

## Session 4

# CREATION OF THE SOUL

When and how was the soul created?

## Questions:

- When was the soul created?
- What part, if any, do our parents play in the creation of the soul?
- Is the soul “inserted” into our body? If so, when? At conception? After conception? At birth? Or sometime after birth?
- Does it really matter?

## Psalm 139:1-17

“O LORD, you examine me and know. 2 You know when I sit down and when I get up; even from far away you understand my motives. 3 You carefully observe me when I travel or when I lie down to rest; you are aware of everything I do. 4 Certainly my tongue does not frame a word without you, O LORD, being thoroughly aware of it. 5 You squeeze me in from behind and in front; you place your hand on me. 6 Your knowledge is beyond my comprehension; it is so far beyond me, I am unable to fathom it. 7 Where can I go to escape your spirit? Where can I flee to escape your presence? 8 If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there. If I were to sprawl out in Sheol, there you would be. 9 If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn, and settle down on the other side of the sea, 10 even there your hand would guide me, your right hand would grab hold of me. 11 If I were to say, ‘Certainly the darkness will cover me, and the light will turn to night all around me,’ 12 even the darkness is not too dark for you to see, and the night is as bright as day; darkness and light are the same to you. 13 Certainly you made my mind and heart; you wove me together in my mother’s womb. 14 I will give you thanks because your deeds are awesome and amazing. You knew me thoroughly; 15 my bones were not hidden from you, when I was made in secret and sewed together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb. All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll before one of them came into existence. 17 How difficult it is for me to fathom your thoughts about me, O God! How vast are their sum total!”

## Options:

1. Pre-existence Theory
2. Creation Theory
3. Traducian Theory

### ***Pre-existence Theory:***

This theory teaches that people's souls/spirits are eternal and, therefore, preexist the creation of their bodies. The sin nature can be attributed to the former state of existence in which the person sinned.

#### **Adherents:**

Origen, Delitzsch

### ***Creation Theory:***

This theory is that God Himself creates each person's soul individually, and then places the soul in the body.

#### **Adherents:**

Grudem, Hodge, Berkhof, Calvin, and Roman Catholics

### ***Traducian Theory:***

Comes from the Latin tradux, meaning "inheritance, transmission." This theory teaches that the soul is created in and with the body by the parents. While God is the ultimate creator of all things, he uses people intermediately or as secondary causes.

#### **Adherents:**

Tertullian, Luther, and Jonathan Edwards

***What say you?***

## Arguments for Pre-existence Theory:

1. No biblical or philosophical arguments to support this view.
2. Common outcome of Gnostic Dualism.

## Arguments for the Creation Theory:

1. The creation account evidences that God creates the body from the earth and the soul is created directly by God.

### **Genesis 2:7**

“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.” (KJV)

2. The Bible explicitly says that God created the soul.

### **Zechariah 12:1**

“The revelation of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: The LORD—He who stretches out the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth, who forms the human spirit within a person—says.”

### **Hebrews 12:9**

“Besides, we have experienced discipline from our earthly fathers and we respected them; shall we not submit ourselves all the more to the Father of spirits and receive life?”

3. Christ was like us in every way, yet without sin. If God does not create each soul individually, Christ's soul was not created by God, but by Mary (since He is like us in every way). If this is the case, Christ's soul is sinful like hers.

## Response to Creation Theory:

1. This evidences a bad translation in the KJV. The creation account speaks not to the creation of the soul, but the giving of life as most modern translations recognize. The same is said of the animals when God gives them life.

### **Genesis 2:7**

“The LORD God formed the man from the soil of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (emphasis added. NET; also see NIV, ESV, NLT, NAS)

### **Genesis 1:30**

“And to all the animals of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life [nephesh] in it—I give every green plant for food.’ It was so.”

2. This is trying to say too much about the direct creation of the soul. God is the ultimate Creator of all things, material and immaterial, but this does not mean that He does not use intermediaries in the creation process. If this argument were true, then it would also have to mean that God directly created the body without using the parents as the intermediate cause since Ps. 139:13-15 says that God formed our body.

### **Psalms 136:13-15**

“Certainly you made my mind and heart; you wove me together in my mother’s womb. I will give you thanks because your deeds are awesome and amazing. You knew me thoroughly; my bones were not hidden from you, when I was made in secret and sewed together in the depths of the earth.”

3. It could be that Christ did not have original sin because it is inherited through the Father. This would explain the necessity of the virgin birth.

## Arguments for Traducian Theory:

1. It better explains the inheritance of original sin and corruption as being handed down, in both body and soul, by Adam.

On the other hand, if God creates each soul directly, and each person is born sinful in both body and soul, then how did the soul become sinful? Did God create a sinful soul and then unite it to the sin corrupted body? This would make God the author of sin—not man.

2. There is no problem in saying that people have been granted the power to create a soul as well as a body. To object would devalue the miraculous nature of the creation of the body.

On the other hand, to say that God must create the soul directly because man does have such great power of creativity, evidences a Gnostic understanding of the separation between the body and the soul, believing that the soul is more important, virtuous, or miraculous than the body.

## Positive Implications of the Traducian Theory:

1. It does not give undue prominence to the soul by saying it is the only part of the human constitution that is created directly by God.

2. It fits better with the Conditional Unity theory of man.

3. It fits better with the understanding of original sin in that there remains a complete solidarity of the human race.

4. There is no doubt that man is a complete and whole person at the time of conception.

If God did not indirectly create man's soul/spirit through the parents, but directly created it Himself, how can we be sure when He gives the soul to a person? In other words, how do we know when a "fetus" (body) becomes a person (body and soul/spirit)?

– At conception?

– At the age of accountability?

– Sometime after?

– At birth?

# GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many people would see this lesson as irrelevant to real life and therefore not important. Do you think the study of the creation of the soul is relevant?

Please explain.

2. The pre-existence theory says that our souls pre-existed the creation of our body. How have you seen this view implicitly evidenced by people's beliefs?

3. The creation view of the soul has been popular throughout church history. Why do you think that this view is attractive?

4. The traducian view of the soul says that parents are intermediate causes for the creation of the soul. Do you think that it is possible for this to be the case? Please explain why or why not.

5. Do you think that it is possible to be a creationist and to support abortion. Keep in mind that, according to the creationist view, we cannot be absolutely certain when God joins the soul with the body? Why or why not?

6. The study of the creation of the soul has become somewhat of a theological pastime. Most people have never dealt with the issues presented in this lesson.

Why do you think this is the case?

7. How is your thinking most challenged by this lesson? Please explain.

