

Who Will Save You?

Satan holds the entire world captive—but God has a plan to deliver mankind!

When God created mankind, He 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 fowl of heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth....’ And God created man in His *own* image, in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female” (Gen. 1:26-27).

This passage makes it clear that both men and women have been made in the image and likeness of God. God has also given mankind other attributes which are like His. David was inspired to write, “O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!... When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You came for him? For You have made him a little lower than God [*elohim*]...” (Psa. 8:1-5).

Many translations of the Bible, including the King James Version, render this verse as “a little lower than the angels.” However, the Hebrew *elohim* used here refers to deities—not angels. In every other occurrence in the King James Version, *elohim* is correctly translated “God” or “gods.”

The correct translation of this verse reveals the tremendous potential of mankind! God made man in His image and likeness but of an inferior nature. Although made of flesh, which is subject to sin and corruption, man has the potential to receive the Holy Spirit of God and become holy and righteous, as God is. All who attain to the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ will be born into the family of God as immortal spirit beings, composed of the same substance as God. That is God’s awesome purpose for mankind!

Of all the creatures that God made to dwell on the earth, only man has been given the attributes of God—including the ability to think and reason, to speak, to write, to plan, to create, to build, to teach, to learn, to judge, to rule. God gave human beings the capacity to love, to hate, to laugh, to cry, to forgive, to repent, and to experience every type of emotion. Man is able to experience these godlike attributes because he was given a unique spiritual dimension, which the Bible describes as the “spirit of man.”

The spirit of man: The spirit that dwells in man is not another spirit being, such as an angel or demon. Rather, it is a spirit essence that imparts the power of thought, intellect and other godlike characteristics, and which makes man unique from all other creatures. This spirit essence comes from God “who stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit [*ruach*] of man within him” (Zech. 12:1).

The spirit of man is different from what the Bible calls the “soul.” The word “soul” is translated from the Hebrew *nephesh*, which refers to physical life, whether human or animal. In many occurrences, *nephesh* is translated “creature” or “life” (Gen. 1:20-21, 24, 30; 2:19; 9:4-5, 10, 12, 15-16). When translated “soul,” it refers to the physical life and strength of a human being (Gen. 2:7; Ex. 1:5; Lev. 23:30; Deut. 4:29; Josh. 11:11; Ezek. 13:18-19; 18:4, 20). Unlike the soul, which ends with the death of the body, the spirit in man returns to God when a human dies (Eccl. 12:7). The spirit of man is the unique power that gives each person thought and consciousness: “But *there is* a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding” (Job 32:8). The apostle Paul wrote, “For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which *is* in him?” (I Cor. 2:11).

It is the spirit in man which gives him the potential to become a son of God. The Scriptures show that the spirit of man was made to receive and unite with the Holy Spirit of God: “Everyone who has been begotten by God does not practice sin because His [the Father’s] seed *of begettal* is dwelling within him, and he is not able to *practice* sin because he has been begot-

ten by God” (I John 3:9). This spiritual begetting takes place only after a person has repented and been baptized, and has had the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit unites with the individual’s spirit, he or she is spiritually begotten as a child of God: “Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God” (Rom. 8:15-16). At the resurrection, every spiritually begotten child of God who has grown to spiritual maturity, having been led by the Holy Spirit to develop the mind and character of God, will be born into the family of God as an immortal spirit being (II Pet. 1:4-11). The resurrection is truly the “new birth,” when the flesh is transformed to spirit and spiritually begotten Christians are born again as the immortal sons and daughters of God.

A choice between two ways of life: The creation of Adam and Eve is described in detail in Genesis two. As the account shows, Adam was the first to receive life—to become a living soul (Gen. 2:7). God created Adam and Eve with the capacity to choose (Gen. 2:16-17). This capacity is manifested in the account of the two trees that God placed in the Garden (Gen. 2:8-9).

God instructed the man and set before him choices. The command that God gave him includes a warning of the consequences for making the wrong choice: “And the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree in the garden, but you shall not eat of the tree of *the* knowledge of good and evil; for in the day that you eat of it, in dying you shall surely die [be subject to the penalty of death]’ ” (Gen. 2:15-17).

