

# The Trip to the Afterlife, part 1

I would like to share with you a sermon from Douglas Hamilton, preacher at the Junction City Church of Christ, Junction City, KS.

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[Douglas Hamilton Video link](#)

## *Hollywood loves to talk about the afterlife.*

They've made 100's of movies that address the afterlife. It's a huge topic behind love & violence. Everybody always likes to talk about the afterlife. Like "All Dogs Go to Heaven," remember "Oh God" with George Burns. They chose him because he was like the oldest man on earth at the time. Remember "Beetlejuice," that was about the afterlife. "It's a Wonderful Life," how about "The Sixth Sense." At the end you found out, hey this whole thing was about the afterlife. Then you had to piece hollywood stuff together. "Field of Dreams" They celebrated that game, that was an afterlife thing. Where do you go? Out into a corn field in Iowa and play baseball. "Heaven Can Wait" with Warren Beatty, apparently you get a sweatsuit in heaven. What about "Ghosts"? That's the biggest one isn't it? These are just ones that I am familiar with. Hollywood is still with discussions on the afterlife. And the sad part is, we can choose to be spiritual imbeciles and let that feed into what we believe about eternal life and not even be close.

The media wants to talk about the afterlife, but they don't want to use the scriptures. They just make stuff up as they go.

**Douglas says,**

*"As a minister I've gotten so many questions about the afterlife which are anchored in a movie and not in the scriptures. And I always just ask them, 'Do you want the Biblical answer or do you want the Hollywood answer? Well, I want the Bible answer. Will you accept what the Bible has to say?'"*

Because Christians use the Bible. So let's get going. This is a four part series. We will do part 1 this morning, part 2 this evening and we'll conclude with parts 3 & 4 on January 1<sup>st</sup>, the first Sunday of January.

Where we start in the series "The Trip to the Afterlife, Part 1", we're going to start out with this premise in Genesis 1:26, a foundational understanding:

## We are made in the likeness and image of God

This is a **powerful** statement in the Bible, but unless we calculate it into the equation you can't even begin to [understand what] it takes to digest this.

SR: Since we are made in the likeness and image of God, we might ask, "How are we like God?", "Does God have a body, eyes, ears, and nose?" Let's investigate how we are made in His likeness and

image by looking at the nature of God.

SR: Beginning, in the beginning, with Genesis 1:26. Notice the pronouns used. In today's world there's a big emphasis on *preferred pronouns*. Let's see what God's preferred pronouns are.

### **Genesis 1:26,**

*Then God said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness..."*

### **In the Bible pronouns mean something**

Notice the call of God [is] in the plurality. [God uses *plural* pronouns.] The word for God in this text is *Elohim*, which is plural. We have a *triune* God (*i.e. consisting of three in one*), being God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They [are] one God with three components. The Father is the Planner, His Son is the Builder, and the Holy Spirit is the Completer of all in the universe. They always work in concert with each other.

*And we see this throughout the Bible. In Creation, in Information, and in Salvation, we see God planning, Jesus building, and the Holy Spirit finishing. For example:*

## **In Creation**

### **God planned the creation. He's the Architect**

- **Jeremiah 10:12** states He *"established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens."*
- God questions Job in: **Job 38:4**, *"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding"*

### **Jesus Built in creation. He's the actual Builder**

- **John 1:3**, *"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."*
- **Colossians 1:15,16**, *"[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."*
- **Hebrews 1:2**, *... [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world.*

### **The Holy Spirit finished creation.**

- **Genesis 1:2**, *"The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."*
- **Job 26:13**, *"By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens"*

# The Same Thing with the Word

## God planned the words.

- **John 14:10**, *“The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works”*
- **John 14:24**, *“the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.”*

The **Father** provided the words, the information He has given us.

## Jesus spoke the words.

- **John 1:1,2**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.*
- **John 1:14**, *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Jesus is the **ONE** who *spoke* the information, the words.

## The Holy Spirit completed the words.

- **Mark 16:20**, *“And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.”*

What did the Holy Spirit have to do with it? He backed it up! He confirmed the inspired writings in our hand

- Paul tells us in: **1 Thessalonians 1:5**, *for our gospel did **not** come to you **in word only**, but also **in power** and **in the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction;...*
- **1 Corinthians 1:6**, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you,

The Holy Spirit confirmed the word for us.

