

## Bible Cosmology 303B:

### Immortality, Consciousness, Hell, Universal Salvation



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#### *Introduction*

This study will explore a series of topics that all relate to the question, “What happens to human beings after the death of the body?” It will also seek to examine this basic question with regard to potential difference between those who are ultimately redeemed and those who are ultimately damned.

Here we should briefly draw attention to the use of the word “ultimately” in the preceding sentence. Our intention here is to pinpoint the state after the Final Judgment. This is necessary because even those who are redeemed were formerly sinners. In order to be succinct but also avoid confusion, from this point forward, we will use the term “wicked” to refer to those who are ultimately damned at the Final Judgment. Likewise, we will use the term “righteous” or “saints” to refer to those who are ultimately among the redeemed for all eternity.

In addition, we should also take a moment to mention some of the common modern terms associated with different points of view on the topics of immortality, consciousness after death, Hell, and universal salvation. Below are a few common definitions for terms like “Christian mortalism,” “Annihilationism,” and “Universal Reconciliation,” all of which refer to concepts that will be explored in this study.

**“Christian mortalism** – incorporates the **belief that the human soul is not naturally immortal; and may include the belief that the soul is uncomprehending during the time between bodily death and Judgment Day resurrection**, known as the intermediate state. **“Soul sleep” is an often pejorative term** so the more neutral term “materialism” was also used in the nineteenth century, and “Christian mortalism” since the 1970s.” – Wikipedia.org

**“Annihilationism** – (also known as **extinctionism or destructionism**) is the Christian **belief that apart from salvation the final punishment of human beings results in their total destruction rather than their everlasting torment**. It is directly **related to the doctrine of conditional immortality, the idea that a human soul is not immortal unless it is given eternal life**. Annihilationism asserts that **God will eventually destroy the wicked, leaving only the righteous to live on in immortality.**” – Wikipedia.org

**“Universal reconciliation** – In Christian theology, universal reconciliation (also called **universal salvation, Christian universalism, or in context simply universalism**) is the **doctrine that all sinful and alienated human souls** – because of divine love and mercy – **will ultimately be reconciled to God**... Universal salvation may be related to the perception of a problem of Hell, **standing opposed to ideas such as endless conscious torment in Hell, but may also include a period of finite punishment similar to a state of purgatory.** Believers in universal reconciliation may support the view that while **there may be a real “Hell” of some kind, it is neither a place of endless suffering nor a place where the spirits of human beings are ultimately ‘annihilated’ after enduring the just amount of divine retribution.**” – Wikipedia.org

Due to the mention of “purgatory” in Wikipedia’s article on “Universal Reconciliation,” we have also included an excerpt of Wikipedia’s article on “Purgatory” for clarification purposes.

**“Purgatory – according to Catholic Church doctrine, is an intermediate state after physical death in which those destined for heaven ‘undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven’**... The word ‘Purgatory’, derived through Anglo-Norman and Old French from the Latin word *purgatorium*, has **come to refer also to a wide range of historical and modern conceptions of postmortem suffering short of everlasting damnation**, and is used, in a non-specific sense, to mean **any place or condition of suffering or torment, especially one that is temporary.**” – Wikipedia.org

As we can see, both Annihilationism and Christian Mortalism assert that the human soul is not immortal. Christian Mortalism also sometimes includes the idea that the human soul may become “uncomprehending” between “bodily death and Judgment Day. The title “soul sleep” is another term sometimes used to denote the idea that the human soul lacks consciousness between death and resurrection at the Final Judgment. In contrast, Annihilation teaches that at the final punishment, God will cause the wicked to utterly cease to exist. And lastly, Universal Reconciliation teaches that all humans will ultimately be reconciled to God, which also implies enjoying immortality, whether they die in a wicked state or in a believing and repentant state. The notion that the wicked may suffer a finite period in torment in Hell before reconciliation is also associated with Universal Reconciliation and is fundamentally similar to the concept of Purgatory, which is defined as a state of temporary punishment that some humans experience before being allowed to enter heaven.

We include these technical terms here because they are directly related to questions we will examine in this study. For that reason, it is important to be acquainted with these terms. However, our study will not focus on any of these formal schools of thought. We are not concerned with them as singular entities with their own particular dogma and technical terms. Neither are we particularly concerned with the individual historical developments. Instead, we are concerned

with the more basic issues that these ideologies wrestle with. Consequently, we will focus our study entirely on the scriptural evidence regarding the fundamental questions that led to these different schools of thought.

In order to clarify the issues at stake, below is an itemized list of the specific questions that will be examined.

- 1) Is there a part of a human being that continues to exist after the death of the body? Or, does the death of the body end the existence of that individual human being?
- 2) If human beings continue to exist after the death of the body, are they in a conscious or unconscious state?
- 3) Concerning the wicked, will all of the wicked eventually be redeemed and reformed? If not, what will be the final state of wicked? Are wicked humans and wicked angels different or the same in this regard?
- 4) What is the extent of the immortality of angels and even resurrected humans? Can or will God potentially strip them of any immortality they might have and utterly end their existence?
- 5) Concerning resurrection, are the wicked resurrected? If they are resurrected, do the fires of Hell end their existence? Or, do they continue to consciously exist in Hell for a long time or perhaps even forever?
- 6) Whether experiencing the fires of Hell lasts only for a moment or forever, is it painful?
- 7) Will wicked humans (or angels) eventually be let out of Hell or even reconciled to God, perhaps after some finite period of being reformed or purged by temporary torment?

Entailed in these questions are issues related to death, consciousness, resurrection, immortality, Hell, and even universal salvation. By exploring scriptural texts in depth, our goal is to demonstrate definitive, clear, and biblical answers regarding these issues. Our goal, of course, is not to discover standalone passages that serve as expeditious proofs for one position or another, but to discover the entire underlying theological system in which each and every individual passage makes perfect sense. Only then will we have the correct biblical understanding of all these issues. And the best place to start is probably with the basics.

For reference, below is a list outlining the sections in this study in the chronological order in which they will appear.

1. The Biblical Definitions of Spirit, Soul, and Body: “Spirit” Can Refer to a Variety of Things
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5. Is Spirit a Substance: An Introduction to the Question
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  - d. Evidence #4 – Spirit and Life in John 4 and 7
  - e. Evidence #5 – Spirit and Life in 2 Corinthians 5
  - f. Evidence #6 – Scripture Only Discusses Resurrection of the Body, Never the Human Spirit
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11. More than One Kind of Death
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  - a. Evidence #1 – Genesis 37
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  - c. Evidence #3 – The Death of Moses and Aaron
  - d. Evidence #4 – 2 Samuel 12
  - e. Evidence #5 – 1 Samuel 28
  - f. Evidence #6 – Unclean Spirits
  - g. Evidence #7 – Matthew 12, Luke 11, 2 Corinthians 5, and Philippians 1
  - h. Evidence #8 – Luke 16, Luke 20, Abraham, and John 5
  - i. Evidence #9 – Moses and the Transfiguration
  - j. Evidence #10 – Luke 23 and the Thief on the Cross
  - k. Evidence #11 – 1 Peter 3-4, Jesus Preaching to the Dead
  - l. Evidence #12 – Matthew 16 and the Gates of Hades

- m. Evidence #13 – Matthew 10 and Those that Kill the Body but not the Soul
  - n. Evidence #14 – Revelation 6, 19-20, Saints Speak After Death Before Resurrection
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21. Summary of Evidence
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  25. Hell, Pain, and Immortal Spirits
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- f. #6 – The Missing Mechanism for Annihilation
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*The Biblical Definitions of Spirit, Soul, and Body: “Spirit” Can Refer to a Variety of Things*

As we begin this section, it is important to discuss the range of meaning that the word “spirit” can have in scripture. In the Old Testament, two common Hebrew words for “spirit” are “ruwach” (Strong’s Number 7307) and “neshamah” (Strong’s Number 5397).

