

# GOD'S DESIGN OF HUMANS—HIS PLAN(S) FOR US

## PART 1

**WE WERE CREATED IN HIS IMAGE, WITH A PURPOSE IN MIND**

“ 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 NKJV*



### Review of Adult Study 7

God demonstrates His grace by forgiving our sins and justifying us (justification) when we place our faith in Christ. Justification is a judicial act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous, free from the penalty of sin, and fully reconciled to God. A survey of the Pauline Epistles revealed approximately 56 verses teach salvation is based upon faith in Christ's death/blood/cross. There are only one or two passages that seem to indicate a person must believe in the death, burial, and resurrection on the third day (DBR) to be saved. However, when taken in context and further analyzed, even these passages do not support the DBR belief for salvation. To avoid mistakes and to gain a true understanding of what God is saying, we must study the Bible by comparing scripture (1 Cor. 2:13). The full array of verses in the Word will best reach all people and create a true understanding of salvation. We must always remember that only God can determine if a person is saved; salvation is His domain.

### Introduction

In Studies 1-3, we learned that God had a predestined plan that required us to be in Christ in order to be saved. In Studies 4-5, we learned more about being in Christ, and how the believer is put into Christ by the action of a spiritual baptism performed by the Holy Spirit. Then in Studies 6-7, we learned what saving faith really is: a personal faith in Christ's death for the sinner. We learned a person does not have to know much of the Bible, be doctrinally correct, or say certain words/prayers to be saved. Now in Studies 8-9, we will learn about God's design of humans and His plan for us based upon that design. Knowing the design of humans is most enlightening; it helps us understand God's overall plan and purpose, that is, God's desire for each of us. Indeed, understanding our design and His plan for our lives answers two of mankind's oldest and most enduring questions: "Who am I?" and "What does God want from me?"

When we see a lion—the massive muscles, huge teeth and claws, forward looking eyes, jaw structure, speed, power, and stealth—we have a good idea of how this animal was designed to function. Similarly, when we learn of our design by God, we gain insight into the Designer's intentions for the human creature.

## EXPLORING GOD'S WORD

### God's Design of Humans

Genesis Chapter 1 provides the basic information we need to learn about our design, and we can learn about this design without getting embroiled in a myriad of other issues related to creation. We want to concentrate on just one main point, the use of the word *created*, that is, when the word *created* is used and why. The use of the Hebrew word *bara* (translated *created*) provides insight into our design. If we were to ask, most Christians would say the word created was used on each of the six days of creation. Actually, the word created is used on only three days, and that use is very instructive. God is very careful in the use of words, and the triple use of the word created has much to tell us.

The word *created* in Genesis 1 is used on days one, five, and six. The three uses are not something to be overlooked because these uses tell us something very important about who we are. Each time the word *created* is used, God brought something into the world that had never before existed; thus, He created it for the first time and out of nothing. On day one, He created all that comprises the physical universe, all the material and energy (including dark matter and energy of which we know very little) that has ever existed: **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"** (Gen. 1:1). Then on days two, three, and four, He fashioned, formed, and made things out of all the "stuff" created on day one. Our physical bodies are made of the stuff created on day one, that is, out of the dust (elements) of the ground.

On day five, God used the word *created* for the second time, because He brought something into the world that never before existed. This new thing was not in any way connected with matter or energy, but something

altogether new and in a class all by itself. Since it was not material or related to energy, it could not be seen or observed. This new thing had something to do with animals (at least the higher animals): **"So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves..."** (Gen. 1:21a). While not directly stated, this verse teaches these great creatures had something within them, so unique and new that God again uses the word *created*. He brought into existence an altogether new thing called the *soul* (Hebrew *nephesh*), and gave it to animals. The soul is that part of animals that makes them aware of themselves and others. Self-awareness (self-consciousness) distinguishes the higher animals from plants, which have unconscious life. The soul gave animals a desire to protect their young and to fight to survive.