So we have this pattern established, God planned, Jesus is the builder, and the Holy Spirit is the completer.

# The Same Thing for the Actual Plan of Salvation

## God planned salvation.

- **Ephesians 1:4**, *“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”*

We are **NOT** an afterthought God planned this!

## But Jesus built salvation.

- **John 14:6**, *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father*

*but through Me.”*

Jesus is the one who blazes the trail for us.

## The Holy Spirit completes salvation.

- **Romans 8:11**, “*But if **the Spirit** of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you.*”

All three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are one. **Before** time, **during** time, and **after** time, they are working together. The Scripture makes a clear connection of the three. They are in concert with each other, functioning as a Triune Being.

- **Matthew 28:19**, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations [How?], baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*”

There they are in our salvation.

- In our very existence in the church, **2 Corinthians 13:14**, “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.*”

God is triune, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, three persons, three components. They are triune, they are always going to be triune. The **ONLY** time was when God turned His back on Jesus and the sky went dark as the sins of the world were being put on that cross. That’s the only time. That’s **NOT** happening again, because that was **PAID** once for all. And so, God is triune.

Don’t think of God in the Hollywood way as an old guy with a beard and a lightning bolt in his hand, ready to throw from heaven, patterned after Zeus, the god of Greek mythology. God is not like that. He is triune. When you’re thinking God, think also of the Son and Holy Spirit, because these three are all one package. They have different parts, different purposes, but God is triune.

But you know, **We** are made in the likeness and image of God... Why? Because, We are also triune in our existence, *did you know that?*, being body, soul, and spirit. This is confirmed through the Scriptures[...] captured in the following three verses.

- **Matthew 10:28**, “*Do not fear those who kill **the body** but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both **soul and body** in hell.*”

So, we know we have a **body** and a **soul**

- **Hebrews 4:12**, *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of **soul and spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and [able] to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

We have a **soul** and **spirit**

- Paul comes out and names all three in defining us in: **1 Thessalonians 5:23**, *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify **you entirely** (i.e. in your entirety — that’s all of you); and may **your spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved **complete** (your entirety), without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We are **three parts, just like God**. We are **body, soul, and spirit**, equally triune. **In this way**, we are made in the likeness and image of our triune God. We are different from other creatures. We are truly different.

Why is it important to understand this at the beginning of our study? It is because we cannot understand *the trip to the afterlife* without knowing the components of humankind.

What's the best way to deal with potential misunderstandings of the scripture? It's to make sure the foundation is strong. If we don't understand that we are made in the likeness and image of God, that we are triune, *body, soul, and spirit*, then we will not understand what the Bible wants us to understand from the scriptures.

## **E.G., let's look at: The Three Dimensions of Man**

### **1. First you have: The Body**

If you have a body, raise your hand.

Good, you couldn't raise your hand if you didn't have a body. Ok, it's a simple point, but you have to go further than that to understand what the Bible says. What Hollywood does is, they want to base everything on the *physical* body. We're going to look the same, we're going to have a sweatsuit, whatever. They base everything on the *physical* earth.

Our body is the part of man for which we are all most familiar with. It is what we know of every person, for it was designed for our presence in this realm—the physical realm. We have a body built for this realm, but **only** for this realm. Additionally, it is the portion of man which will perish, it's temporary. The physical realm is temporary, it's finite, it has an end coming.

- **Psalm 103:15,16**, "*As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. <sup>16</sup> When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.*"
- **Hebrews 9:27**, "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die*"

What if Jesus comes back?... Oh we'll chew on that later...

- **Philippians 3:21**, refers to the body that we have right now the... "*body of our humble state.*"

And what he's talking about is, this body is going away. And the older I get, the happier I am that I don't have to get stuck with this {points to his body!}

Douglas says, "I had somebody in hospice one time ask me a question, they're almost at the point of death and they said, 'Do you think we'll kinda just pick up where we're at?' I let them process it, 'What do **you** think?' they said, 'No, because it wouldn't be heaven if I was in this dilapidated condition.'" And that's right! This body is for this realm.

### **2. But then we have The Soul**

That's the real person, that's the one we need to be concerned about.

Our soul our inner being, encompassing everything about us. Our sexuality (isn't that biological?