**H7307 ruwach** רוּחַ

From רוּחַ (H7306)

- 1. wind, breath, mind, spirit

**H5397 nēshamah** נְשָׁמָה

From נָשַׁם (H5395)

- 1. breath, spirit
  - a. breath (of God)
  - b. breath (of man)
  - c. every breathing thing
  - d. spirit (of man)

As we can see from the lexicon entries above, both “ruwach” and “neshamah” can refer to “spirit.” And collectively, their range of meaning includes anything from physical wind, to natural breath in the sense of respiration, to a spirit whether of God or of man.

This same range of meaning is easily demonstrated by surveying the use of the Greek word “pneuma” (Strong’s Number 4151), which is the common New Testament word for “spirit.” Below is a typical definition for “pneuma” provided from the Online Bible Greek Lexicon.

**4151 pneuma**

from 4154; n n; TDNT-6:332,876; { See TDNT 643 }

- 1) the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, coequal, coeternal with the Father and the Son
  - a. sometimes referred to in a way which emphasises his personality and character (the Holy Spirit)
  - b. sometimes referred to in a way which emphasises his work and power (the Spirit of Truth)
  - c. never referred to as a depersonalised force
- 2) the spirit, i.e. the vital principal by which the body is animated
  - a. the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides
  - b. the soul
- 3) a spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting
  - a. a life giving spirit
  - b. a human soul that has left the body
  - c. a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel
    - i. used of demons, or evil spirits, who were conceived as inhabiting the bodies of men
    - ii. the spiritual nature of Christ, higher than the highest angels and equal to God, the divine nature of Christ
- 4) the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one
  - a. 4a) the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc.
- 5) a movement of air (a gentle blast)
  - a. 5a) of the wind, hence the wind itself
  - b. 5b) breath of nostrils or mouth

As we can see, the lexical entry above reflects a variety of different uses in the New Testament. Its meanings include “the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit,” or “the vital principal by which the body is animated,” and even a “movement of air” in the sense of a “wind” or “breath.” The definition above does rule out the idea that “pneuma” ever refers to “a depersonalized force.” To some extent, we’ll question that assertion. But for now, let’s establish some of the other, prominent meanings listed in this definition.

We find “pneuma” used to refer to the physical phenomena of wind or moving air in John 3:8.

**John 3:8 The wind (4151) bloweth (4154) where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so (3779) is every one that is born of the Spirit.**

In this verse, Jesus’ clearly intends to give an illustration to explain something about the work of the Holy Spirit of God. The illustration hinges on the use of an everyday, natural phenomenon as a vehicle to explain something unfamiliar to men. In fact, we know the first part of the verse is intended to present a metaphor because the second half of the verse begins with the Greek adverb “houto” (Strong’s Number 3779), which means “in this manner.” The use of this Greek

comparison word demonstrates that the item mentioned in the first part of the verse cannot be the exact same thing as the item mentioned in the second half. They are alike in some way, but they are not the same thing. So, while the second half uses the same word “pneuma” to refer to the Holy Spirit of God, the first half of the verse uses “pneuma” to refer to normal, physical wind that blows back and forth.

Typical examples that use “pneuma” to refer to the Person of the Holy Spirit include Matthew 12:32, Luke 3:22, and John 15:26.

**Matthew 12:32** And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but **whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost (4151)**, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Although the King James Bible translates “pneuma” as “Ghost” instead of “Spirit,” Matthew 12:32 refers to the Holy Spirit in personal terms directly parallel to the way it refers to Jesus, who is identified in the verse as “the Son of Man.”

**Luke 3:22** And the Holy Ghost (4151) descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Luke 3:22 actually identifies all three Persons of God in a single verse. When Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Jesus, of course, is in the river. And, there is a voice from heaven that refers to Jesus as his “son.” The fact that this the voice comes from the Person of God the Father is demonstrated by the use of the counterpart term “son” combined with the fact that the Holy Spirit and Jesus are both located at the river’s surface at the time of the declaration.

**John 15:26** But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit (4151) of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

John 15 records a statement from Christ Jesus, which is filled with personal pronouns and actions that clearly distinguish the person of the Father from Jesus and likewise distinguish the Holy Spirit from both the Father and from Jesus.

It is not difficult to find passages using the Greek word “pneuma” to refer to the Person known as the Holy Spirit of God. But what about other usages of “pneuma?”

“Pnuema” is used to refer to the type of malevolent beings who at times took possessions of men. (More information on the identity of these malevolent beings can be found in our study series, “Spiritual Warfare: Part 3,” which establishes that the term “unclean spirit” or “demon” does not refer to a wicked angel.)



**Matthew 8:16** When the even was come, they brought unto him **many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits (4151) with his word**, and healed all that were sick:

**Luke 4:36** And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for **with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits (4151), and they come out.**

In addition, each individual human being has a spirit. We'll talk more about the meaning of this later, but for now it is sufficient to note that the Bible clearly states that humans each have a spirit.

**Romans 8:16** The Spirit (4151) itself beareth witness **with our spirit (4151)**, that we are the children of God:

**1 Corinthians 2:11** For **what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit (4151) of man which is in him?** even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and **I pray God your whole spirit (4151) and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, Luke 24 indicates that the Jewish people of Jesus' day even understood the term "spirit" could refer to a disembodied human spirit after the death of the body. The passage below records an occasion in which Jesus' appeared to his followers on the day of his resurrection.

**Luke 24:33** And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 **Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.** 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. 36 And as they thus spake, **Jesus himself stood in the midst of them**, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37 **But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit (4151).** 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 **Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit (4151) hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.** 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

Despite reports of Jesus' resurrection, which are referred to in verse 34, the disciples are still frightened when Jesus suddenly appears among them in verse 36-37. Verse 37 tells us that their initial presumption is that, rather than being bodily resurrected, Jesus is a "spirit." Jesus goes on to prove to them that he is no mere spirit and along the way, he defines the meaning of the term "spirit" in this

context. According to Jesus, spirits do not have “flesh and bones” and they cannot eat food. In essence, this context is referring to a spirit in the sense of a being that doesn’t have a body. Although it is possible to suppose that the term “spirit” here is intended to convey that the disciples thought they were seeing an angel or a wicked spirit, there is really no reason to do so. From passages like Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:11, and 1 Thessalonians 5:23, we already know that Jewish people of Jesus’ day believed each human being has a spirit. Even if it were a close relative or good friend, it would still be frightening to see the ghost of a dead person. So, the fact that the disciples were frightened doesn’t really demonstrate that they thought this was some other being like an angel or wicked spirit. The simplest explanation is that they perceived they were seeing Jesus’ disembodied human spirit after his death. And consequently, Jesus merely provides proof that he has a body, which he does by eating and letting them touch his hands and feet, most likely where the nail scars remained from his crucifixion (John 20:20, 25).

All things considered, there is nothing about Jewish belief or in the details of the passage that would suggest anything other than the simple explanation that the disciples perceived they were seeing the disembodied ghost of their teacher. Later on, we will see other evidence corroborating the Jewish concept of a “spirit” as the disembodied spirit of a deceased human. But for now, we will add this concept to our list of biblical uses of the term “pneuma” or “spirit.”

