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Word of His Grace  
Christian Ministry

Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ through the exposition of God's Holy Word, the Bible.

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# The Nature of Man

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Since the beginning, man's nature has been a topic of great interest and an ongoing science. On the sixth day of creation, God declared, "*Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness...*" (Genesis 1:26).

### What does this mean exactly?

What is man's composition; is man a wholistic, undivided being made up of the physical, mental, and spiritual or a dualistic being made of the physical and an indestructible immortal soul? Answering these questions are also closely tied to other issues; such as death, the grave, the afterlife, and just rewards.

Men like Job and David asked, "What is **man**, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?" (Job 7:17).

"**LORD**, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!" (Psalm 144:3).

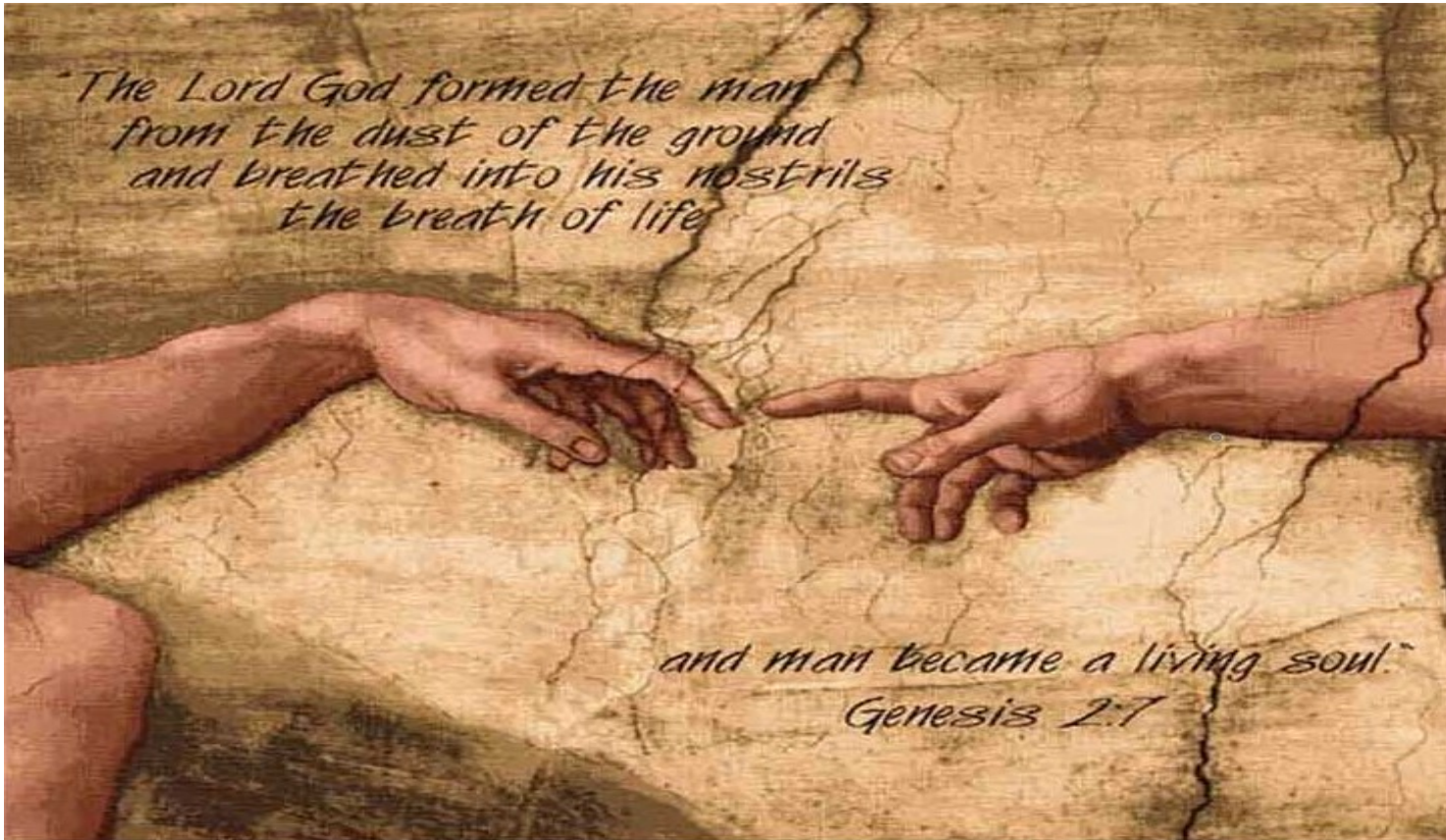
### How exactly was man created?

