward these people would ring true in their own conscience. They knew that he was dealing honestly with them.

This sums up what Scripture says about the human conscience. God has put it in each of us so that we can follow His paths. Unfortunately, not everyone listens to His truth.

### **Summary To Question 20 According To The Bible What Is The Human Conscience?**

The New Testament speaks of human beings having a conscience. This is the part of our inner nature that tells us what we should and should not do.

The conscience reacts to what we have already been taught concerning right and wrong. It does not teach us right from wrong. This means a person can do evil with a clear conscience because they believe they are doing the right thing.

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The prime example of this is the Apostle Paul. He persecuted Christians with a clear conscience because he wrongly believed he was doing the work of God.

Thus, while each of us has a conscience but the conscience of the believer is different than that of the unbeliever. The conscience of the believer can and should be a good guide.

However, because our conscience only reminds us what we have learned it is important that we are being taught the right information. This can only come about through a serious study of the Word of God.

## Question 21

### What Is The Purpose Of The Human Body?

There have been various ideas as to the purpose of the human body. Some of these thoughts are biblical while others are not. We can place it in three different categories.

#### 1. The Human Body Is Made For Pleasure (Hedonism)

Many people who reject biblical truth believe that the human body exists purely for pleasure. The highest goal of human beings should be to please ourselves. The idea is eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we may die. Life is to be lived for today for there is no tomorrow. Such a view denies the existence of a soul or the idea of a coming judgment from God.

However, the Bible says that humans do have an immaterial part, a soul. This is distinct from the body. Jesus said:

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28 NRSV UE).

Therefore, we are made up of more than a mere body. Furthermore, what we do in these bodies will determine our eternal destiny. This soul will be judged one day.

#### 2. The Human Body Is Evil

On the opposite extreme of hedonism, is the idea that the human body is evil. The soul is something non-material and it is good while the material body is evil. The body, therefore, is seen as the prison for the soul.

This is completely contradictory to the biblical view of the body. After the Lord had created all things, including the bodies of Adam and Eve, He made the following pronouncement.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning-- the sixth day (Genesis 1:31 NIV).

Notice that everything was “very good.” This includes the human body.

The Apostle Paul wrote about certain people in his day which treated the human body as something evil:

You died with Christ. Now the forces of the universe don't have any power over you. Why do you live as if you had to obey such rules as, “Don't handle this. Don't taste that. Don't touch this.”? After these things are used, they are no longer good for anything. So why be bothered with the rules that humans have made up? (Colossians 2:20-22 CEV).

We should not live our lives by human-made rules which tell us that the body is evil. Indeed, it is evil if we live that way!

#### 3. The Human Body Is Made To Glorify God

The last view we will look at is the biblical view. The Scripture says that humans have both a body and a soul. The body should be used to glorify the Lord. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19 NRSV UE).

Since our body is a temple of God's Holy Spirit, we should treat it accordingly. The human body is not to master us; we are to master it. We are to submit our bodies to the Lord. Paul wrote to the Romans:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1 NIV).

Paul wanted Jesus Christ to be glorified in his body whether he was alive or dead. He wrote to the Philippians:

As it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death (Philippians 1:20 NRSV UE)

One day, each believer will be judged for the works we have done in our body. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10 NKJV).

Therefore, the biblical view of the human body is in complete contrast to the idea that the body is merely for pleasure or that the human body is somehow evil. Nothing could be further from the truth.

### **Summary To Question 21**

#### **What Is The Purpose For Human Body?**

There are three basic ideas as to the purpose of the human body. They can be summarized as follows.

One view is biblical while the other two are not. The position of hedonism is that the human body exists for pleasure. Hedonism is very popular among those who reject any type of biblical authority.

Since there is no God to which we must ultimately answer for our behavior, we can thus do what we please with our bodies. Basically, anything goes.

A second non-biblical view is the idea that the body is evil. This is the complete opposite of hedonism. Those who hold this perspective treat the human body as something that is corrupt. Our soul or spirit is actually imprisoned in this evil shell.

Therefore, the goal is to rid ourselves of the body.

The biblical perspective rejects both of these viewpoints. The body has not been made exclusively for our pleasure as the hedonists contend. Yet neither is it evil because it was originally created by God. Scripture says that the human body was made for the Lord. We are to glorify Him through our body. While our bodies are now sinful, they can be redeemed through belief in Christ. They are to be instruments of His will not our own.

## Human Beings, Who Are We?

### About The Author

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Don is a best-selling and award-winning writer having authored, or co-authored, over eighty books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies.

Don is now a full-time missionary with GoinChrist Ministries. His website [educatingourworld.com](http://educatingourworld.com) provides many free resources for those wanting to know what Christians believe, as well as why we believe.

Currently under eleven different categories, there are 65 books on the site in PDF form, containing thousands of pages of material while answering over 1,900 questions about the Christian faith. All of the books can be downloaded for free at [educatingourworld.com](http://educatingourworld.com).