On day six, God uses the word *created* for the third and last time in Genesis 1. On day six, He again brought into the world something that had never existed, an invisible but very real entity. He had created the physical stuff of the universe and He had created the soul with its function of awareness. Now, for the third and crowning act of creation, God again *created* something altogether new—the human *spirit*. **"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"** (Gen 1:27). God put within humans the breath (Hebrew *ruach*) of life, referring to an *invisible force* that we call the human spirit.

The Scripture confirms our three-part design in the New Testament: **"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 Thes. 5:23). The human spirit is not the same as the human soul, but the words are

often used interchangeably in conversations (even in the Bible). If a plane crashes we say, "All souls aboard perished in the crash." The use of the word soul in this case refers the entire human being. The main point to remember is the human spirit is as different from the soul as the soul is from the body. The human spirit is that part of us, and only of humans, capable of being aware of God. Our *God-awareness* is what makes us distinct from all the animals and unique in all of creation. No other creatures have a spirit; they have no concept of God and never can because they lack that essential part. The human spirit recognizes there is a God and causes a desire within us to have a relationship with Him (that desire can be somewhat "turned off" early in life by wrong teaching and many other factors). It is the human spirit that makes us aware of sin and its consequences, ultimately creating the desire for a relationship with God. In conclusion, each human is designed by God to be composed of a body, soul, and spirit—our three aspects.

### How the Creation Days Relate to Our Design

<u>Day</u>	<u>God Created</u>	<u>Relates to Our</u>
one	the physical universe	Body
five	higher animal life	Soul
six	humans	Spirit

  
*We humans are a spiritual being in a physical body with a mind (soul) to do what the Holy Spirit teaches.*<sup>1</sup>  


### Defining Our Parts

**Body:** Our physical body is composed of the stuff of the universe. Our *body* is the visible, material, physical part of who we are. It is not eternal and will die.

**Soul:** Our soul is that part of us that is self-conscious (aware of ourselves and relates to the world around us). The human soul is invisible and eternal; it is what we

often call the *mind*. Our soul is composed of our character, emotions, desires, personality.... The human soul/mind is not the brain (a physical organ), but the mental activities connected with the brain. The higher animals have a soul so they are aware of themselves; however, their souls are not eternal as are ours.

**Spirit:** Our spirit is that part of us that is God-conscious (aware of God and the need for a relationship with Him). The human spirit is not the same as the Holy Spirit. The human spirit is invisible and eternal; it is composed of conscience, faith, God-awareness... (often called the *heart*). Our spirit is what makes us human and is the most essential part of who we are.

In most contemporary teaching, the human soul and spirit are often treated as one, so it is easy to see why there is confusion. From Scripture, clearly God expects us to understand the basics of our design, that is, what our constituent parts/aspects are. When we get beyond the basics, however, distinguishing between the two can be difficult (even beyond what the average person wants to hear). The Scripture attests to this difficulty, but also assures us God knows and has taken this into account, **"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 is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"** (Hebrews 4:12). At times, the distinction between soul and spirit is impossible for us to understand since the distinction gets into thoughts and intentions that only God can discern. However, they are understandable enough for us to grasp the basics; relying upon Him for those matters beyond our comprehension.

**Your Thoughts:** In your own words, define the human soul and the human spirit.

### His Image

God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:27). Being created in His image means humans were created with three aspects/parts (just as He is three): a body, soul, and spirit. He created us to be without sin, with the ability to

<sup>1</sup> Vogel, H.C.A.; *The Nature Doctor*; Keats Publishing; 1991.

make choices, with a mind to reason/think, and with the ability to understand spiritual things. Our three essential parts define who we are, and each aspect has specific functions and needs. Thankfully, God has a plan for each aspect according to His foreknowledge and predetermined plan (in place before creation began, Rom. 8:29).

The Bible strongly indicates humans are unique in all of creation. We are distinguished from the animals by our

spirit; thus, our spirit is what makes us human beings, not opposable thumbs, brain size, walking upright, or other distinctive characteristics. Again, animals have no spirit, so they are incapable of having any concept of God. The human spirit is a purposeful, creative act of God, not an evolutionary process or adaptation. No other thing is said to have been created in God's image, and that is what makes us so unusual (Gen. 1:27). Both males and females were created in His image.

