



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 4 – THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

LESSON 78 – A LIVING SOUL

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – JOHN MACARTHUR, PGS. 399-451

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – WAYNE GRUDEM, PGS. 439-528

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The Origin of the Soul

- ▶ Review: Scripture uses the terms “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably.
- ▶ In John 12:27 Jesus says, “Now is My soul troubled.”
- ▶ In John 13:21 He says He was “troubled in spirit.”
- ▶ Mary rejoiced at the angel’s announcement of the birth of Christ by proclaiming, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God My Savior.” (Luke 1:46-47)
- ▶ In Hebrew parallelisms, the same idea is repeated using different but synonymous words for emphasis.
- ▶ The Bible refers to those in heaven and in hell as “spirits” (Heb. 12:23; 1 Peter 2:19) and as “souls” (Rev. 6:9; 20:4).

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- ▶ At death we are told that the soul departs or that the spirit departs (Gen. 35:18; Luke 12:20; Psa. 31:5; Luke 23:46).
- ▶ At different times we are described as being “body and soul” (Matt. 10:28) and “body and spirit” (1 Cor. 5:5).
- ▶ For those who separate the soul and spirit they often say that the soul can sin but the spirit is created holy and sinless at regeneration, however, Scripture tells us that for the believer, both the soul and the spirit can sin (2 Cor. 7:1, 34, etc.).
- ▶ Understanding then that the immaterial part of us is referred to in Scripture as our soul or spirit, where does that immaterial part of us originate? What is the origin of the soul?

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- ▶ Is the soul created by God at conception?
- ▶ Is the soul passed down from one's parents through a natural process?
- ▶ There are three views concerning the origin of the soul: preexistence, creationism, and traducianism.
- ▶ Preexistence – some, like Greek philosophers, believe that the soul existed before conception. Early church theologian Origen (no pun intended) taught that God originally created a specific number of spirits, some which were joined with material bodies to become human. This is the idea that there are spirits waiting in heaven to be assigned a body.
- ▶ Islam teaches a form of preexistence.
- ▶ This view has no Biblical support whatsoever and has been soundly rejected by orthodox Christians, Origen excepted.

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- ▶ Creationism – each individual soul is created by God sometime between conception and birth, rather than being transmitted from one's ancestors, just as the body is the result of the joining of the physical components of reproduction from the father and mother of each child.
- ▶ Genesis 2:7 tells us that God created Adam's body and then his soul and joined them together when he breathed into him the breath of life.
- ▶ Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us that the spirit that God gave us returns to Him at death.
- ▶ Zechariah 12:1 says that God “formed the spirit of man within him.”
- ▶ God is referred to as “the Father of spirits” (Heb. 12:9).
- ▶ Jerome (340-420), Aquinas (1225-1274), and Calvin (1509-1564) affirm this view as many others throughout history have agreed.

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- ▶ Traducianism – the soul is transferred from the parents to the children by the natural procreation process, just as the body is.
- ▶ While God directly created Adam’s body and soul, the constitution of all persons after Adam is passed on through God-ordained human procreation.
- ▶ At conception all that is necessary to “create” a new, living soul is present and presented by the parents. At the moment of conception a new human life comes into being.
- ▶ Adherents to this view in church history include Tertullian (160-220), Gregory of Nyssa (330-395), and Martin Luther (1483-1546).

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- ▶ Evaluating these three views we find these arguments in favor of the traducian view:
- ▶ God created what is in 6 days, and on the 7th day He rested, having completed His works of creation (Gen. 2:1-2).
- ▶ Within creation God has designed that each living being, man or animal, reproduces after its own kind (Gen. 1:24), so Adam and Eve were able to physically produce offspring who were with a physical body and a spiritual nature, being made in their image and likeness just as God created man in His image and likeness.
- ▶ The Bible speaks of descendants being somehow present in the previous generations, as when Abraham met Melchizedek, we are told “Levi...was still in the loins of his ancestor” (Heb. 7:10).

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- ▶ Finally, and perhaps most convincingly, traducianism helps explain how the sins of the parents can be passed on to the children without making God directly responsible for creating a sinful soul. David says we are conceived in sin (Psa. 51:5), and Paul tells us that we died “in Adam” because we sinned in Adam, and that guilt is passed down from father to child by natural generation.
- ▶ Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— 13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.... 18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

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- ▶ Traducianism also helps explain why Jesus had to be born of a virgin, without the contribution of two sinful parents, thus inheriting his human body from Mary, but not the sin nature of Adam through Joseph.
- ▶ Remember, we can hold to a view that the body and soul are the product of natural processes, but those processes were designed by God, and unless He blesses the efforts for new life to be conceived there will be no new life! God uses means, so even through a natural process, we can see God creating in some way each new life – Psa. 139:13; Isa. 42:5; Zech. 12:1).

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- ▶ Which view is correct? Godly believers throughout the history of the church have disagreed, and this is not a doctrine to be used as a test of fellowship. Ultimately we must confess that all life comes from God and will return to Him.
- ▶ Psalm 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep. 3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. 5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.