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

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**NOTE:** The word for *soul* in Hebrew is *nephesh*, which can be translated as being, life, and various aspects of our being, such as one's strength, heart, etc. As reflected throughout the scriptures, the Hebrews did not equate *nephesh (soul)* with an immaterial, indestructible, or an immortal soul separate from the body.

History bears record that this idea was introduced by others, like the Egyptians and later refined by Greek philosophers. Instead, *nephesh (soul)* refers to man as a wholistic being, undivided; the totality of man's human nature.

### What is this breath of life?

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

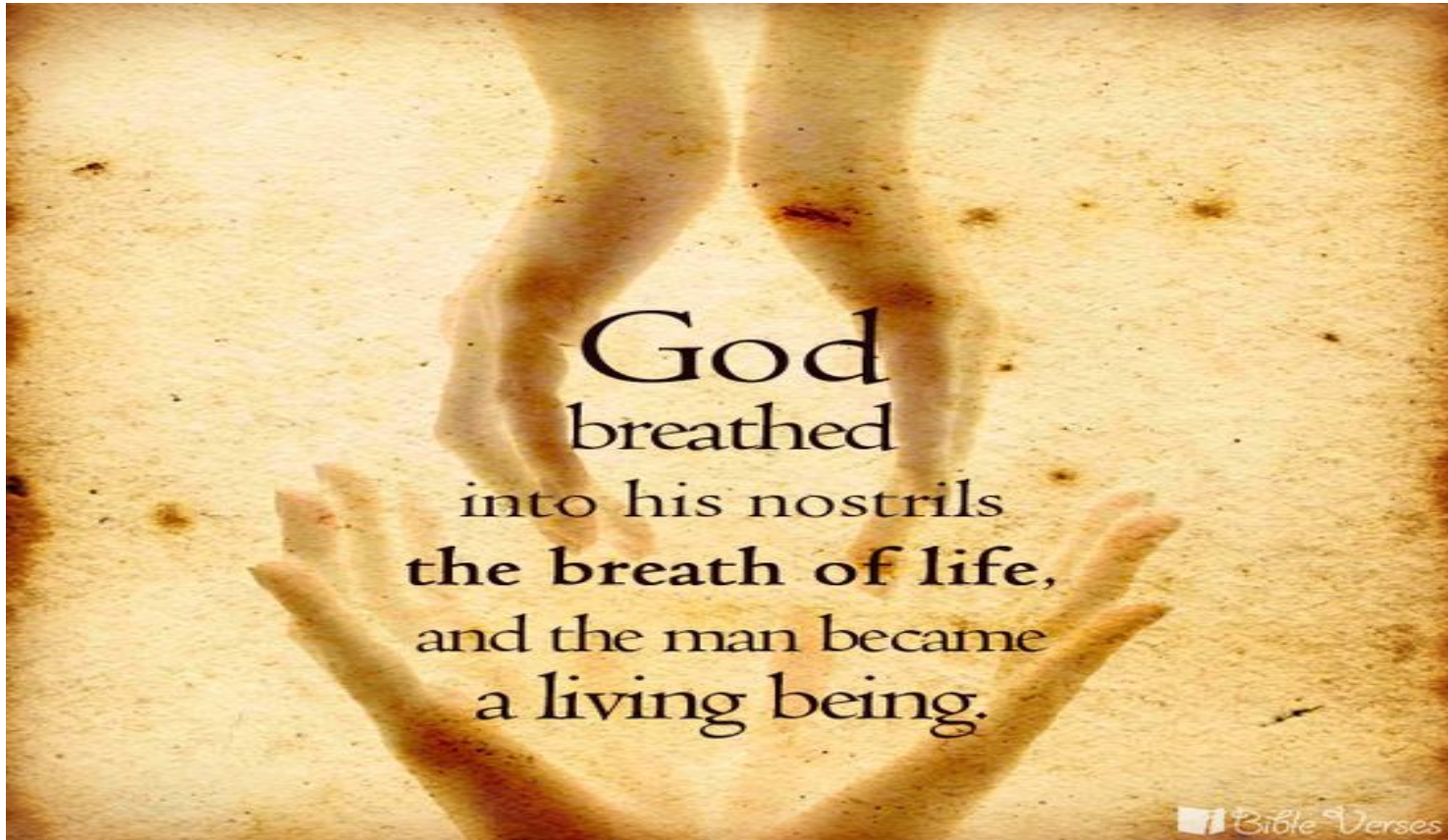
"Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their **breath**, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy **spirit**, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:29-30).

**NOTE:** The word spirit in Hebrew is *ruach*, which literally means moving air; wind. These texts show that the words "*breath*" and "*spirit*" are used interchangeably in Scripture. The following passage expresses this truth further:

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“The **Spirit** of God hath made me, and the **breath** of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4).

“If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his **spirit** and his **breath**; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto **dust**” (Job 34:14-15).