Moving on, scripture also indicates that angels are a type of spirit. We saw this fact listed in the lexicon entry above, which noted that the Greek word “pneuma” at times refers to “a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel.” Although perhaps a little less direct, Hebrews reflects the Bible’s use of “wind” as metaphorical title for “spirit” and asserts that God makes angels into “spirits,” or “winds” (as well as fires).

**Hebrews 1:7** And of **the angels** he saith, **Who maketh his angels spirits (4151), and his ministers a flame of fire.**

In Revelation 4 and 5 we find a reference to “seven spirits” which are “before the throne” of God. Like Hebrews, both verses from Revelation also employ the metaphorical imagery of “fire” when describing these “spirits.” The King James capitalizes the use of “spirit” here, but that is by no means suggested by the underlying Greek grammar or spelling. And just a few chapters later, Revelation 8 again refers to these seven beings who “stand before God,” but this time refers to them as “angels.” We see these same seven angels coming out of God’s presence in chapter 15 as well, which describes them exiting the heavenly temple.

**Revelation 4:5** And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were **seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits (4151) of God.**

**Revelation 5:6** And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having

seven horns and **seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits (4151) of God sent forth into all the earth.**

**Revelation 8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God;** and to them were given seven trumpets.

**Revelation 15:6 And the seven angels came out of the temple,** having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

And, in fact, scripture indicates that beyond just the specific Person of the Holy Spirit, more generally speaking the entire Being of God is spirit, including the Person of God the Father. We see Jesus himself attest to this fact in John 4.

**John 4:23** But the hour cometh, and now is, when **the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.** **24 God is a Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Here in verses 23-24, we see the phrase “worship him” used three times. It occurs twice at the end of verse 24 in the phrase “they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.” And it occurs once at the end of verse 23, in the phrase “the Father seeketh such to worship him.” The phrase “the Father seeketh such to worship him” is clearly meant reflexively so that the Father is the one receiving the worship. The earlier phrase “worship the Father in spirit and in truth,” which occurs in the middle of verse 23, also confirms that the Father is the object of worship throughout these two verses. It is equally clear that the phrase “God is a Spirit” in verse 24 is intended as an explanation for why men must worship him in spirit and in truth. The logic of Jesus’ remark is simple. Why does the Father want men to worship him in spirit? Because God the Father is a Spirit. The fact that Jesus switches from the specific Person of “the Father” in verse 23 to the more general designation “God” in verse 24 does require some explanation. The switch to a more general title naturally implies that the entire Being of God (including all three Persons of the Godhead) is a Spirit Being. In other words, the switch to the more general designation is intended to include the Father but also the other Persons of the Trinity. Conversely, any interpretation that suddenly excludes the Father from the phrase “God is a Spirit” and attempts to focus that phrase solely on the Holy Spirit would contradict the focus on the Father throughout the entire statement.

Galatians 4:6 and Hebrews 12:9 even refer to God the Father as “the Father of our spirits,” which of course implies that the Father himself is spirit.

**Galatians 4:6** And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.**

**Hebrews 12:9** Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto **the Father of spirits**, and live?

There is something interesting about this doctrine that God is spirit and, therefore, that his children are also spirits. We will explore the implications of that scriptural fact momentarily. But for now, it is worth noting the range of meanings and applications for the term “spirit” that we have found in scripture. It can refer to the entire Being of God, the Person of the Holy Spirit specifically, angels, wicked spirits, the spirit of a living human being, the disembodied spirit of a dead human being, or even to natural, physical wind.

With such a wide range of uses, the question arises as to whether the variety is coincidental or otherwise doctrinally insignificant on the one hand or if there is perhaps some underlying logic that could explain how the same word might be used deliberately due to a conceptual, common thread between all of them. Setting aside the meanings of physical wind and natural breath for now, the relationship between the other usages seems fairly apparent. God is Spirit and consequently every being (particularly beings with self-awareness and the capacity for rational thought) which God creates by directly imparting a measure of spirit can also be called a spirit, whether angels, men, or even disembodied men. (Even subsequent generations of human beings who, unlike Adam, are not directly created by an impartation of spirit from God are still understood in the bible to have spirit inherited from their parents.) And in this sense, to quote Hebrews 12:9, God is the “Father of spirits.” Or to put it another way, the term “spirit” is broadly applied to many different beings because the authors of scripture understood this term to refer to a category of beings that included God. Simply stated, in scripture “spirit” is a category or type of being.

### *The Role of Spirit in the Creation of Man*

With such a wide range of uses, it would be helpful to delve a little further into the origin of the use of the term “spirit.” Once we review the origin of the use of this term in scripture, then we will be able to understand why the term could be used so broadly. With this goal in mind, we will compare the creation of Adam, the first man, as described in two passages, Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 15.

**Genesis 2:7** And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed (05301) into his nostrils the breath (05397) of life (02416); and man became a living (02416) soul (05315).

Genesis 2 describes the creation of Adam, the first man. First, God forms his body from the dust of the ground. But the body is lifeless, a virtual soil-based statue of a human being. But it's not a human being, not yet. God then breathes life into the nostrils of the body at which point the text declares, “and man became a living soul.” As we can see, it is this breath from God that transforms the lifeless, molded body into a living thing.

To understand the relationship that 1 Corinthians 15 has to Genesis, we first need to take a closer look at the vocabulary of Genesis 2.

The Hebrew word for “breathed” in the phrase “breathed into his nostrils” is “naphach” (Strong’s Number 05301), which means, “to breath or blow.” The term for “breath” in the phrase “breath of life” is the Hebrew word “neshamah” (Strong’s No. 05397). “Neshamah” means “breath, spirit.” The meaning of “neshamah” is very closely related to “ruwach” the Hebrew word for “spirit” (Strong’s No. 07307), which is similarly defined as “wind, breath, mind, spirit.” In fact, just 5 chapters later, Genesis 7 describes that the Flood killed all living creatures “in whose nostrils was the breath of life.” Here the single English word “breath” is actually a translation of the two Hebrew words “neshamah” and “ruwach” side by side.

**Genesis 7:22** All in whose nostrils was the breath (05397) (07307) of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

Similarly, the book of Job also refers to the “neshamah” or breath and the “ruwach” or spirit being in the nostrils.

**Job 27:3** All the while my breath (05397) is in me, and the spirit (07307) of God is in my nostrils (0639).

By reiterating the language and phrasing of Genesis 2 but adding the word “ruwach,” the author of Genesis 7 is actually informing us how ancient Israelites (and even the more ancient saints before them) interpreted the word “neshamah” in the phrase “breath of life” in Genesis 2. They did not interpret it simply as “breath” or even as a “breath that gives life,” but rather as a breathing of spirit that gave life. And the fact that they understood that this particular breath was a breath of spirit is demonstrated by the addition of the term “ruwach” for “spirit” just a few chapters later in Genesis 7:22. The fact that Job 27:3 does the same thing further demonstrates that this was a widely-held, ancient interpretation of Genesis 2 that is not limited solely to Genesis 7.

With this basic vocabulary in mind, we now turn to 1 Corinthians 15, which is actually a commentary on the creation of Adam particularly in comparison to the transformation of Christ at the time of his resurrection.

