Composition of Man

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Man, meaning mankind, was created by God during the sixth 24-hour day ([Genesis 1:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-27&t=NKJV), [31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.31&t=NKJV)) of the restoration of earth from its chaotic condition as depicted in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, the result of the catastrophe that befell it upon the rebellion and fall of Satan and its resultant angelic conflict ([Isaiah 14:12-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.12-17&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 28:11-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.11-19&t=NKJV)).

Scripture is clear on the subject. God created man “*in His own image*,” which was an agreement between all three Persons of the Triune Godhead ([Genesis 1:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-27&t=NKJV)). For a more comprehensive discussion of the one God who is evident in three distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), please see the study/article entitled “[The Trinity](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-six.php#The%20Trinity)” in this site, and also, as an aside, [The Trinity by Mark and Carol Miller](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/hope-of-glory-by-mark-and-carol-miller.php#II.%20THE%20TRINITY%20%E2%80%93%20The%20Starting%20Point) also in this site. And although the “image of God” involves more than the tripartite aspect of His composition, which is the cornerstone of His image, this discussion will limit itself to this facet of man’s composition.

The first mention of God’s creative act pertaining to man is found in [Genesis 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.7&t=NKJV):

*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 being.*

Man was formed of the dust of the ground. It is interesting to note that human bodies are made up of the very same 17 elements that make up the dust of the ground. The atoms that make up human molecules are fungible, that is, the carbon atoms needed are readily available and chemically interchangeable with any other carbon atoms.

Following the formation of the body, God “breathed into” man the “breath of life,” which transformed him into a “living being” (Hebrew: literally a “living soul”) in the image of God Himself. And subsequent to this, God placed the man into “deep sleep,” while he withdrew a rib from him and formed it into woman ([Genesis 2:21-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.21-22&t=NKJV)). This action is the type of which the anti-type in the New Testament will be the “bride of Christ” that will come from the “body of Christ” and will co-reign with Him during the Messianic Era (a subject and study for another time). But on a practical plain, this early account of the formation of man and woman teaches that marriage (the uniting of a man and a woman) is a God-ordained institution, which requires (1) that they ideally should see themselves and act “as one” and (2) that the husband ideally should place priority on his wife over every other human in his life ([Genesis 2:23-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.23-24&t=NKJV)).

For greater clarification as to the components of man, attention is directed toward two verses in the New Testament, as follow:

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ([1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.23&t=NKJV))

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow* [body], *and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. ([Hebrews 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.12&t=NKJV))

(In the above scriptures the Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*; the Greek word for “soul” is *psyche*; and the Greek word for “body” is *soma*)

Numerous Bible scholars insist that man is really only dualistic in nature, *i.e.*, composed only of body (material) and soul (immaterial). They do so from their evaluation of how the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which basically means “life” or “living being,” is translated in the Old Testament; and how the Greek word *psyche* with its corresponding meaning is utilized in the New Testament — an involved discussion/study for another time.

But the apostle Paul in his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica and the author of Hebrews makes it quite clear that there is a distinction between “soul” (*psyche*) and “spirit” (*pneuma*) and “body” (*soma*). And as for this commentator, it is impossible to believe that the Holy Spirit intended no distinction between the soul and the spirit of man, especially in light of the tripartite image of God in which man was made in the likeness thereof.

From these verses it is clear that man is a tripartite being, *i.e.*, he is composed of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. Then the question arises as to how to understand the nature and function of these parts.

**Body** — this is man’s link to the physical world, is fully functional at birth and involves physical sensations (“feelings”). Within its cell structure is the “sin nature,” *i.e.*, the propensity to sin, that was the result of man’s fall due to his disobedience in the Garden of Eden and which was passed down genetically by means of procreation through males (the male sperm) to all of Adam’s ancestors (Christ being the only exception since there was no human male involved in His birth).

For the believer in Christ (Christian), the body will eventually be transformed into a *resurrection body*, which will be like that of Christ’s resurrection body and which will no long possess the sin nature ([1 Corinthians 15:42-54](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.42-54&t=NKJV); [Philippians 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.21&t=NKJV); [1 John 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+3.2&t=NKJV)).

**Soul** — this is man’s link to self-consciousness (self-awareness), reason, mentality, volition, emotion and conscience; all of which are located in man’s cerebral hemispheres (brain). The “soul” is what makes a person a “living being.” Although no person can see the “soul,” it is the souls that communicate among the human race.

This component is developed through time and exposure to its environment. A newborn is not aware of his existence, but eventually becomes aware of his existence and individuality. A newborn is ignorant, but eventually becomes educated and rational. A newborn cannot make decisions, but eventually becomes decisive. A newborn has limited emotion, but quickly develops to a more sophisticated degree the feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, *etc*. A newborn can’t distinguish right from wrong, but eventually develops norms and standards.