Yeah, but it's driven by your soul), personal preferences, intentions, knowledge, memories, all these things that are part of you, who make you, you, is your soul. That's your soul.

If we desire to have a steak, if that's what you're craving, it is because our *"soul desires to eat flesh"* (**Deut. 12:20**). When we long for God, it is our soul which thirsts for Him (**Ps 63:1**). The knowledge of being fearfully and wonderfully made is captured in the soul (**Ps 139:14**). When you remember someone who has passed, it is your soul which remembers (**Lam 3:20**). Our soul is the real version of ourselves, being our *"inner man"* (**Eph 3:16**). We have an outer man, we have an inner man.

And though our outward body is temporary, our soul is eternal. Long after we pass from this life, what remains of you is your soul, the soul will continue into the afterlife. **2 Cor 4:16**, *"though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."*

### 3. Now The Spirit

Let's digest the word ***spirit*** for just a moment. Paul said in **1 Thes 5:23** that we have a spirit, soul and body, but what is the spirit of which he speaks. What is he referring to?

The word *"spirit"* can mean many things such as the following.

- a. Wind (pneuma) - **Hebrews 1:7** (KJV, NKJV) "... who makes his angels winds/spirits"
- b. Breath (pneuma) - **II Thessalonians 2:8** "spirit of his mouth" (KJV)
- c. A Resurrected Soul (pneuma) - **1 Corinthians 15:45** "last Adam became a life-giving soul"
- d. Personal Sentiment - **Matthew 5:3**, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit"*
- e. Intentions - **Philippians 1:27**, *"standing firm in one spirit"*
- f. Holy Spirit (pneuma) - **Acts 2:38** And Peter {said} to them, *"the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

None of these fit the context [of our composition], yet there is one definition which does apply, [that] being the ***"spirit of life"***. The spirit of life is what was God breathed into Adam and made man a living soul. **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. The spirit of life is what was driven from those who were drowned in the Great Flood. **Genesis 7:22** *"in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died."*

We have the *"spirit of life"* within us. It is the life force which energizes the body and soul of man. The body cannot live without the spirit of life, neither could the soul. But the spirit of life never leaves the soul, the soul leaves the body, that's why the body dies. We'll cover more of that in detail in the next lesson.

The spirit of life is that mysterious life force which powers the being, for which science cannot dismiss nor explain.

- **Ps 104:29**, *"Thou dost take away their spirit, they expire, and return to their dust."*
- **Job 33:4**, *"...the breath of the Almighty gives me life."*
- **Job 34:14,15**, *"If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to himself His spirit and His breath,"* <sup>15</sup> *All flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust."*

The body cannot live without the spirit of life and neither can the soul. According to the Scriptures, when our physical body dies, the soul dis-associates from the body, taking the spirit of life with it. It is the spirit of life that keeps the soul alive, eternally alive, for it was what made man a “*living soul*”. The “*spirit of life*” that God has connected to our souls makes it possible to continue to eternal life or eternal damnation.

TO CANAAN’S LAND I’M ON MY WAY #867

To Canaan’s land I’m on my way, Where the soul (of man) never dies;  
My darkest night will turn today, Where the soul (of man) never dies.  
Dear friends, there’ll be no sad farewells, There’ll be no tear-dimmed eyes,  
Where all is peace and joy and love, And the soul of man never dies.

## Conclusion

### **You see, we are made in God’s likeness and image**

And not only is this going to help us understand our trip to the afterlife, but it also is the very reason why we treat each other [like we ARE] made in the likeness and image of the living God, because we are.

What sex is a soul?

What color is a soul?

How rich is a soul?

In this way when somebody is baptized into Christ [they are] neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for we are all one in Christ..., How? Because a soul comes up from [the water]. You may have sown a body, but God saw a soul committed to Jesus. And that soul, understanding the triune quality of humans, that they are made in the likeness and image of God, is what makes it possible to value another human being. We are commanded to love our neighbor, [we are commanded to love our enemies,] we’re commanded to love those made in the likeness and image of God. And every human being is made in the likeness and image of God. And that soul is going to keep going, there’ll be a new body later on, we’ll cover and describe what that body’s like later.

But that soul with the spirit of life is not going to die. Your soul is not going to die.

The question is: Where is your soul going?

## Invitation

We are extending the invitation, now, to anyone who is subject to it. Come,... while we stand and sing.