

ANTHROPOLOGY AND HAMARTIOLOGY:

The Nature of Man

A Study for Bible Institute of Gulf Coast Baptist Church - Spring 2026

INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson we saw that God's creative power was on display over the course of six literal days as He brought forth light, water, plants, animals, and human life by divine decree. Scripture states that even today His creation serves as all the evidence mankind needs of His existence (Ps. 19, Ro. 1). Mankind was created on the sixth and final day of creation when God determined to make him in His "image and likeness" Following this statement, God "...formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen. 1:27) While modern science has rightly come to understand that man's body is consists of trillions of microscopic cells, bundles of nerves, and interrelated body systems guided by the human brain. By breathing into man the "*breath of life*", God made man more than a cellular machine. He is a tri-partite being, each consisting of body, soul, and spirit. When God finished with His creative acts He stated that everything was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)

While we do not know exactly how long Adam and Eve lived in this state of being "very good" we know this all changed as a result of Adam's sin. The image and likeness no longer resembled their original form and man's body, soul, and spirit were all damaged by the Fall. Most Christians recognize that the fall had terrible implications on mankind but they often fail to both understand the significance of sin's damage to God's image and the difference between the soul and the spirit. Sin has so damaged man's relationship with God that all three parts; body, soul, and spirit, need to be saved.

IMAGE AND LIKENESS

Bible scholars have struggled to clearly define what God meant when He stated that we would be created in His "*image and likeness*". This inexactitude is because there are no conclusive statements defining "*image and likeness*". While the meaning of "image and likeness" has been debated for centuries it appears that there are potentially two most likely explanations:

- I. Traditional View - "*image*" and "*likeness*" are similar yet distinct
 - A. "*Image*" - Heb. selem (LXX eikon - physical resemblance and representation)
 1. what a person is by nature - including but limited to rational beings, freedom of will, capacity for morality, etc.
 2. some scholar believe the image refers to man's ability to relate to God and others
 3. while others believe it signifies man's God-given position of authority over God's creation
 - B. "*likeness*" - Heb. demooth - similitude
 1. The basic idea of this word in the traditional view is that it refers to man's similarity to God in certain aspects

- C. The Fall's Impact - the image and likeness are in various stages of disrepair but are not lost
1. Supports
 - a) Genesis 9:6 - "*whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*"
 - b) James 3:9 - "*therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made [perfect] after the similitude of God*"
 2. Because of a lack of passages that clearly define "image and likeness" these definitions have often been the result of logic and philosophy

II. The Lost Image View

A. "*Image*" - Heb. selem - primary use in the OT is physical images of false gods (wood, stone, precious metals)

1. Examples

- a) 1 Samuel. 6:5
- b) 2 Ki. 11:18
- c) Ezek. 7:20
- d) Amos 5:26

2. Question: How would it be possible for "*image*" to refer to physical image rather than qualities and abilities if God is a spirit?

- a) "The image was God's glory garment. God wears light like we wear clothing (Psalm 104:2). God created Adam and Eve in a state of light, which the Psalmist described as "crowned with glory" (Psalm 8:4-5)¹
- b) This could potentially provide an answer to a number of verses
 - (1) Genesis 5:1-3 - God created man (qal perfect - completed action) in his image and likeness but after the fall Adam begat a son in his own image and likeness
 - (2) Genesis 9:6 - God made man (qal perfect - completed action) in his own image and likeness before the Fall
 - (3) 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 - "*...and as we have borne the image of the earthy [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [future]*"
 - (a) The image was lost with Adam
 - (b) The image is being restored in the believer's as they are "*conformed into the image of Christ*" and will one day be fully restored in their glorified body in heaven

B. "*Likeness*" - "This means that mankind is able to thin objectively, outside the realm of experience, in a manner similar to God. Therefore, to insult men is to insult that part of them which is till similar to God (James 3:9). Animals have sense and emotions. Therefore, animals can only operate within their sphere of experience. They can only relate to what their sense can experience. Man has a spirit in addition to a soul (1 Thessalonians 5:23)...God created Adam with a spirit and a soul. Adam was able to think outside the realm of his experience.

¹ Hoelscher, Tim. God's House Plans. Royal City, WA. John 14:20 publishing. www.graceteaching.com 2008.

Man's spirit, his center of rational, distinguished him from animals. This capacity for rational thought in his spirit show man bears a likeness to God."²

Adam had children who were not after God's likeness and image - pre-fall - but in the broken state after the fall (Gen. 5:30). Adam passed on his sin nature to each of his children. After Adam sinned, the body began to die as God said it would. Man's understanding was darkened (Rom. 1:21, Eph. 4:18). Man became dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit. The soul and body of all individuals is unregenerate, having the curse of sin upon it. However, the believer has received new life - a God-quality of life in the realm of the His Spirit.

- I. The Body - Gk. soma
 - A. The body has been negatively affected by the fall - illness, frailty of mind, fatigue, pain, etc.
 - B. Scripture views the body as a tent that temporarily houses our immaterial parts during one's sojourn on earth (2 Pe. 1:13-14)
- II. The Spirit - Gk. pneuma
 - A. The spirit is the means by which one think outside the realm of one's existence and therefore can conceptualize who God is
 - B. Man's spirit
 1. It is a part of the mind (Eph. 4:23)
 2. Where one makes rational decisions (Acts 19:21) - "purposed in spirit"
 3. The believer can mortify the deeds of the body by the spirit related to the Spirit's work (Rom. 6) - "come to the logical conclusion you are dead"
 4. The Spirit provides faith (1 Cor. 12:9) - must be able to conceive of a promise
 5. One can pray in the spirit (1 Cor. 14:14) - communicate with God
 6. One can fear in the spirit (2 Ti. 1:7) - an agitation of mind
 7. Where one can recognize what is true (real) and what is not (error/false) (1 Jo. 4:6)
 8. The spirit is capable of objectively knowing apart from one's senses or personal experience (1 Cor. 2:11)
- III. The Soul - Gk. pseuche; Heb. nephesh
 - A. The soul relates to the realm of man's senses, how he interprets his environment, and his response to those sense
 - B. Old Testament
 1. A man's soul clave to Dinah (Gen. 34:3,8) - soul yearned intensely
 2. One's soul abhorred God's commandments (Lev. 26:15) - intense dislike
 3. The soul has cravings (Deut. 12:15) - animal meat
 4. The soul can be bitter because of circumstances (Job 3:20)
 - C. New Testament
 1. The soul can be divided (James 1:8; 4:8) - split, competing desires
 2. The soul is where some can feel the affects of tribulation and anguish (Ro. 2:9)

² ibid.

3. The soul can experience vexation (2 Pe. 2:8)
 4. The soul is the battlefield where the sin nature attacks (1 Pe. 2:11)
- IV. Concluding Thoughts on the Spirit and Soul
- A. The Spirit and Soul are distinct and yet they influence one another. It can be difficult to know where one stops and the other starts. God's Word can help provide distinctions (Heb. 4:12)
 - B. The spirit when it is rightly related to God's Word can have a stabilizing affect on the soul (Heb. 6:19)

CONCLUSION

Man's nature is made up of both the physical and the spiritual. What God had originally stated was "*very good*" is felt that terrible affects of sin. Sin has corrupted God's image and likeness in man and has damaged his body, soul, and spirit. It is only through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that man's nature can be restored to what God had originally intended.