

# The Creation of Man

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The greatest quest of man is the search for identity; very egocentric but that's who man is. "Know thyself" was the challenge of Socrates to the people of ancient Greece. The greatest questions of ancient and modern man have concerned his origins, his purpose, and his destiny. "Who am I?" "From whence did I come?" "Why am I here?" and "Where am I going?" have been the most essential questions pursued by man in most every academic discipline of the university, from anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and natural science, to every major religion known to man. But, if man is to ever truly "know himself" he must look beyond himself to the one who created him, in that he is a being created in the image of God, after God's likeness.

## The Genesis Accounts: 1:26-27 and 2:7

If God was the original from which man was, in some sense, made a copy, his search must begin with his maker. The most important record of the creation of man is found in Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7,

*Then God said, "Let us make (asar) man (adam'/LXX anthropos) in our image (tzelem/LXX eikon), according to our likeness (demeuth/LXX homoiosis); let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created (bara) man (adam'/LXX anthropos) in his image (tzelem/LXX eikon); in the image of God (tzelem Elohim) he created (bara) him; male and female he created (bara) them (Gen 1:26-27).*

*And the LORD God (Yahweh Elohim) formed (yatsar) man (adam'/LXX anthropos) of the dust (aphar) of the ground (adamah), and breathed (naphach) into his nostrils (aph/LXX prosopon- face) the breath (neshamah/LXX pne-breath, wind, breeze) of life (chay/LXX zoe); and man (adam') became a living being (chay nephesh), (Gen 2:7).*

There are several linguistic points of interest in these verses. The term *tselem* (image) is of essential importance, as is *demuth* (likeness). Theologians of the early church (Irenaeus, Augustine, *et al*) tried to distinguish between the two terms, but the consensus over the centuries has been that the "*tselem-demuth*" play was simply a Hebrew parallelism making the construction emphatic, indicating the emphatic nature of the presence of God's likeness in man.

Another exegetical point of significance is the word *nephesh* (breathed). *Nephesh* is most often translated as "soul," but it most often has the sense of "life" or "a cognizant life force," as is seen in its Greek equivalent *psyche*. The issue of most concern in the Genesis account of creation is the expression *tselem Elohim* (image of God); and the question of how man is created in the image of God. The Hebrew word *tselem* is defined as, "image, or an imitation of, a copy or reproduction;" it is the visual impression produced by a reflection in a mirror, a figure sculptured after the likeness of, a portrait or drawing of a person, a thing very much like another.

The significance of this linguistic data is that all of the terms in both the Hebrew of the original OT texts and the Greek of the Septuagint translation used by the Jews of the Diaspora, are kindred or related terms. The Hebrew terms *neshamah* and *nephesh* have intrinsic within them the idea of a wind, a breeze, breath or spirit, as does the Greek *pneuma* (wind, breath or spirit) and the verb *pneo* means, "to breath or blow." The spirit of man and the breath of man are conveyed by the same words. This is all evidence of the fact man has as a part of his being the very breath of God dwelling within him.

It cannot be that man is a being sculptured after the physical likeness of God or an image reflected in a mirror? Jesus tells the

woman at the well in Samaria that God is “spirit,” (John 4:24). The word translated as “spirit” in the English translations is the Greek *pneuma*, which would in Hebrew be *ruach*. Further, Jesus says to his disciples when he appeared to them following his resurrection, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have,” (Luke 24:39).

In his book, *In His Image*, Paul Brand gives a good statement of the problem associated with determining the nature of the image of God in man,

How can visible human beings express the image of God? We certainly cannot look like Him, sharing characteristic features of eyebrow or earlobe, for God is invisible spirit. Philosophers and theologians have long speculated on all that could be contained within the mystery of that single phrase. Predictably, they tend to project onto their definitions the principal concerns of their own era. The enlightenment age assures us the image of God is the ability to reason, the Pietists identify it as the spiritual faculty, the Victorians claim it as the capacity to make moral judgments, and the Renaissance thinkers locate the image of God in artistic creativity. As for our own psychology-dominated age? What else could that image be, we are now advised, than our capacity for relationships with other people and with God (Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *In His Image*, p 20).

