

## 4 • A Spirit That Will Return to God

**“What does it mean to be a human being?”** Ask a hundred people and you’d get a wide variety of answers. In this 4-part series, we’ve consulted the Creator. What answers has *he* provided? What do those answers tell us about ourselves? Each other? Where we came from? Why we’re here? Where we’re going?



The final answer to our questions in this short series: **You have a \_\_\_\_\_ that will \_\_\_\_\_ to God.** That phrase comes from **Ecclesiastes 12** where young people are encouraged to remember their Creator “before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (12:1). Throughout the next few verses, the process of physical aging is poetically described (12:2-6), ultimately leading to:

...and the \_\_\_\_\_ returns to the \_\_\_\_\_ as it was, and the spirit returns to God who \_\_\_\_\_ it. (Eccl 12:7)

**What does that mean?** In order to understand, we have to go back nearly to the beginning. Notice how the creation of Adam is described in **Genesis 2:7**:

...then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the \_\_\_\_\_ and breathed into his nostrils the \_\_\_\_\_ of life, and the man became a living creature.

**Zechariah 12:1** uses much the same language:

Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and \_\_\_\_\_ the spirit of man \_\_\_\_\_ him...

Human beings have been blessed by their Creator with bodies. But you are **more** than a body. You were created in God’s own image. You have a “spirit” within you, given to you by God.

Death isn’t always easy to talk about, but with those Bible passages in mind, notice how the Holy Spirit leads James to describe physical death:

For as the body \_\_\_\_\_ from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:26)



**What is death?** Death is the separation of our bodies from our spirits. What happens when we experience physical death? “The dust returns to the earth as it was.” Moses said of God in **Psalm 90:3**, “You return man to dust.” But is that our end? **Not at all.** Even as the dust returns to the earth as it was, “the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

That’s a lot to take in. **Let’s talk about it...**

## For Class & Family Discussion:

- Practically speaking, what does it mean to “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth” (Eccl 12:1)? Why do even people who are very young need to do such a thing?
- Ecclesiastes 12:7 speaks of “the spirit” that “returns to God who gave it.” In your own words, what is this “spirit”? Why is it absolutely key for us to realize that our spirits are God-given?
- Let’s open our Bibles back to James 2. In verses 14-26, what is James talking about?
- In James 2:26, to illustrate his overall point, James draws attention to “the body apart from the spirit” being “dead.” How is this a perfect illustration of his overall point?
- As an interesting reference, let’s read Luke 16:19-22 and notice the first few verses of Jesus’ description of the rich man and Lazarus. What happened when the poor man, Lazarus, died? *What* was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side?
- Let’s revisit Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses. What can we learn from Psalm 90:1-4?
- Notice what this awareness leads Moses to pray in Psalm 90:12. What does he mean? How would you rephrase his prayer in your own words? How should what we’ve talked about in this lesson frame our overall understanding of what it means to be a human being?

## For NEXT Wednesday:

- Next Wednesday we’ll kick off a new Wednesday series for the month of October, exploring “What is Wisdom?” In Part 1 of the series, we’ll zero in on James 3:13-18. What is “wisdom that comes down from above”? How is it different from the wisdom of the world (1 Cor 1:20)? What difference can God’s wisdom make in my life?