“And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy **all** flesh, wherein is the **breath of life**, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die” (Genesis 6:17). See also **Genesis 7:22**.

**NOTE:** The difference between *nephesh* (*soul*) and *ruach* (*spirit*) is that the former describes a living person in relationship to other human beings, while the latter describes a person in relationship to God. Neither the soul nor the spirit is part of human nature that survives the body at death.

**Are there additional passages in the Bible that emphasize this truth?**

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the **breath** of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6).

“Thus saith the God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth **breath** unto the people upon it, and **spirit** to them that

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walk therein” (Isaiah 42:5).

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

### At death where does one go?

“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah” (Psalm 89:48).

“Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb” (Job 21:32).

“If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness” (Job 17:13).

### Is there consciousness in death?

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:4).

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

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## How is death described in the Bible?

“So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep” (Job 14:12).

**NOTE:** The term ‘*soul sleep*’ is a metaphor used by some describes the *intermediate state*; the time between one's death and future resurrection. What happens during this time is a great mystery; however, believers are assured by Christ of a coming, future resurrection.

Also, the term ‘*immortal soul*’ is not found in holy bible; once again, Greek philosophers' introduced and influenced the early Jews with their philosophies and culture (aka *Hellenism*).

“Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of death*” (Psalm 13:3).

## How did Jesus refer to death?

“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his *death*: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep” (John 11:11-13).

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The Parable of the  
**RICH MAN**  
& **LAZARUS**

## Will man remain in the grave forever?

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall **awake**, some to everlasting **life**, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all** that are in the **graves** shall hear his voice, And shall come **forth**; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

## What about the following New Testament passages?

### The Rich Man & Lazarus

Jesus told this **parable** as a condemnation against the Pharisees, after a prolonged controversy with them regarding money, with its social and religious attitudes between the rich and poor (v 1-13). Although the previous parable about the unjust steward was addressed to the disciples, it was also directed toward the Pharisees (v. 14).

Some make the claim that since no other parable uses an actual **name**, Jesus must be referring to a real **person** in **verse 19**. However, there is no **known rule** that says parables cannot use names.

Also, the very name **Lazarus**, a spin off Eliezer means “*God helps*”, which highlights in the parable that God helped the poor man.

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EVERYONE  
who belongs to  
*Christ*  
will be given  
NEW LIFE

1 Corinthians 15:22

Both verses, 1 and 19 begins with “*There was a certain rich man.*” Both parables use the same name, with one being unjust but wise, while the other is poor.

Additionally, the parable highlights rich and poor by contrast:

Rich man (v 19) / Lazarus the beggar (v 20).

Clothed in fine linen & ate well (v 19) / begged & full of sores (v 20).

Both Lazarus, the beggar / dogs are at the rich man’s table (v 21).

The beggar died / rich man buried (v 22).

**Note:** It was considered a disgrace not to be buried. Bodies not buried were commonly eaten by animals.

Rich man ends up in hell (the realm of the dead, the grave) / Lazarus ends up in Abraham’s bosom (v 23).

**Note:** During the time of Jesus, Jews had been heavily influenced by hellenism (Greek culture), which taught the immortality of the soul, and Hell (*hades*) became popularly known as a place conscious torment.

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If Jesus wanted to refer the fiery judgment to come, he would have used the word (*gehenna*). Yet, the New Testament writers did not equate hades/sheol with gehenna. Instead, like Paul, hades (the place of the dead) was emphasized, along with the resurrection. See **1 Cor. 15:51-54**.

The word for “**bosom**” is kolpos [kowlpo], which literally refers to the side or lap of a person. So, traditionally, it is a figurative phrase that draws from the then popular belief that the righteous would rest by Abraham's side in the world to come.

So, the rich man & beggar are both children of Abraham; known in part for his hospitality. See **Gen. 18:1-15**.

The rich man is in torment / Lazarus is in comfort (**v's 23-24**).

The rich man had good things / Lazarus evil things (**v 25**).

The rich man's and beggar's end are fixed, it is irreversible (**v 26**).

Abraham appeals to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, for in them, instructions are given to the rich and poor alike!

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**Conclusion:** The *Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus* is not a proof text for the intermediate state of consciousness or of gehenna (*fiery judgment*). It is rather, a rebuke to the rich and their mistreatment of the poor; in which Jesus turns the table of a popular opinion, regarding the rich and poor upside down. See [Amos 2:6](#); [Eze. 16:48-49](#); [Isa. 58:6](#).

Depart & Be With Christ

*“To depart and to be with Christ”* (Philippians 1:22-23):

It's important to note that Paul here is speaking in relational terms and is not making a definitive statement about **the state of man**, between death and the resurrection.