**1 Corinthians 15:42** So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 **It is sown a natural (5591) body (4983); it is raised a spiritual (4152) body (4983). There is a natural (5591) body (4983), and there is a spiritual (4152) body (4983).** 45 And so it is written, **The first man Adam was made a living (2198) soul (5590); the last Adam was made a quickening (2227) spirit (4151).**

First, let's establish that the phrase "the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" does in fact refer to the transformation of the body of Jesus Christ at the time of his resurrection. As it turns out, this entire passage in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 is Paul's explanation that the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the means and the form for the resurrection of the saints. We see this specifically in verses 20-22.

**1 Corinthians 15: 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**

Verse 20 refers to Christ as the "firstfruits of them that slept," which infers that there will be others who are raised from the sleep of death after Christ. Verse 21 explains that just as death entered the human experience when Adam and Eve sinned, in the same way resurrection from the dead becomes possible through the incarnation of the Word of God, Jesus Christ. And verses 22 restates plainly, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Consequently, verse 45 later states that "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit," we know that the phrase "the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" refers to the fact that it is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ that men are made alive. Jesus Christ is the "last Adam," who gives resurrection life to all.

Second and more to the point, let's take a closer look at three closely related sentences in verses 44-45. Number one, the first sentence in verse 44 refers to the mortal body that dies as "a natural body" and refers to the resurrected body as "a spiritual body." Number two, the real existence of these two types of bodies is repeated again for emphasis in the second sentence that appears at the end of verse 44. And number three, verse 45 expounds on the "natural body" and resurrected, "spiritual body" with a sentence that explains that "Adam was made a living soul" in contrast to the resurrected Christ who became "a quickening spirit." The parallel nature of these three sentences is evident. The "natural body" in verse 44 corresponds to Adam becoming a "living soul" in verse 45. And the resurrected "spiritual body" in verse 44 is related to Christ Jesus being a "quickenning spirit" in verses 45.

Third, the vocabulary in these verses of 1 Corinthians 15 is fascinating, particularly as a commentary on the creation of Adam in Genesis 1. Multiple items are worth noting.

Number one, we see the same Greek word "soma" (Strong's Number 4983) translated as "body" with regard to both the "natural body" and the "spiritual body." This tells us unequivocally that the "spiritual body" is just as much of a body as the natural body is.

Number two, the English words "natural" and "spiritual" are conveniently distinct for English readers but not very clarifying, especially the word "natural." What does "natural" mean here? Is the "spiritual body" somehow "unnatural?" The

Greek word translated as “natural” in verse 44 is “psuchikos” (Strong’s Number 5591), which means “of or belonging to breath.” That’s a little less vague than “natural,” but it still doesn’t tell us much about the intended distinction from the term “spiritual.” The Greek word translated as “spiritual” is “pneumatikos” (Strong’s Number 4152), which has a range of meaning that includes “relating to the human spirit” and “part of the man which is akin to God” to “of God the Holy Spirit” or even more basically “pertaining to the wind or breath; windy, blowing.”

Number three, the Greek words for “natural” and “spiritual” seem to correspond to the Hebrew words used in the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7. During our examination of Genesis 2:7, we saw the Hebrew word “naphach,” which referred to “breathing or blowing” and the Hebrew word “neshamah” which referred to “breath or spirit.” We also examined scriptural examples showing that “neshamah” was closely related in meaning to the Hebrew word “ruwach,” which means, “wind, breath, mind, spirit.” In fact, “neshamah” and “ruwach” are so closely related in meaning that in Genesis 7:22 and Job 27:3, they are used conjointly as a single concept referring directly back to the “breath of life” that God breathed into Adam’s nostrils in Genesis 2:7.

Given the relationship between these two Hebrew words describing the creation of Adam in Genesis, it is no surprise to find that the Greek word describing Adam’s “natural” body in 1 Corinthians 15 is also defined as “belonging to breath.” In both Old Testament and New Testament language, Adam literally had a body that was “breathed into” with the “breath, wind, or spirit” of God. And that “breath, wind, or spirit” of God is what transformed that body from a lifeless, soil-based statue of a human being into an actual living being.

Number four, there is another set of parallels found in the vocabulary in 1 Corinthians 15. Although it is not apparent in the English, the Greek word for “natural” in the phrase “natural body” in verse 44 is closely related to the Greek word for “soul” in the phrase “Adam was made a living soul” in verse 45. We have already seen that the word “natural” is “psuchikos” (Strong’s Number 5591). The Greek word for “soul” in verse 45 is “psuche,” (Strong’s number 5590) which means, “breath.” (Incidentally, the Greek adjective “psuchikos,” 5591, which is translated as “natural” in verse 44, comes from the noun “psuche,” 5590.) “Psuche” (5590) is modified here by the descriptive term “living,” which is the Greek word “zao” (Strong’s Number 2198), meaning, “to live” or “among the living.” And, just as Paul indicates in verse 45 with the words “so it is written,” the Septuagint rendering of Genesis 2:7 uses the same combination of “psuche” (5590) “zao” (2198) to translate the Hebrew words “living soul” in the phrase “man became a living soul.” Likewise, we have already seen that the Greek word for “spiritual” in the phrase “spiritual body” is “pneumatikos” (Strong’s Number 4152). But in in the phrase “the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” in verse 45, the Greek word for “spirit” is “pneuma” (Strong’s Number 4151). We have already seen that “pneuma” is a Greek word that can simply refer to the “breath” or “wind” but is also used commonly in the New Testament to refer to a range of things, including the entire Being of God, the Person of the Holy Spirit specifically, angels, wicked spirits, the spirit of a living

human being, the disembodied spirit of a dead human being, or even to natural, physical wind. To summarize, in Adam, God had created a “psuchikos” body for a “psuche.” In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God had created a “pneumatikos” body for a “pneuma.”

(As a footnote, Paul does explicitly state in 1 Corinthians 15:35-37 and 42-44 that the “pneumatikos” body is from the “psuchikos” body, which establishes that the second merely constitutes a transformative restoration of the first rather than being two entirely separate bodies. This again parallels Christ’s resurrected body. When Christ was raised from the dead, God resurrected the very body that died on the cross and was buried in the tomb. This is why the tomb was empty when Christ rose. So, although his resurrected body was no longer a mere “psuchikos” body, nevertheless it was, in fact, the same body that died on the cross. However, through the resurrection that same body was transformed into a “pneumatikos” body by the power of the Holy Spirit. See 1 Corinthians 15:51 and Philippians 3:21 for further indications that our “psuchikos” or natural body, will be transformed into, rather than replaced with, a “pneumatikos” or spiritual body.)

With such a large degree of overlap in meaning between “psuchikos” and “pneumatikos,” it is difficult to draw any meaningful conceptual distinction between them. However, having reviewed Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 and their vocabulary, we can now properly understand the contrast between the “natural (psuchikos) body” and “living soul (psuche)” on one hand and the “spiritual (pneumatikos) body” and “spirit (pneuma)” on the other. With no real basis for a conceptual distinction between these terms, we are left to conclude that the contrast is largely one of structure and degree.

In fact, the description of Adam’s creation in Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 corroborates that the distinction between “psuchikos” and “pneumatikos” is one of structure and degree.

First, as we’ve seen the Greek words for “natural,” “soul,” “spiritual,” and “spirit” all share a basic reference to “breath.” But even more importantly, that correspondence is completely exemplified in the conjoined Hebrew phrase “neshamah ruwach” in Genesis 7:22. The combination of “neshamah” and “ruwach” as a singular concept in Genesis 7:22 necessarily conveys something along the lines of “breath of spirit.”

