

**HOW WE KNOW AND UNDERSTAND GOD
AND CAN LIVE ACCORDING TO HIS WORD**
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What Is Man?

Once in a grade school after recess the teacher of the sixth grade came to the classroom. In order to quiet her students down she asked this question: “What is man?” After about two seconds of silence one of the boys lifted his hand and said, “Man is m-a-n, ‘m’ stands for ‘man’, ‘a’ stands for ‘a lot of’, and ‘n’ stands for ‘noise’; man is just making a lot of noise.” It was a good illustration for the life of man in this world, for as Moses says, “We spend our years as a sound (or murmuring!)” (Ps. 90:9.) (“A tale” in KJV is from the original verb meaning “to utter sounds, to murmur, to moan, or to growl.”) It, however, was not the right answer to “What is man?”

What is man? James Montgomery, an English poet, wrote a poem on “Definition of Man” more than one century ago. It reads:

*Man is an animal unfledged,
A monkey with his tail abridged;
A thing that walks on spindle legs,
With bones as brittle, sir, as eggs;
His body flexible and limber,
And headed with a knob of timber;
A being frantic and unquiet,
And very fond of beef and riot.*

We do not believe any reader will accept such a definition, neither do we ourselves! Man, according to the Bible, was created, formed, and made by God, as God says in Isaiah 43:7, “For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”

Man was made. What does this mean? This means that man was not something out of nothing but was made of the dust of the ground. Man was formed. This means that man was not made immediately after God’s command as animals were, but that he had gone through an elaborate procedure of creation. Man was also created, because man was a brand new creation in this world. The verb “created, *bara’*,” according to its etymology, does not necessarily mean something out of nothing, but something created new. Big monkeys or huge apes could have existed in the pre-Adamic world, but not man. Man was definitely a new creation on this renovated earth. For this reason, the word “created” was used three times to describe man’s coming into being, in order to emphasize the truth that man was created new on this earth and did not evolve. Without doubt the Holy Spirit knew from the very beginning the trouble which evolution would bring, so He sealed man’s creation with three “created,” they are, “God *created* man . . . in the image of God *created* He him; male and female *created* He them,” (Gen. 1:27).

There have been some parts of big apes’ fossils discovered but not man’s fossil, except Cro-Magnon man who might have lived as late as 10,000 years ago. This is why even zoologists and anthropologists have to admit that Java man was half ape and half

man, and Neanderthal man was a rude specimen. In other words, they admit that these fossils were not real men but manlike. Since only different kinds of apes existed before Adam was created, it is no wonder that zoologists and anthropologists could not find any substantial data to fill up the gaps among those different stages of fossils. Man did not evolve. Without a doubt, God created man. The difference between man and animals is that man was created after God's likeness, but animals were not.

Throughout Church history, many theologians have misinterpreted God's likeness in man. However, Scripture explains it very clearly and simply. After God had formed man out of the dust of the ground, He breathed into his nostrils something out of Himself that is translated into English as "breath." As the result of this impartation, the lifeless body became a living soul. **THIS BREATH IS THE ONLY THING THAT GOD AND MAN HAVE IN COMMON.** It causes man to have God's likeness on one hand and to be distinguished from animals on the other. Since it is such an important word and its meaning is much more than breath, the writer would like to use the original pronunciation instead of the translation. It is pronounced *neshamah*.

Ancient Jewish scholars believed *neshamah* to be the highest perception within man. It occurs twenty-four times in the Old Testament: twenty-three times in Hebrew and once in Aramaic. Sometimes it is used as the synonym for spirit and has been translated spirit twice in KJV. According to the Bible it contains the following three principles:

First: the principle of man's life. Job 33:4 says, "The spirit of God has made me, and the *neshamah* of the Almighty has given me life." Both this verse and Genesis 2:7 agree that *neshamah* is the very thing that gives man life. Moreover, the grammatical construction of the phrase "breath of life" in Genesis 2:7 supports this view. "Breath" here is in the construct state and in apposition to the genitive "life." They actually mean "the breath, that is to say, life," just as John 2:21 "the temple of His body" means "the temple, that is to say, His body." It makes man a living **soul**, gives man Godlike intellect, sensibility, and will, and causes man to think, to sense, and to make up his mind as God does. With it man has Godlike personality and is expected to be crowned with glory and honor and to have dominion over the works of God's hand. Without God's breath man is only a standing animal or a clothed gorilla!