Although this component is an immaterial part of man, it is not to be confused with the spirit. The soul provides life to man and will function even after physical death in the corridors of eternity in one location or another, *i.e.*, heaven or hell.

(It is interesting to note that when Christ was speaking to His twelve disciples in order to prepare them to preach the *gospel of the kingdom* [which is different from the *gospel of grace*] not to Gentiles but only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” [[Matthew 10:5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.5-7&t=NKJV)], He cautioned them to not “. . . *fear those who kill* [Gk: *apokteino*] *the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy* [Gk: *apollumi*] *both soul and body in hell* [Gk: *geenna*] — [Matthew 10:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.28&t=NKJV).” *Geenna* (Gehenna) appears to be analogous to the “*furnace of fire*” where there will be “*wailing and gnashing of teeth*” as seen in the parables of [Matthew 13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13&t=NKJV).

This was specific advice to these disciples, as well as to believers in any age, to fear God who is able to punish (not extinguish) the believer for a specific period of time [one thousand years] because of the believer’s wasted life in faithlessness to Him. This corresponds with the New Testament’s prolific teaching that even though eternal [spirit] salvation for the believer is secure, should he not persevere in a life of faithfulness during this lifetime [soul salvation] he will face a “just recompense” at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which will result in both a lack of rewards and a non-participatory position in the “bride of Christ” during the Millennial Kingdom.)

**Spirit** — this is man’s link to God as seen in [Romans 8:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.16&t=NKJV), which is a feature, upon installation or activation (depending upon one’s view) that allows man’s soul to be permanently united with God in time and throughout eternity.

This component is “dead on arrival.” Man’s spirit died as a result of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.17&t=NKJV); [Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV); [6:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+6.6&t=NKJV); [7:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.5&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.18&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV), *etc*.). An alive spirit becomes either instilled within man or, if a “dead spirit” is already resident within him, is activated for all eternity at the “Second Birth” ([John 3:5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.5-7&t=NKJV)) when a person accepts by faith alone Christ alone for his own personal salvation.

**Sin Nature**

The sin nature is the core of man’s rebellion toward God, *i.e.*, a predisposition to sin — to be rebellious toward God in thought, word, and deed. In the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible it is designated as “sin” (the singular noun) in [Romans 7:4-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.4-23&t=NKJV), as “flesh” in [Galatians 5:13-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+5.13-21&t=NKJV), and as the “*old man*” in [Ephesians 4:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+4.22&t=NKJV). In other translations, particularly in the New International Version (NIV), the term, “sin nature” or other similar designations are used.

The sin nature was generated in Adam at his fall in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.17&t=NKJV)) and was subsequently transmitted genetically by males through procreation ([Genesis 5:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+5.3&t=NKJV); [Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV)). With the exception of Jesus Christ, who was conceived without the participation of a human male, the sin nature is an integral part of the cell structure of every human being. At the moment of birth, God imputes both “soul life” and Adam’s original sin (sin nature) to the new born; therefore, every person is born physically alive but spiritually dead.

The sin nature is in control of a person’s life prior to the person’s new (spiritual) birth, and with the cooperation of the person, it may also be in control even after the new birth ([Romans 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+6.12&t=NKJV); [7:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.5&t=NKJV), [14-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.14-19&t=NKJV))—although, this does not need to be the case. The sin nature is the source of a person’s temptation to sin, but the person’s volition is the source of sin. When a person chooses to succumb to the sin nature, he is in a state of *carnality* (*i.e*., a state of “walking according to the flesh”) — [Romans 8:5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.5-7&t=NKJV). The lost person has no power to overcome the sin nature. But the saved person through the grace of God is given resident-power (Holy Spirit) to overcome the sin nature ([Romans 8:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.5&t=NKJV)). He only needs to avail himself of it by (1) confessing (accept responsibility for) any known sins in his life ([1 John 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9&t=NKJV)) and (2) accepting it in the same manner that he accepted eternal salvation—*by faith* ([Colossians 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+2.6&t=NKJV)).

The sin nature was condemned by Christ on the Cross of Calvary. He became our sin on the cross, as a substitution-sacrifice, and died in our place to pay the penalty required by a Holy God for our sin (both our sin nature and individual acts of sin). Once a person understands this fact and by his conscious act of will accepts by faith this sacrifice (Jesus on the cross) as full payment for his sins, the person is immediately born into eternal life. This is being “born again” as explained in [John 3:3-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.3-7&t=NKJV). Upon physical death (or the Rapture) this person will permanently be free of the sin nature. After death the believer will be provided a new sin-nature-free body, his *resurrected body* ([1 Corinthians 15:42-54](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.42-54&t=NKJV); [Philippians 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.21&t=NKJV); [1 John 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+3.2&t=NKJV)).