God created man as a free moral agent and gave him the power of independent choice. Every human being has been given this capacity to choose. The choice that each must make is whether or not to love and obey God. As Creator and Lawgiver, God has decreed that the penalty for disobedience to His commands is death. But through faith, love and obedience, God grants the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

Man chooses the way of sin: The book of Genesis records that Adam and Eve received God’s instructions before the serpent, Satan the devil, was allowed to test them as to which way they would choose—the way that leads to eternal life, or the way that leads to sin and death (Gen. 2:16-17). Since they had been in personal contact with God, their knowledge of God’s commands was direct and firsthand.

Notice the account in Genesis three: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any creature of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘*Is it* true that God has said, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” ’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may freely eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the middle of the garden, God has *indeed* said, “You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die” ’ ” (Gen. 3:1-3).

Eve had full knowledge of God’s instructions concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Eve listened to the serpent: “And the serpent said to the woman, ‘In dying, you shall not surely die! For God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, deciding good and evil’ ” (verses 4-5).

Instead of rejecting the persuasions of the serpent and obeying God, Eve ate of the fruit, and gave some to Adam: “And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (verse 6).

Their eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not due to ignorance or misunderstanding. They knew they were transgressing God’s command—they knowingly chose to disobey God.

The consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin: When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin entered into the world. With their first act of disobedience, sin became part of their very minds and beings. They had experienced evil. Because they now had a sinful nature—a mixture of good and evil—they were ashamed that they were naked and were afraid of God.

The sin of Adam and Eve had profound consequences for them and for all humanity. God's judgment was upon them, upon the earth and upon all mankind. Notice God's judgment upon Adam and Eve: "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception—in sorrow shall you bring forth children. Your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam He said, 'Because you have hearkened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree—of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat *of it!*"—the ground *is* cursed for your sake. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life. It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and *thus* you shall eat the herbs of the field; in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return' " (Gen. 3:16-19).

God's judgment included the sentence of death. Just as sin became part of their nature, the sentence of death became part of their beings. However, the sentence of death was not imposed immediately. Adam and Eve lived over 900 years after their sin (Gen. 5:5).

As a result of their sin, they were exiled from the Garden of Eden, cutting them off from the tree of life and from access to the Holy Spirit of God, which imparts the power to live forever (Gen. 3:24). Moreover, their sinful nature and the sentence of death passed to all their descendants, who were also cut off from access to the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit of God, mankind was powerless to resist the temptations of the flesh and the influence of Satan the devil, and could not be freed from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). No human being can escape the death that Adam brought upon all mankind, "for as in Adam, all die" (I Cor. 15:22). Again, "it is appointed unto men once to die..." (Heb. 9:27).

The apostle Paul confirms that the sentence of death came to all mankind as a result of the first human sin: "Therefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and by means of sin *came* death; and in this way, death passed into all mankind; *and it is* for this reason that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

The only escape from subjection to sin and death is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through which sinful human beings can be reconciled to God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When God pronounced His judgment on Adam and Eve, He gave the first prophecy of the coming Messiah, Who would redeem humanity from the curse of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:15).

The nature of man: Like Adam and Eve, all human beings have a nature that causes them to sin by yielding to the wrong desires. These desires originate in the mind and are an integral part of human nature. Paul shows that the mind of man is motivated by "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The law of sin and death is within every human being and generates the evil desires that the Bible refers to as "fleshly lusts" or "the lust of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3; I Pet. 2:1; II Pet. 2:18). It is these fleshly lusts that lead human beings to sin (James 1:14-15).

The fleshly nature of sin within man is further described in Romans 8:7-8: "Because the carnal mind [mind of the flesh] *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. [Indeed,] those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God."

All human beings are born with this nature of sin and death, which opposes the laws of God. This carnal nature is the source of every evil thought and deed: "For from within, out of the hearts of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, guile, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). Every human being is by nature an enemy of God because of these wicked works, which originate in the mind (Col. 1:21).