Second: the principle of spiritual understanding. Job 32:8 says, "There is a spirit in man, even the *neshamah* of the Almighty gives them understanding." Here, *neshamah* is identical with spirit that gives man understanding. The verb "gives understanding" is the same verb used in Psalm 119:27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169 referring to the understanding of spiritual things, such as God's precepts, God's law, God's commandment, and God's testimonies. It is in the causative form that indicates "to cause to understand." Thus, *neshamah* gives man understanding of spiritual truths.

Man is man not only because he has Godlike personality but also because he has the capability of understanding God. He is endowed with spiritual perception and discernment that he may be able to perceive spiritual things, to discern divine truth, and to know God's mind (Rom. 1:19). Otherwise, man would never be able to reign with God.

Third: the principle of moral judgment, which is conscience. Proverbs 20:27 says that “the *neshamah* of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.” The origin of conscience has long been a riddle among most philosophers and psychologists. They usually like the word *superego* instead of conscience and presume that *superego* is the result of maturity, and its judging nature is formed by parental discipline and environmental inhibition. In other words, they consider conscience strictly an environmental product that has nothing to do with God. Of course conscience can be sharpened or dulled by society and family. However, to make conscience the product of discipline and inhibition is to put the cart before the horse! This wonderful verse in Proverbs answers all the essential questions concerning conscience: its name, its origin, and its function. Its name is man’s *neshamah* or God’s candle; its origin is from God (conscience in Proverbs 20:27 is identical with *neshamah* and in Genesis 2:7 man’s *neshamah* was inbreathed by God); its function is to search the innermost chambers of the heart, telling the truth and witnessing for justice.

Thus, man is not as Nietzsche says, “The earth has a skin. That skin is full of sores. One of those sores is called man.” Neither as Haeckel writes, “Our human . . . has no more value for the universe at large than an ant, or the fly of a summer day.” Man is God’s creature created with God’s *neshamah*, whereby he possesses Godlike personality, Godlike understanding and Godlike conscience. He is able to know God, to judge in accordance with God, to lead a Godlike life, and one day to reign with the Lord.

However, this definition is not in accordance with the fact since the fall of Adam. Man is no more Godlike. Nations before God are nothing but wild beasts (Dan. 7:3-8). People now are as Peter describes, “As natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed” (2 Pet. 2:12). Why? What is wrong with man? The answer may be found in Titus 1:15. It says, “Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” “Defiled” means “to be stained,” or “to be colored.” The fall of Adam did not do away with man’s spiritual understanding and conscience, but rather defiled them. Man’s spiritual understanding has been clouded by his sinful nature that is at enmity against God, and his moral judgment has been distorted by either conscious or unconscious mechanistic deceit. Thus his knowledge concerning spiritual things is blurred. Although his spiritual understanding and conscience are still active, they are perverted and without any spiritual value. He can only figure out religious ideas blindly and judge things according to his own perverted standard. Various religions in this world are only the products of man’s reprobate spiritual understanding, and different ethical codes or moral teachings are the same from man’s defiled conscience. No matter how good they are, there is no real spiritual value in them, **unless man’s spiritual understanding is first changed and conscience restored. Such a change and restoration is called REPENTANCE.**

Repentance is not just regret though the sequence of repentance is regret. It is a change of the spiritual understanding as the Greek word *metanoia* explains, and as a consequence of repentance the function of conscience is restored. With such a change granted by God man can be a new creature. Without such a change no one can know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. Neither can one reprove himself of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. In other words, **without repentance no one**

can become a Godlike man! This was why the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament emphasized repentance so much. Yet without hearing the Gospel who can have God's grant of repentance? Without Gospel preaching what can they hear? Who is going to let others hear the Gospel that they might be restored to the status of a Godlike man? Are you a believer willing to be a witness for Him and what He did for you?

For more information about man's *neshamah*, see *Genesis: A Biblical Theology*, 49-53 at this web site (www.bsmi.org).

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