## GOD'S PLANS

God had a plan fully developed in His mind before creation began, knowing full well how His special creation (humans) would behave. His plan was established based upon His truth, love, grace, holiness, and was not the result of having to adjust to us. God's plan for us was no afterthought or alternative (as though His original plan failed). Since He specifically created us with three aspects (body, soul, and spirit), He had a corresponding plan for each of those aspects. First, He wants to save us (relates to our spirit), then to transform us by renewing our minds (relates to our soul), and finally to give us a glorified body in the future.

To know God's plan is to save, transform, and glorify us is exciting. He wants to work in our lives moment by moment, from the time of salvation (or even before) to the last day of our lives. We must not get stuck thinking that once we are saved, that is all there is to the Christian life. Perhaps such thinking is why many Christians feel mired in life and that God has no plan for them. God does not intend that we struggle through life with the same old mindset we had before being saved. It is the renewed mind that conforms us to Christ and keeps us from being

conformed to the world. His transforming power is liberating and exciting.

His plan for each of us can be summarized as shown below. It is essential to grasp the time-sequence of these three events. Salvation is primarily spiritual in nature, but it affects every aspect of our being and occurs in an instant, upon belief in Christ as Savior. Transformation is not instantaneous, but a process that takes place our entire lives. The renewing of the mind is a step-by-step process led and guided by the Holy Spirit. We must cooperate in this process or the Spirit will be quenched. This is how God (all three persons) speaks to us today, not audibly or visibly, but silently working in the heart and mind. Finally, His plan for our body will be realized in the future when we are taken to Heaven and given a new glorified body.

### **God's Overall Plan for Human Beings**

1. Salvation for the spirit
2. Transformation for the soul
3. Glorification for the body

## TAKE TO HEART

### Summary

Understanding God's creation of humans gives us a better idea of what God had in mind for us. God specifically uses the word *created* three times in Genesis 1: first, for the creation of the physical universe; second, for the creation of the *soul* (self-awareness); and third, for the creation of the human *spirit* (God-awareness). Humans were the crowning act of creation, being created in His image, with three distinct parts/aspects: body, soul, and spirit. We are distinguished from the animals by our spirit, which defines us as human. Since animals have no spirit, they are incapable of having any concept of God. The human spirit is a purposeful creative act of God, not an evolutionary process or adaptation. Both males and females were created in His image, meaning we were created without sin, with the ability to make choices, with a mind to reason/think, and with the ability to understand spiritual things. God has a plan corresponding to each of our three aspects. First, He wants to save us (relates to our spirit), then to transform us by renewing our minds (relates to our soul), and finally, to give us a glorified body in the future.

### Gospel

When you trust in Christ, you become a new creation, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all**

**things have become new"** (2 Cor. 5:17). Your former self is crucified with Christ, and you are made alive in Christ. Thus, a new life begins (Rom. 6:6). We become new in a spiritual sense, but our soul (mind) and body remain as they were. The good news is God will change our minds and renew them, if we allow Him.

### Encouragement

We know God had a purpose in mind when He created us, and He had a plan for each of our parts. This is very encouraging, for we realize that He is not a distant God with no interest in our daily lives. Indeed, God wants to be involved in every aspect and in each moment of our lives. Far from being disinterested, He wants to save us and then transform our minds throughout our lives so that we become more Christ-like in outlook, values, and behavior. If the events and circumstances of your life are harsh and distressing, you may wonder how such events can be consistent with God's good and perfect plan. These very events may be what God is using to create change within you. Salvation does not suggest freedom from problems in this life, and transformation actually requires a struggle. The events of life may get you down; but through it all and over time, you will see the hand of the Lord at work assuring you of His presence. Thus, you are encouraged by the Lord, knowing He is always present and working for your benefit.

Note: For Studies 8-9, considerable information was borrowed from the book, *Biblical Transformation: The Renewed Mind*, by Steve Shober (also the author of this study). The book just mentioned is available from Amazon and the *Grace 4 You* website, [www.grace4you.com](http://www.grace4you.com). Adult Studies 8-9 are also similar to several G4U Teen Lessons, but the information is so important that it had to be presented in an adult format.