Second, unlike the “pneumatikos” body that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15:44, Adam’s body itself was not made of “spirit.” Instead, God formed a lifeless body from the soil and then breathed spirit into the body, causing it to come to life. Human beings, as defined by Adam’s creation, have a “breathed-in” body. But this was no ordinary breath. It was not like performing CPR in which everyday air is pumped into the lungs. In the case of CPR, the body was already previously alive. In the case of Adam’s creation, his body was recently formed and remained inanimate matter until God breathed into him. Pumping ordinary air into this molded human figure would not have done anything to bring it to life any more than performing CPR on a long-dead corpse. No, there was something



special about this breath. It was more than just a breath of air. It was, as Genesis 7:22 informs us, a breath of spirit, a “neshamah ruwach.”

Third, we should consider what happened to this breath of spirit after it brought Adam to life. For instance, did this breath of spirit just kick start Adam and recede from Adam’s newly living body? Or, did Adam afterward retain this impartation of spirit as part of his being? Scripture’s answer to this question can be seen in New Testament passages like Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:11, and 1 Thessalonians 5:23, which testify that each human being has a spirit. But this isn’t just something we find in the New Testament. Genesis 41:8, 45:27, and 1 Samuel 1:15 are just a few examples of Old Testament passages that describe a human being as having a spirit, including both the patriarch Jacob and ungodly men like the Pharaoh of Egypt.

**Ge 41:8** And it came to pass in the morning that **his spirit was troubled**; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and **Pharaoh told them his dream**; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

**Ge 45:27** And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, **the spirit of Jacob their father revived**.

**1 Samuel 1:15** And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, **I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit**: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but **have poured out my soul** before the LORD.

**Job 10:12** Thou hast granted me life and favour, and **thy visitation hath preserved my spirit**.

The fact that each man has a spirit demonstrates that when God breathed the spirit of life into Adam that spirit remained as part of Adam’s being. Moreover, when Adam and Eve had children, that deposit of spirit passed to them as well down through the generations to men like Job, Jacob, and Pharaoh. Consequently, Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 demonstrate that men are beings comprised partially of a body made from the soil but also partially comprised from spirit, which was imparted when God breathed into our ancestor Adam. In short, humans are already part spirit.

Fourth, this leaves only the question of what is meant by the phrase “spiritual body.” But the attachment of the term “body” already provides an answer. Adam’s body was not made of spirit. It was made from the soil of the earth. It was a body from soil with spirit breathed into it. However, Paul is telling us that there is such a thing as a body made of spirit. Adam was not made with this type of spirit body. But this is the type of body the saints will have when they are resurrected, just as Christ Jesus does through his resurrection. God will imbue our mortal bodies with spirit to such a degree that it will transform the body so that the body will be permeated by spirit and comprised of spirit as well. Resurrected

humans will no longer be just partially spirit. We will no longer just be spirit that was breathed into a mortal body made from soil. We will be a spirit being that also has a body of spirit.

This is the difference between a “natural body” and a “spiritual body.” A natural or “psuchikos” body is one that spirit was breathed into but the body itself is not spirit. Rather, the “psuchikos” body is made of earth (Genesis 2:7). And a “spiritual” or “pneumatikos” body is one that is itself comprised of spirit. That is what Paul means by “psuchikos” and “pneumatikos.”

But what about the phrase “was made a quickening spirit” in 1 Corinthians 15:45? Doesn't that phrase imply that Jesus didn't have a spirit prior to his resurrection? Not really. What was new as a result of his resurrection was the “quickenings” aspect, not the “spirit” aspect. The Greek word for “quickenings” is “zoopoieo” (Strong's Number 2227). “Zoopoieo” is related to “zao” (Strong's Number 2198), which we already saw translated as “living” in the phrase “Adam was made a living soul.” The lexicon entries below show that “zoopoieo” is derived from the Greek noun “zoon” (Strong's Number 2226), which is in turn derived from “zao.”

### **2198 zao**

a primary verb; v; TDNT-2:832,290; { See TDNT 282 }

AV-live 117, be alive 9, alive 6, quick 4, lively 3, not tr 1, misc 2, vr live 1; 143

1) to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead)

2) to enjoy real life

2a) to have true life and worthy of the name

2b) active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God

3) to live i.e. pass life, in the manner of the living and acting

3a) of mortals or character

4) living water, having vital power in itself and exerting the same upon the soul

5) metaph. to be in full vigour

5a) to be fresh, strong, efficient,

5b) as adj. active, powerful, efficacious

### **2227 zoopoieo**

**from the same as 2226** and 4160; v; TDNT-2:874,290; { See TDNT 282 }

AV-quicken 9, give life 2, make alive 1; 12

1) to produce alive, beget or bear living young

2) to cause to live, make alive, give life

2a) by spiritual power to arouse and invigorate

2b) to restore to life

2c) to give increase of life: thus of physical life

2d) of the spirit, quickening as respects the spirit, endued with new and greater powers of life

3) metaph., of seeds quickened into life, i.e. germinating, springing up, growing

### **2226 zoon**

**of a derivative of 2198**; n n; TDNT-2:873,290; { See TDNT 282 }

AV-beast 23; 23

- 1) a living being
- 2) an animal, brute, beast

As stated previously, “Zao” is verb that means “to live,” but in 1 Corinthians it is used as a participle to convey the idea of “living.” “Zoopoieo” is also a verb, but instead of meaning, “to live,” it means, “to cause to live, make alive, give life, restore to life.” The resurrection didn’t cause Jesus to have a spirit for the first time. That would contradict numerous passages that describe men as inherently having spirits. Instead, at the resurrection Jesus’ spirit became “life-giving,” which refers to the fact that through Jesus we will all be brought back to life and made immortal, just as Paul plainly says in verses 20-22. (Similar teaching is can also be found in John 5:21, Romans 4:17 and 8:11.)

**1 Corinthians 15: 20** But now is **Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.** **21** For **since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.** **22** For **as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**

So, as we can see, the phrase “quickenning spirit” does not pose any challenge to our conclusion that Adam and all his descendants are beings comprised partially of a mortal body (composed from the substance of the soil of the earth) and partially of a measure of spirit breathed into Adam when God created him.

### *Are Spirit and Soul the Same Thing?*

In modern contexts, the terms “spirit” and “soul” are often used interchangeably. Generally speaking, both terms are used refer to the “inner self” as opposed to the body. But beyond that it may even be difficult to discover any meaningful or coherent distinction between them in everyday Christian usage. However, in scripture, the soul and the spirit are distinct concepts. There are several lines of evidence for this.

First, there is vocabulary. In the Old Testament, a different Hebrew word is used for “soul” than for “spirit.” The Hebrew word for “soul” is “nephesh” (Strong’s No. 05315) and the Hebrew word for “spirit” is “ruwach” (Strong’s No. 07307). Likewise in the New Testament, a different Greek word is used for “soul” than for “spirit.” The Greek word for “soul” is “psuche” (Strong’s No. 5590) and the Greek word for “spirit” is “pneuma” (Strong’s No. 4151).

Second, in both Testaments, the terms are not interchangeable. This is demonstrated by 1 Thessalonians 4 and Hebrews 5.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God **your whole spirit (4151) and soul (5590) and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Thessalonians 5, both “spirit” and “soul” are listed side by side with the “body.” The inclusion of the “body” along with “spirit” and “soul” implies that the “spirit” and the “soul” are as distinct from one another as they both are from the “body.”