Paul shows that the sinful nature of the flesh has alienated all human beings from God:

“What then? Are we of ourselves better? Not at all! For we have already charged both Jews and Gentiles—ALL—with being under sin, exactly as it is written: ‘For there is not a righteous one—not even one! There is not one who understands; there is not one who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; together they have *all* become depraved. There is not *even* one who is practicing kindness. No, there is not so much as one! Their throats *are* like an open grave; with their tongues they have used deceit; *the* venom of asps *is* under their lips, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness; their feet *are* swift to shed blood; destruction and misery *are* in their ways; and *the* way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.’ Now then, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:9-19).

Although the entire world has been shut up under sin, Paul shows that there is hope for mankind: “But the Scriptures have shut up all things under sin, so that by *the* faith of Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe” (Gal. 3:22). No one who is practicing evil can be in right standing with God, but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, those who repent of their evil works can be reconciled to God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Every believer who is begotten by the Holy Spirit receives power to overcome “the law of sin and death” and to resist the fleshly lusts of the carnal mind.

At conversion, every repentant believer begins a lifelong battle to overcome his or her sinful nature through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul describes this fierce inner struggle against the nature that is inherent to human flesh: “So then, I am no longer working it out myself; rather, it is sin *that is* dwelling within me; because I fully understand that there is not dwelling within me—that is, within my fleshly being—*any* good. For the desire to do good is present within me; but how to work out that which is good, I do not find. For the good that I desire to do, I am not doing; but the evil that I do not desire to do, this I am doing. But if I do what I do not desire to do, I am no longer working it out myself, but sin *that is* dwelling within me” (Rom. 7:17-20).

Although Paul desired to do the will of God, he was experiencing conflict within himself because his flesh was constantly tempting him to sin. Despite his earnest desire to obey God, he found himself being drawn into sin by the powerful pulls of the flesh, which made him captive to “the law of sin” within his body: “Consequently, I find this law *in my members*, that when I desire to do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law within my own members, warring against the law of my mind, and leading me captive to the law of sin that is within my own members. O *what a* wretched man I am! Who shall save me from the body of this death? I thank God *for His salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, on the one hand, I myself serve the law of God with *my* mind; but on the other hand, with the flesh, *I serve* the law of sin” (verses 21-25).

Paul clearly defines the inherent evil nature of human beings as “the law of sin”—working within our “own members.” In Romans 8:2, he further defines it as “the law of sin and death.” This law of sin and death is in every human being! This is the sinful human nature that we all receive from Adam and Eve by heredity.

When they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve’s nature became sinful—their eyes were opened to know good and evil. When God pronounced His judgment upon Adam and Eve for their sin, the sentence of death became part of their beings. From that time, the law of sin and death became part of the nature of mankind. As a result, mankind’s way has been the way of sin and death: “There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof *is* the way of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). “The wages of sin is death...” (Rom. 6:23).

All mankind has chosen the way of sin and death under the influence of Satan the devil. The nature of sin and death makes all human beings subject to the deceptions of Satan, who is

the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). Together with his fallen angels, he is the ruler over the spiritual darkness and wickedness of this world (Eph. 6:11-12). Satan's evil influence works with human nature to lead all people in the way of disobedience to God—the way of sin and death. The far-reaching effect of Satan's influence is described in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians: "Now you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you walked in times past according to the course of this world [society], according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan the devil], the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience; among whom also we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind, and were [before God's calling] by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest *of the world*" (Eph. 2:1-3).

Who will save you? What a dilemma! All human beings have this sinful nature of death, cutting them off from God and making them subject to Satan's rule and society. God has subjected the entire world to this sentence of sin and death! But in so doing, God also promised a way out. There is hope! God will deliver the world from the "bondage of corruption" through Jesus Christ, according to His plan and purpose (Rom. 8:19-22).

It was God Who placed the law of sin and death within human beings, and He alone can save each person. This is why the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was planned from "the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). God has provided the way of salvation for all mankind through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).