
The Gospel Proclamation

Christadelphian Unamended First Principles

Proposition 4

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PROPOSITION 4 – That the first man was Adam, whom God created out of the dust of the ground as a living soul, or natural body of life, "very good" in kind and condition, and he was placed under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience. Gen. 2:7, 17; Job 4:19; 33:6; 1 Cor. 15:46-49.

What It Means

This proposition emphasizes and contrasts the *initial* state of man when God first created him as compared to what man has been since the fall. It describes man's condition *before* the fall as being "very good" and without sin and death, but because of the fall, human beings have become weak, limited, and mortal by nature in the sense of being a corrupt, dying being.

In this episode, we will focus on how God created man, how man became a living "soul" and what that means, what the "very good" state was, and what the law in the garden of Eden entailed.

Scriptural Testimony

Let's first look at the creation of man and the soul.

The origin of the human race is recorded for us in Genesis 2. We read in

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.*

There was a clear process for creating the life that was man. God first took the dust of the earth and formed man's body out of this material. His body was formed, but the man was not a "living soul" yet. It was only after God breathed into man the breath of life that man became a living being. So man was created from the dust, had breath breathed into him, and therefore became a living being. Before any of this, man existed only as an idea in God's mind. Our human race did not pre-exist God's creation.

Man was created through the same process that God used to create the animals. It says in

Genesis 2:19 – *And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air...*

Since man and beast were created through the same means, it is logical that they *cease to exist* in the same way, and this is what we find the Scriptures to teach. We will not cover this in depth because the next episode will do that, but it's important to our subject that we at least touch on it. After the fall, man was told in

Genesis 3:19 – *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou **return** unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for **dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.***

Man was formed from the dust, given the breath of life, and he became a living soul (or creature). The death process is the reversal of this. Man's breath leaves his lips when he dies, and he returns to the dust he was created out of. This is what we see concerning the animals both in nature and in Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 3:18-20 – *I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. (19) For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. (20) All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*

Psalms 49:20 – *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.*

This brings us to the question of what “the soul” is. The Hebrew word *nephesh* is translated in Scripture as “life, person, heart, mind, body, and being”, appearing in over 750 passages. It is used consistently throughout the Bible to refer not only to humans, but also to animals and other living creatures. At its core, *nephesh* denotes a living being—one that is alive.

According to the Biblical account, man became a living soul when his body received the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). In this sense, man does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul. When life is present, man “is”; when that life departs, man “is not.”

Animals likewise share in this same principle of life. Scripture affirms that both man and beast are sustained by the same life force and share a common condition as we have just seen (Genesis 7:21–22; Ecclesiastes 3:19). Thus, *nephesh* is applied equally to humans and animals, indicating natural, living beings rather than an inherently immortal essence. Since both man and animals are the same kind of “soul” or “living creature”, they either both have a mortal soul or have an immortal one. The Scriptures are clear that they are mortal.

This places both humans and animals in clear distinction from plant life. While plants are described as living and growing (Genesis 1:11–12), they are never called *nephesh* (“soul” or “living creature”) because they do not have the breath of life. Furthermore, Scripture consistently uses different language to describe their end. Plants are said to wither, fade, or be cut down. Isaiah 40:7–8 says that “*the grass withers, the flower fades*”. Psalm 37:2 says, “*they... shall wither as the green herb*”. In Jonah 4:7, the plant “*withered*.”

By contrast, humans and animals are said to “die.” This distinction in language is significant. Plants are portrayed as perishing in a passive, natural sense, while *nephesh*—living beings—are described in terms of death, emphasizing that creatures and plants operate on a different principle. **The distinction is the breath of life.** Man and animals have the breath of life, plants do not. Man and animals therefore “die”, plants “wither and fade”. In the account of the flood of Noah's day, we note in Genesis 7:22 that “*all in whose nostrils was the breath of life... died*,” including both man and beast.

In a large number of instances—over 320 times—*nephesh* is directly associated with death. Scripture explicitly teaches that “*the soul that sins, it shall die*”, Ezekiel 18:4 being just one place. The consistent Biblical witness, therefore, is that the soul is not inherently immortal, but is rather a living being whose existence depends on the presence of the breath of life. There are countless passages which speak of a soul both *being born* and *dying*, and we will cite just a few here. Note that these verses explicitly teach that the *soul* is born or dies, not just the body.

Genesis 46:27 – *And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.*

It was the *souls* that were born, referring to the living people. We see this kind of verbiage again in

Exodus 1:5 – *And all **the souls** that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy **souls**...*

Just as souls, or creatures, or born, they can also die. In Joshua’s conquest of the land, we read that *souls* were destroyed, or killed.

Joshua 10:39 – *And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all **the souls** that were therein; he left none remaining...*

Joshua 11 shows this same thing, and it ties in the fact that the destruction of the soul occurs *when the breath of life exits a being*. It says in

Joshua 11:11 – *And they smote all **the souls** that were therein with the edge of the sword, **utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe**...*

When the breath of life leaves a being, the soul is destroyed. Like we read in

Ecclesiastes 12:7 – *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

Some other verses which show the mortality of the soul are as follows:

Job 7:15 – *So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.*

Psalms 78:50 – *He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death...*

Isaiah 53:12 – *... he hath poured out his soul unto death...*

Ezekiel 18:4 – *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

James 5:20 – *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Man’s soul is simply his being of a living creature. Once he dies, he ceases to be a “living soul” and becomes a dead one. But this is not how God created man. It is essential that we understand the difference between what man was *before* the fall and what he became *as a result* of the fall.

“Very good”

When God finished His creative work on the sixth day, we’re told in

Genesis 1:31 – *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was **very good**. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

The word “good” in Genesis is translated from the Hebrew *tob*, signifying that which is fitting, pleasing, or in a state of divine approval. At the completion of creation, God declared everything to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31), a phrase which is not ascribed to mankind after the fall and the entrance of sin.