Regarding the distinction between “spirit” and “soul,” Hebrews is even more direct.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even **to the dividing asunder of soul (5590) and spirit (4151)**, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Verse 12 states that the “word of God” is capable of “dividing asunder” “soul” and “spirit.” The Greek word for “dividing asunder” is “merismos” (Strong’s Number 3311), which means, “a division or a separation.” Or in other words, although “soul” and “spirit” might be closely interrelated, it is possible to distinguish between them.

We have already established that a spirit is a type of being. So, now that we’ve shown the soul and the spirit are distinct, we need to identify what the term “soul” refers to, particularly in way that is meaningfully distinct from “spirit.”

In the previous section, we saw from Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 7:22 that God formed Adam’s body from the soil of the earth and then breathed a “breath of spirit” (“neshamah ruwach”) into the molded, lifeless earthen body and brought it to life. Consequently, 1 Corinthians 15:44 refers to Adam’s body as a “breathed in” body.

But more importantly, this very early description in Genesis 2:7 sets the stage for the proper definition of a “soul.” We have already seen 1 Thessalonians 5:23 distinguishes the “spirit” from the “body,” which in itself is not controversial. But the creation of Adam in Genesis 2 actually provides us with a simple picture in which the earthen body and the breath of spirit are both presented as separate elements that come together to form a human being. But if the earthen body and the impartation of spirit are separate components of the human being, then perhaps “soul” is simply the term for the individual being itself, a being which in the case of mortal men is comprised of both body (derived from the earth) and spirit.

Inherent to this definition is the idea that while “spirit” and “body” are distinct components from one another in the creation of Adam, “soul” is an inclusive term that flexibly overlaps both “spirit” and “body.” In fact, the Hebrew word for “soul” is sometimes used in a way that primarily refers to the body and at other time in a way that primarily refers to the “inner self,” including things like emotions, thoughts, and consciousness.

For example, in 1 Samuel 2:35 God says, “I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind.”

**1 Samuel 2:35** And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind (05315): and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

In this verse, the English word “mind” is translated from the common Hebrew word for “soul,” which is “nephesh” (Strong’s Number 05315). This passage clearly associates the “nephesh” with God’s intentions and purposes. These are faculties of the mind and clearly not a reference to a body. (Likewise, the Septuagint translates “nephesh,” which is Strong’s Number 05315, into the Greek word “psuche,” Strong’s Number 5590.)

In Judges 10 we also find another example.

**Judges 10:16** And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul (05315) was grieved for the misery of Israel.

This passage describes that God was “grieved” in his “soul” over the misery Israel was experiencing. Grief is an emotion. It is something that we experience in our minds. Therefore, this passage again exemplifies the use of “nephesh” in reference to the mind.

In 1 Samuel, Hannah prays to the Lord and the text describes her as being “in bitterness of soul.”

**1 Samuel 1:9** So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. 10 And she was in bitterness of soul (05315), and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

Bitterness is clearly a description of Hannah’s emotional and mental state. Verse 10 even concludes by saying that she “wept sore.” Clearly, “nephesh” is again being used in reference to the mind or to the “inner self.” (Again, the Septuagint translates “nephesh,” which is Strong’s Number 05315, into the Greek word “psuche,” Strong’s Number 5590.)

Proverbs 2 provides another example in which “nephesh” is clearly associated with the “inner self.”

**Proverbs 2:10** When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.

Here in Proverbs, we again see the Hebrew word “nephesh,” this time translated as “soul” in English. Specifically, the verse says that “knowledge is pleasant unto the soul.” Because the verse is talking about “knowledge,” we know that “nephesh” here is not referring to a body, but to the mind or the “inner self” in

some sense. (Note that here again the Septuagint translates “nephesh,” which is Strong’s Number 05315, into the Greek word “psuche,” Strong’s Number 5590.)

We find similar implications regarding the meaning of “soul” in the New Testament as well.

**Matthew 26:38** Then saith he unto them, **My soul (5590) is exceeding sorrowful (4036)**, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

In Matthew 26, Jesus declares that his soul is “exceedingly sorrowful.” As expected, the Greek word for “soul” here is “psuche” (Strong’s Number 5590). The Greek word for “exceedingly sorrowful” is “perilupos” (Strong’s Number 4036), which means, “very sad.” Here again, we see that the soul refers to the “inner self” where emotions like sorrow are experienced.

Similarly, Acts 2 states that fear came upon every soul. Once more, the soul is shown to refer to the inner self, where fear is experienced.

**Act 2:43** **And fear came upon every soul (5590):** and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Moreover, in 1 Samuel 1:15, Job 7:11, 12:10, and Isaiah 26:9, “soul” and “spirit” are virtually interchangeable and are associated with the same cognitive functions. Yet despite the fact that “nephesh” is used at times primarily in reference to the “inner self” or “spirit” and not the body, there are other passages where “nephesh” is very clearly used in reference to the body and not the “inner self” or spirit. The most straightforward examples of this can be found in Numbers 6 and 19 where the word “nephesh” is combined with the Hebrew word “muwth” (Strong’s Number 04191), which means “to die or kill.” It is translated as “dead,” “dead man,” or “dead body” 04191 times in the Old Testament.

**Numbers 6:6** All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD **he shall come at no dead (04191) body (05315)**.

**Numbers 19:11** **He that toucheth the dead (04191) body (05315) of any man** shall be unclean seven days. 12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. 13 **Whosoever toucheth the dead (04191) body (05315) of any man that is dead**, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

As we can see, these passages are providing instructions for what happens when a person comes into contact with a dead body. Because it is impossible for someone to come into contact with a dead “mind,” the context here necessitates that in these cases “nephesh” is actually being used primarily in reference to the body, not the “inner self” or mind. (In all three instances in both of these passages,

“nephesh” is translated in the Septuagint using the Greek word “psuche,” Strong’s Number 5590)

But, before we conclude that perhaps “nephesh” should normally be understood in reference to the “body,” we should also take note of passages like Genesis 35 and 1 Kings 17.

**Genesis 35:16** And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. **17** And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. **18** And it came to pass, **as her soul (05315) was in departing (03318), (for she died) that she called his name Benoni:** but his father called him Benjamin. **19** **And Rachel died, and was buried** in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

As we can see, Genesis 35 recounts the death of Jacob’s wife, Rachel, while she was giving birth to her son Benjamin. As she is dying, she says the child’s name and the text records, “her soul was in departing.” The Hebrew word for “soul” here is “nephesh.” It could theoretically be suggested that in this particular passage “nephesh” refers to Rachel’s breath, rather than an immortal conscious soul. However, what is most certainly clear is that in Genesis 35, the nephesh is neither Rachel’s dead body, nor her living body, nor even the body generally speaking. We know this specifically because the Hebrew word for “departing” is “yatsa” (Strong’s Number 03318), which means, “to go out, come out, exit, go forth.” Whatever the “nephesh” refers to here, it is something going out of the body. The body is left behind as the “nephesh” departs it. (The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word “nephesh,” which is Strong’s Number 05315, into the Greek word “psuche,” Strong’s Number 5590.)

**1 Kings 17:9** Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded **a widow woman there to sustain thee...****17** And it came to pass after these things, that **the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath (05397) left in him.** **18** And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and **to slay (04191) my son?** **19** And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. **20** And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, **by slaying (04191) her son?** **21** And he stretched himself upon the child three times, **and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul (05315) come (07725) into him (07130) again (07725).** **22** **And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul (05315) of the child came (07725) into him (07130) again (07725), and he revived (02421).** **23** And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, **See, thy son liveth.**

This passage from 1 Kings focusses on the prophet Elijah, as we can see plainly in verse 18. The context of the situation is spelled out equally plainly throughout the text. Verse 9 explains that God commanded Elijah to go and stay with a widow who lived in Zarepheth. And while Elijah is there, the widow's son gets very sick and dies. And the fact that he dies is important to our understanding of the word "nephesh." Several points are worth noting.