## God Is Spirit

Where should we go if looking for insights into the meaning of the expression “in our image” other than the Hebrew Scriptures? From first to last in his revelations of himself God has consistently identified himself with the Hebrew term *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma*, these are the OT and NT words for “Spirit,” as Jesus says to the Samaritan woman in John 4:24. In the opening lines of Scripture we read,

*In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God (Ruach Elohim) was hovering over the waters (Gen 2:1-2).*

Following man's disobedience to God they hid themselves as they "heard God approaching or moving (*halak* - to go, to move) in the breeze (*ruach*)." *Ruach* is found in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) in 232 occurrences as "spirit," in 92 occurrences as "wind," and in 27 occurrences as "breath." Clearly in this text the word means spirit, wind, or breath; all giving a sense of the nature of God as perceived by Adam and Eve. Following man's expulsion from the Garden to the time of the great flood, man had become so estranged to God that God was grieved that he had made man (Gen 6:6). In Gen 6:3, we read of God's identification of his relationship to man, "Then said *Yahweh*, 'My spirit (*ruach*) will not contend with man (*adam*) forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years'," (Gen 6:3). Here God speaks of himself as "*Ruach*" (spirit).

In the book of Job, which is possibly one of the oldest books of the OT, the writer of Job identifies his life as dependent upon the *ruach Elohim* in his nostrils, "while my life is within me and the *ruach* (breath/spirit) of God is in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness," (Job 27:3-4). The author of Job repeatedly identifies the life of Job with the term *ruach* and identifies God with the term *ruach*. In Job 33:4, one of Job's companions says, "The spirit of God (*ruach El*) has made me, and the breath (*neshamah*) of the Almighty (*Shaddai*) has given me life (*chayah*)," (Job 33:4). The language here is the same as that found in Gen 1:26 and 2:7. Further, in Job 34:14-15, Job's companion continues, "If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit (*ruach*) and breath (*neshamah*), all flesh would perish together and man (*adam*) would return to the dust (*aphar*). Here again we have the same language as found in Gen 1:26 and 2:7. A curious occurrence of *ruach* is found in 32:8, where Elihu says to Job, "But there is a **spirit** (*ruach*) in man (*enosh* - mortal man); and the inspiration (*neshamah*-breath) of the Almighty (*Shaddai*) gives them understanding," (Job 32:8).

In the earliest tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures God had revealed himself to man through a variety of names (*Elohim, Yahweh, El Shaddai, El Elyon, Adonai*), all of which revealed something of the nature of God. But the term of most significance to us in this study is the word *ruach* (spirit), God is Spirit, and curiously man is a being consisting of flesh and spirit (*ruach*); and he is also filled with *neshamah* (breath), both terms *ruach* and *nephesh/neshamah* are associated with the nature of God and the nature of man.

The perception of God as *ruach* (spirit) is seen by the psalmist's revelation that God is present everywhere, "Whither shall I go from your spirit (*ruach*) or whither shall I flee from your presence (*panim* - face or presence)? (Psalms 139:7.)

This is the language used by Jesus to speak of God. Jesus speaks of him as *Abba*" or "Father," and also as "spirit." In Matthew Jesus says to his disciples concerning the empowerment they will receive from God,

*But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but **the spirit of your Father** speaking through you (Matt 10:19-20).*

As mentioned earlier, Jesus says explicitly to the woman of Samaria,

*But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. 24 **God is a spirit** [or "spirit" without the article], and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24)*

## The Spirit of Man

The breath God breathed into man instilled within him a *ruach* (spirit) as God himself is called *Ruach* (Spirit). Man's existence is both physical and spiritual. Paul speaks of man as a being made up of

spirit (*pneuma*) and body (*soma*), which constitutes life (*psuche*), a cognitive, animated, living, breathing being. In his first letter to Thessalonica he writes:

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:23).*

For the most part the terms spirit and soul were used by the Greeks synonymously to speak of the intangible part of man as contrasted with the flesh. The root of the Hebrew *neshamah*, translated as breath in Gen 2:7, is *naphesh*, which is usually translated as “life” or “soul” throughout the OT. The word most often translated “spirit” in the OT is *ruach*, but it is also translated as “wind,” as in the parting of the sea in Exodus 14:21, “Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and all that night Yahweh drove the sea back with a strong east wind (*ruach*), and turned it into dry land.” In the 97 occurrences of the word “wind” in the KJV of the OT, it is the translation of the Hebrew word *ruach*. In its other 213 occurrences it is translated as “spirit.” In rabbinic thought, it was common to refer to the *ruach Elohim* as the “breath of God” as much as “the Spirit of God.” In fact, the *shekhinah* (the “presence” of God) was spoken of by later rabbis as the movement of the breath of God among his people.

In the Greek LXX translation of the Hebrew text the term *pneuma* was used for *ruach* while *psuche* was used for *nephesh*. These are also the words used in NT for “soul” (*nephesh*) and “spirit” (*ruach*). In that the word *ruach* rather than *nephesh*, is the term used for God, the Greek *pneuma* became the word carrying the greatest significance in NT theology.