Absent From The Body...Present With The Lord

*“Absent from the body and to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:1-8):

Paul here compares our earthly house (*body*) to *“a building of God”*, *“this tabernacle”* to *“an house not made with hands”* (v. 1), which body is reserved for us in Heaven (v. 2). Paul desires our current bodies to be *“swallowed up of life”*, which is future (v. 4).

So, *“absent”* from the body is Paul's way of expressing being absent from this mortal or current body and *“present with the Lord”* is his desire to be in a new glorious body with Christ. Paul obviously refers to death as the time of being naked or unclothed (v. 3).

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Does Paul say when believers will be given immortality?

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

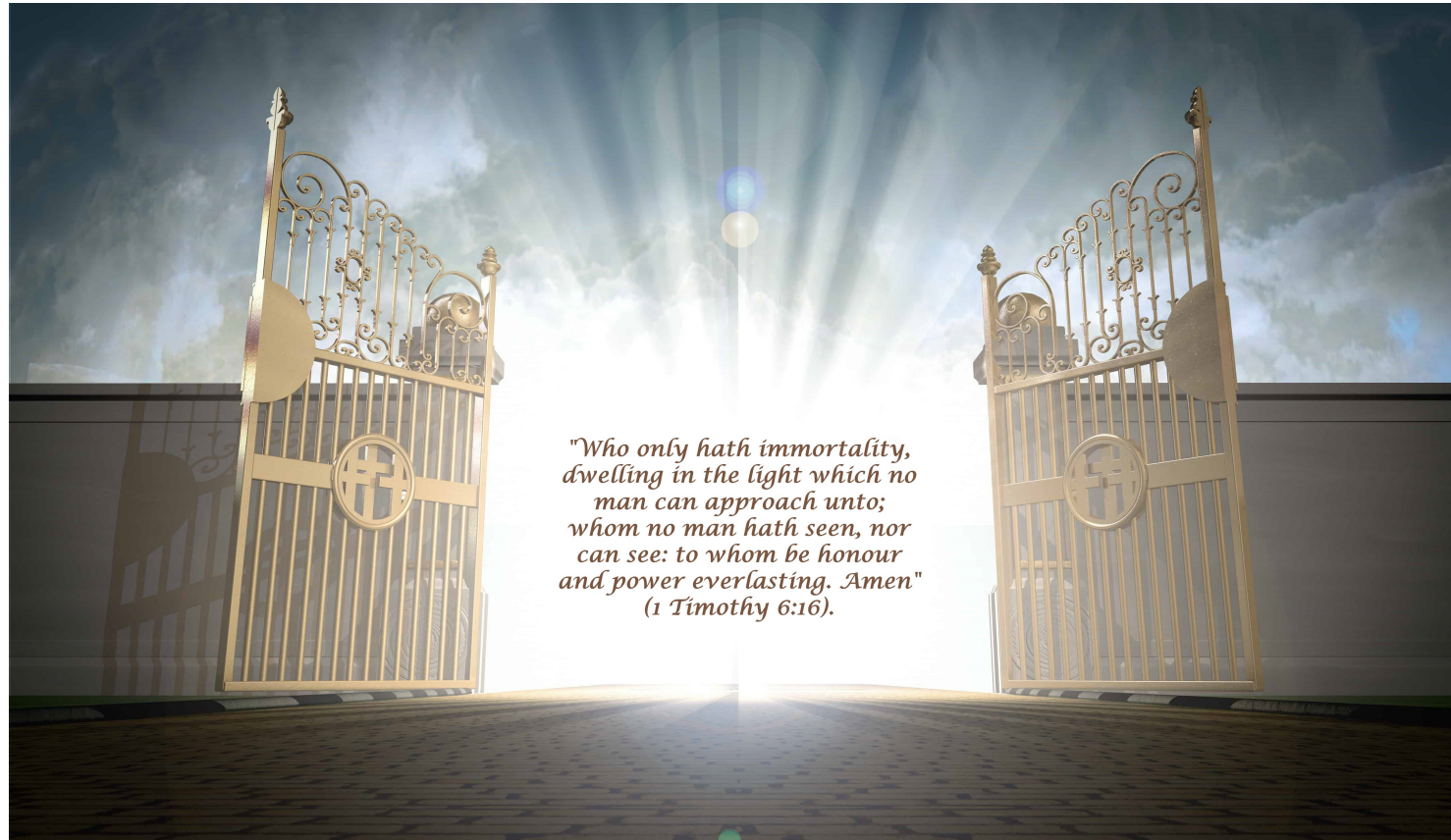
For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).

Paul speaks of the believer looking forward, seeking “glory, honour, immortality, eternal life” (Romans 2:7).

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Who alone has immortality?

“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; **Who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

When will God’s promise of immortality be fulfilled?

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should **raise it up** again at the **last day**. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, **may have everlasting life**: and I will **raise him up** at the **last day**” (John 6:39-40).