First, the son's death is demonstrated in verse 17, which records not only that he "fell sick" but also that his "sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him."

Second, we see his death confirmed in the widow's remarks in verse 18, where she asks if Elijah came to "slay" her son. And his death is confirmed again in verse 20, when Elijah asks God why he would "slay" her son. In both verses, the word for "slay" is "muwth" (Strong's Number 04191), which means "to die or to kill." In fact, "muwth" is the exact same word that Numbers 6 and 19 used to describe a "dead" body.

Third, it is critical to note that the word for "breath" here in verse 17 is "neshamah," which means, "breath" or "spirit," as we saw earlier. The phrase "left in him" employs the Hebrew word "yathar" (Strong's Number 03498), which means "to be left over or remain." This verse is telling us that there was no spirit remaining in the son. He had died. (The Septuagint translates "neshamah," which is Strong's Number 05397, into the Greek word "pneuma," which is Strong's Number 4151.)

Fourth, in verse 21 Elijah prays that God will "let this child's soul come into him again." (In verse 21, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word "nephesh," which is Strong's Number 05315, into the Greek word "psuche," which is Strong's Number 5590.) And verse 22 records that God heard Elijah's prayer and, consequently, "the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." The Hebrew words here are noteworthy. The word for "soul" is "nephesh." The phrases "come again" in verse 21 and "came again" in verse 22 are a translation of the Hebrew word, "shuwb" (Strong's Number 07725), which means "to return or turn back." The phrase "into him," which is used in reference to the son's soul in verse 21 and verse 22 is the Hebrew word "qereb" (Strong's Number 07130), which means "midst, among, or inner part." This language unavoidably conveys that the son's soul (or "nephesh") had previously departed, was no longer within him, and needed to return. In saying this, these verses not only confirm that he was dead, but they also tell us some important things about the Hebrew word for "soul."

Fifth, the use of "nephesh" here in 1 Kings is directly different from its usage in Numbers 6 and 19. Numbers 6 and 19 used the word "nephesh" and the word "muwth" to describe a dead body. But here, when the widow's son dies and "muwth" is again used to refer to his death, "nephesh" clearly does not refer to his body at all. Instead, the "nephesh" refers to something that is no longer present in the body. Moreover, here the son's "nephesh" or "soul" refers to something



associated directly with the son's spirit, or "neshamah." There is clearly a link in the text between the fact that no "neshamah" or spirit is left in the son in verse 17 and the fact that verses 21 and 22 plainly state that there was no "nephesh" or soul remaining in him. Rather than using "neshamah" or soul to refer to the body of the dead man like Numbers 6 and 19, 1 Kings 17 is using the "neshamah" to refer to the soul that departed when the son's spirit departed.

We find similar distinctions reflected in the New Testament. In Matthew 10, a passage we will revisit later in our study, Jesus warns not to fear "them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Instead, they should fear God, who can "destroy both body and soul." Since the soul is not automatically destroyed with the body, the soul must be distinct from the body.

**Matthew 10:28** And **fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul (5590):** but rather fear him which is able to **destroy both soul (5590) and body in Hell.**

Before we sum up our definition of soul, there are two additional factors to consider.

First, both the New and the Old Testaments record God himself explicitly stating that he has a soul. (In Isaiah 42:1, "soul" is translated from the Hebrew word "nephesh," which is Strong's Number 05315. In the Septuagint, "nephesh" is translated with the Greek word "psuche," which is Strong's Number 5590. Likewise, "spirit" is translated from the Hebrew word "ruwach," which is Strong's Number 07307. In the Septuagint, "ruwach" is translated into the Greek word "pneuma," which is Strong's Number 4151.)

**Isaiah 42:1** Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul (05315) delighteth; I have put my spirit (07307) upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

**Matthew 12:18** Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul (5590) is well pleased: I will put my spirit (4151) upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

Second, the word soul is also used in reference to animals. In fact, we see this very early in Genesis 1, where the Hebrew word "nephesh" is applied to animals that swim in the water, fly in the sky, and walk on the land. (Both verses use the Greek word "psuche," which is Strong's Number 5590, in the Septuagint.)

**Genesis 1:20** And God said, **Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath (05315) life, and fowl that may fly above the earth** in the open firmament of heaven.

**Genesis 1:24** And God said, **Let the earth bring forth the living creature (05315) after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth** after his kind: and it was so.

Altogether, these passages provide several critical requirements that must be met by a proper definition of the Hebrew word “neshamah.” Number one, from 1 Thessalonians 5 and Hebrews 4 we learn that the soul is conceptually distinct from the spirit but that there is a close relationship between them. Number two, from 1 Samuel 2, Judges 10, Proverbs 2, Matthew 26, and Acts 2 we learn that the soul refers to the inner self or the mind, the seat of the thoughts and emotions. Number three, from Numbers 6 and 19 we learn that the soul can refer to the body when it is dead and there is no longer spirit in it. Number four, from 1 Kings 17 and Matthew 10 we learn that soul can refer something that leaves the body with the spirit when the body dies. Number five, from Isaiah 42 and Matthew 12 we learn that the word “soul” is also applicable to God. And number six, from Genesis 1 we learn that the word “soul” can even be applied to animals.

So, what possible definition could fit all of these biblical criteria? The simple answer, and ultimately, the only answer is that the Hebrew term “nephesh” and its Greek counterpart “psuche” range from a technical definition that refers to an individual living being as a whole to a more a casual usage that is basically equivalent to the English word “person.” This definition fits all of the biblical constraints on the definition established by the passages above in three ways.

Number one, according to this definition a soul is what we are, not something we have. Spirit was imparted to Adam. Adam has a body. But a soul is not something we have or were given. A soul is what we are. We don’t have a living being. We are a living being. God is a living being. Animals are living beings. Therefore, the definition fits with Matthew 12 and Genesis 1.

Number two, human beings in particular are living beings that are sentient. As such, we are consciousness. Consequently, the bible can speak of emotions and thoughts as properties of the human soul, the human being. This fits with 1 Samuel 2, Judges 10, Proverbs 2, Matthew 26, and Acts 2.

Number three, as we learned from the creation of Adam, the human being is comprised of both an earthy body and a breath of spirit. Therefore, when the body dies and the spirit departs, the human soul departs as well. In other words, since the human being (or human soul) is comprised of both body and spirit, when the body dies all that is left of the human being is the spirit. Since all that is left of the human soul when the body dies is the spirit, when the spirit departs, the soul is by definition departing the body as well.

Number four, because there is a natural and easy transition from the technical idea of a living being to the casual idea of a person, it is not surprising to find references in Numbers 6 and 19 to a “dead person” without intending to infer that the Hebrew term for “soul” has a standard, one-to-one correspondence with the body. Even if Numbers 6 and 19 intend to use the term “soul” more technically, the term “soul” is generally inclusive of the entire being with all its parts. Consequently, it would not be surprising to see the term used on occasion in reference to one of those parts but not the others, such as the body. Or conversely,

to see it used in reference to the spirit alone, excluding the body, like we see in 1 Kings 17 and Matthew 10. So, whether the “soul” refers to the body in Numbers 6 and 19 or in a more casual, non-technical sense to a dead “person,” this definition explains Numbers 6 and 19 as well as 1 Kings 17 and Matthew 10.