The Gnostic heresy of the first and second centuries made a distinction between the levels of maturity of its membership by the contrast of *psuchikos* (of the soul or natural man) and *pneumatikos* (of the spirit or spiritual man). Those who were “of the flesh” were *sarkikos* (mud people) where those “of the spirit” were *pneumatikos*. Essentially, Paul rejects this distinction recognizing only those of the

flesh and those of the spirit, which is the more biblical view of man. The word *psuche* is usually interchanged with *bios* and *zoe*, as words for “life;” it is translated 58 times in the NT as “soul” and 40 times as life. The verb form *psucho* is translated “to breathe;” obviously, the terms *psuche* and *pneuma* have great similarity and are often interchanged.

### Dual Nature of Man

From this linguistic data it would appear that the breath breathed into man by God was “of God” in some mysterious sense. Man’s existence is both physical (*sarx* – flesh) and spiritual (*pneuma*). This dual nature of man is found throughout the writings of Paul. Thoroughly schooled in both the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Jews he would have knowledge of the nuances of these terms as reflected in the Sacred Writings. This usage is informing as concerns the dual nature of man as a being created of the earth into whom God breathed the breath of life. Death is the separation of the spirit from the body, as the psalmist writes” You hide your face, they are troubled: you take away **their breath**; they die, and return to their dust. You send forth your spirit, they are created: and you renew the face of the earth, (Psalms 104:29-30)

Solomon’s poetic depiction of death is revealing concerning this imagery:

*For he does not know what will happen; so who can tell him when it will occur? There is no man that has power over **the spirit** to retain the **spirit**; neither has he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it (Eccl 8:7-8).*

*Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goes to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and **the spirit** shall return unto*

*God who gave it (Eccl 12:5-7).*

Jesus reinforced this view in his sermon on the bread of life, “**It is the spirit that gives life;**” he insists, “the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are **spirit**, and they are life,” (John 6:63). James, the Lord’s brother states, “**For as the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is dead also,” (James 2:26).

In the raising of Jairus’ daughter the miracle was the return of her spirit to her body. “But he put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Little girl, arise.” Then **her spirit returned**, and she arose immediately,” (Luke 8:54-55).

In his experience of human death, Jesus quoted Psalms 31:5, and cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands **I commend my spirit;**” and having said this, he breathed out (Luke 23:46). There is a spirit within man and man received that spirit from God at creation, and at death, it returns to God.

### The Flesh and the Spirit in Paul

Man was also made, “of the dust (*aphar*) of the ground (*adamah*).” The human body of man came from the dust or clay (*aphar*); man is a carbon-based life form. It is this part of man that is uniquely “adamic” or “of the earth.” The Apostle Paul uses two terms for this aspect of man, *soma* (body) and *sarx* (flesh), which has been translated in modern versions of the Bible as “sinful nature,” an interpretation rather than a legitimate translation. In conversion to Christ man experiences a transformation of existence; he is transferred from existence “in Adam” to existence “in Christ.” The curse of Adam in Gen 2:15-17, “in the day you eat thereof you shall surely die,” was a condemnation of Adam’s earthly existence. Adam was mortal in that having been expelled from Eden he was now subject to death. The body of every human being will experience death, but for those “in Christ” their spirits will not die with the adamic body, as Paul says in his Roman letter, “You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” (8:9).

For the one whose existence has been transformed through conversion to Christ, his spirit will survive the body at death:

*For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if through the spirit put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage (to adamic existence-mwl) again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom 8:13-17).*

*And if Christ be in you, **the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness**, but if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you (Rom 8:10-11).*

The redemption of the body will not occur until the return of Christ and the resurrection of those in Christ (1 Cor 15:42-49). During this earthy sojourn through this vale of soul-making called earthly existence Paul informs them that they live out a tension between the flesh and spirit, "they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit," (Rom 8:5).

## Conclusion

The dual nature of Adam is applied to all those descended from him. The spirit breathed into the face of Adam is the life force transferred down through the human race. Every man and woman is an adamic being consisting of flesh and spirit.

This contrast between flesh and spirit is present everywhere in Paul's letters. It is the spirit of man that Christ came into the world to redeem; the spirit that was given to man when God breathed into his face. That same spirit is within every son of Adam and daughter of Eve, to use C.S. Lewis' way of referring to the human race. But we have not addressed the meaning of "the image of God." This we will

take up in the following lesson.

So, man is a being with a dual nature; he consists of human flesh, he is a carbon-based life form and he was given his spirit by the very breath of God. God breathed into his face and man became “a living soul/life” (*chay nephesh*); i.e. he is living (*chay*) and that has something to do with *nephesh*, the breath of life.

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