This “very good” state indicates that Adam and Eve, though formed from the dust of the ground, were made in the likeness and image of the angels, also referred to as Elohim (Genesis 1:26–27). The term “likeness” carries the idea of resemblance or comparison. Man was given dominion over the earth as God’s representative and

was endowed with the capacity for moral and intellectual development, enabling him to reflect the divine character.

In this original condition, mankind was placed under divine law, expressed in the command concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in Genesis 2:16–17, which stated, “*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*”

This established a state of probation. Adam and Eve were not created inherently immortal, nor were they under an immediate sentence of death; rather, their continued life was conditional upon obedience. Death was only introduced as the stated penalty for disobedience—“*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*”

Thus, the “very good” state was a conditional one. As long as they did not break God’s law – which we refer to as the Edenic law – they would remain in the “very good” state. Humanity was therefore capable of continued life, but not incapable of death. Immortality was not possessed by nature. When Adam transgressed, his sin lay not merely in the act of eating, but in disobedience to the expressed will of God.

As a result of this transgression, “*sin entered into the world, and death by sin*”. This is how Romans 5:12 describes what happened. The sentence pronounced brought about a change in human condition and the condemnation to death as expressed in Genesis 3:1, “*dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*” From that point forward, mankind came under what Scripture later terms “*the law of sin and death*” in Romans 8:2. This is the legal sentence of condemnation to return to the dust from which man was formed.

Consequently, man is no longer in the “very good” state, but exists in a fallen condition, subject to sin and mortality. The effects of sin are not merely legal, but physical, affecting human nature itself. Life is now temporary, and death is the universal end of all descendants of Adam apart from the hope set forth in the promises of God.

Why This a First Principle

Proposition 4 lays an essential foundation for understanding the Biblical record in its proper order. It stands as a first principle of the Truth because it defines what man is, how life exists, and what happens at death.

Life is the result of the union of body and breath—“dust” from the ground and the breath of life from God. Man does not possess an independent, immortal entity within him; rather, he is a living being because of this union. When death occurs, that process is reversed. The breath of life returns to God who gave, and the body returns to the dust from which it was taken (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

For this reason, Scripture consistently describes death as a state of unconsciousness, often likened to sleep like we see in John 11:11–14. The elements that once produced life are simply separated, and the living being ceases to exist because the conditions necessary for life are no longer present. Death, therefore, is not the release of an immortal soul, but the dissolution of the whole man. Understanding how man was formed provides the foundation for understanding what happens at death: it is the complete undoing of life, awaiting the hope of resurrection through the power of God.

This principle also establishes a vital truth about the origin of sin and death. These were not part of the original creation. Man was created “very good,” in a state of harmony and fellowship with God. Sin, death, and corruption entered the world not by God’s design, but as the direct result of man’s disobedience. The loss of that “very good” state and the presence of sin in the world is therefore the consequence of man breaking God’s law, not the original design of the Creator.

Understanding this point is critical. If man were created in his present sinful, dying condition, it would mean that God Himself is the author of sin and death. In that case, what God declared to be “very good” would have included corruption and mortality. Man could then justly place the blame for the present state of the world upon God. But Scripture plainly rejects this conclusion like we saw stated in

Romans 5:12 – *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that (literally “in whom”) all have sinned:*

Recognizing that sin and death came by man’s disobedience is essential if we are to approach God acceptably. Many today look at the suffering and disorder of the world and conclude that, if God exists, He must be responsible for it and is therefore a cruel tyrant who takes pleasure in misery. Yet Scripture places the responsibility squarely upon mankind.

This leads to an important implication: since God is the One who has been offended, He alone has the right to establish the terms of reconciliation. Man cannot approach God on his own terms. However sincere human worship may appear, it is not acceptable unless it is offered on the basis God has revealed. This is the purpose and message of the Gospel—the good news of reconciliation according to God’s appointed way.

We see, then, that understanding the difference between the original nature and condition of man and that which man possesses today is essential to grasping the nature and purpose of God’s plan of salvation. God’s plan is one of restoration—the re-establishing of what was lost. Scripture speaks of this as “the restitution of all things”, and God will send His son Jesus Christ to the earth once more to enact this restitution. We’re told in

Acts 3:20-21 – *And he (God) shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: (21) **Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.***

In the beginning, God and man were in fellowship. That relationship was broken through sin, bringing the sentence of death upon the human race. If that sentence is to be removed, it can only be through the re-establishment of that relationship on God’s terms.

This is why Scripture speaks of the faithful being granted access once more to the tree of life. In Revelation 2:7, Christ’s servants are given this promise: “*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of **the tree of life**, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*”

Man was originally driven from the garden to prevent access to that tree while in a state of sin. But those who overcome sin, through obedience and faith, will receive grace and be counted worthy to partake of it. They will be given a nature that is higher than Adam’s in the beginning and that which Adam hoped to attain, for as Paul says in

1 Corinthians 15:53 – *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

Adam did not possess immortality by nature, but the redeemed will be made both *incorruptible* – meaning that they *cannot be corrupted*, and *immortal* – meaning that they *cannot die*. They will share in the perfect, divine, everlasting nature which is free of sin, death, and corruption, and God’s plan will have come full circle. The lesson is summarized for us in

Acts 3:19-21 – ***Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (20) And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: (21) Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.***

If we wish to have a part in this wonderful restoration process, we must repent and attach ourselves to God's plan through Christ.

It is difficult to discuss this more without first considering the Edenic law which man broke in the garden, and it's necessary to explain what it meant, entailed, and why man did not die that day in the garden, and this will be the subject of the next episode in Proposition 5.

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