Number five, by defining “soul” as an individual living being, we have also satisfied the criteria from 1 Thessalonians 5 and Hebrews 4, which required that there must be some conceptual distinction between the terms “soul” and “spirit.” The soul refers to the individual living being as a whole, while the term “spirit” refers to only one particular component of a human being, just as a body is only one particular component of a human being.

Ultimately, now that we’ve examined the evidence that the Hebrew and Greek words for “soul” refer to an individual, living being, we can see that definition confirmed by the standard lexicons. Below are the lexicon entries for both the Hebrew word “nephesh” and the Greek word “psuche” as provided by the Online Bible Lexicon. We have seen these lexicon entries already above, but we’re including them here again in order to emphasize that both definitions include the term “living being.” The Hebrew term also includes the more casual equivalent of “person.” And although we would disagree with the lexicon’s definition of “psuche” as “the vital force which animations the body” because that definition is more properly fitted to the term “spirit,” nevertheless we have established both the biblical evidence and the lexical confirmation for our definition that in scripture a soul generally refers to an individual living being.

### **05315 nephesh**

1) soul, **self**, life, creature, **person**, appetite, mind, **living being**, desire, emotion, passion

1a) that which breathes, the breathing substance or being, soul, **the inner being of man**

1b) **living being**

1c) living being (with life in the blood)

1d) the man himself, self, **person or individual**

1e) seat of the appetites

1f) seat of emotions and passions

1g) activity of mind

1g1) dubious

1h) activity of the will

1h1) dubious

1i) activity of the character

1i1) dubious

### **5590 psuche**

1) breath

1a) the breath of life

1a1) the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing

1a1a) of animals

1a1b) of men

1b) life

1c) that in which there is life

1c1) **a living being**, a living soul

2) the soul

2a) the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions (our heart, soul etc.)

2b) the (human) soul in so far as it is constituted that by the right use of the aids offered it by God it can attain its highest end and secure eternal blessedness, the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life

2c) the soul as an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death (distinguished from other parts of the body)

### *The Relationship between Spirit and Life*

Before we move away from our focus on the term “spirit,” there are two other important items to discuss. And, in some sense, these next two points are the most critical when it comes to the doctrines we are currently investigating. The first item is the relationship between spirit and life. And the second item is the extent to which spirit at times refers to a substance. We’ll begin our exploration of the first of these two items here and then the return to focus on the second item in a later segment below.

First, our examination of the creation of man as described in both Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 has demonstrated that spirit is life-giving. It was the breathing of spirit into the nostrils of the lifeless body of Adam which transformed the molded soil into a living being. And the use of the word “zoopoieo” to describe the resurrected Christ as a “life-giving” spirit also ascribes the property of “giving life” to Christ Jesus’ spirit.

In fact, the “life-giving” property of spirit is no small secret in scripture.

Number one, we have already seen Paul describe the resurrected Christ Jesus as a “life-giving spirit,” but in Philippians 3 Paul describes the same fact using different language.

**Philippians 3:20** For our conversation (4175) is in **heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working** whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Number two, the essential concept here in Philippians 3 is identical to the basic elements of the phrases we examined earlier in 1 Corinthians 15, including “now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept,” “in Christ shall all be made alive,” and “the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” These are all descriptions of the biblical doctrine that it is through the resurrected Jesus Christ that the saints will likewise be resurrected.

Number three, the particular phrasing of that doctrine in Philippians 3 is intriguing. Here Paul describes the means of our resurrection through Christ with the phrase “the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” The Greek word for “working” is “energeia” (Strong’s Number 1753), which the lexicon notes “in the NT used only of superhuman power.” More specifically, in this context “energeia” is a reference to the power to resurrect and transform our “vile” mortal bodies and make them “like unto” the resurrected “glorious body” of Jesus Christ. It is interesting here that Paul does not instead say that Christ will “change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, by the Holy Spirit.” Of course, we know from passages like Romans 8:11 that the Holy Spirit will be involved. But instead of focusing on the Holy Spirit, here Paul focusses on the power itself, discussing it on its own without any direct reference to the Person of the Holy Spirit. In other words, what Paul refers to as “life-giving spirit” in 1 Corinthians 15 is here described as a “supernatural power” to resurrect (and transform) the dead. The description of this as a “supernatural power” further affirms the life-giving power associated with God imparting spirit, just as was the case when God breathed spirit into the nostrils of Adam’s body.

The fact that the impartation of spirit is inherently life-producing was well-understood by the Jews of the Old Testament times. In Ezekiel 37, God gives Ezekiel a prophecy concerning a valley of dry bones. It should be noted that it does not matter whether this prophecy is intended merely as a metaphor for God restoring the nation of Israel or as a literal description of a future resurrection (or both). In order for this prophecy to function even as a metaphor, the Jewish audience to whom it was addressed would have had to be familiar with the concept that an impartation of spirit produces life.

**Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, 2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. 4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. 9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost:**

we are cut off for our parts. 12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14 **And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live**, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

Number one, throughout Ezekiel 37 the Hebrew word “ruwach” is alternately translated as “spirit” in verse 1, as “breath” entering into bones in verses 5, 6, 10, and 14, and also as “wind” three times in verse 9. This affirms the close conceptual association between wind, breath, and spirit that existed in the minds of the Jewish people, especially given the similarity between the way terms are used here and in Genesis 2 and 7. (The word “breath” in verse 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 is the Hebrew word “ruwach,” which is Strong’s Number 07307, and in the Septuagint it is translated into the Greek word “pneuma,” which is Strong’s Number 4151. Likewise, verse 14 translates “ruwach” as “spirit. In the Septuagint, this is the Greek word “pneuma.”)

Number two, the parallels to the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7 are readily apparent, particularly in verse 8, which describes the body being fashioned starting with the bones, then the sinews, and then the flesh or skin coming on them, yet they were still lifeless, which is demonstrated by the fact that verse 8 describes them as “without breath” using the Hebrew word “ruwach.” Of course, God would have had to form Adam’s bones from scratch as well, but it’s impossible to overlook the similarities to Adam’s creation given that Ezekiel’s imagery employs the construction of a human body that remains lifeless until spirit is imparted into it.

Number three, Ezekiel’s frequent use of the Hebrew word “ruwach” in reference to the breath that enters into a lifeless body and brings it to life confirms what we said earlier concerning the meaning of “neshamah” during the creation of Adam in Genesis 2. As we noted previously, Genesis 2:7 does not use the Hebrew word “ruwach” when describing how God breathed into Adam and brought him to life. Nevertheless, as we’ve also pointed out, Genesis 7:22 combines “neshamah” and “ruwach” together in a way that demonstrates that “neshamah” was understood to refer to “spirit” in Genesis 2. Because Ezekiel 37 repeatedly uses the word “ruwach” entering into lifeless bodies to bring them to life, we have yet another confirmation that ancient Jewish people understood that the phrase “breath of life” in Genesis 2:7 did indeed refer to “spirit,” despite the absence of the word “ruwach” in Genesis 2. The fact that Job 27:3 does the same thing further demonstrates that this was a widely-held, ancient interpretation of Genesis 2 that is not limited solely to Genesis 7.

Number four and most importantly, due to its depiction that the impartation of spirit is what actually causes these reformed bodies to come back to life, Ezekiel 37 confirms that the ancient Jews understood the inherent relationship between an impartation of spirit and life.

We will return to our discussion of life as an inherent property of spirit below. But first we need to introduce an important, related question.