

God is a Trinity; does humanity also have some kind of "triple structure"?

Reflections on the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments

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The Bible says: "God made man in His own image, male and female in his image." (Genesis 1:27) This verse reveals a profound truth: people are honored not only because they were created, but because they bear the image of God (Imago Dei).

However, this "image" does not mean that humans and God are essentially the same. Christianity has always emphasized: God is the one and only Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, glorious, honored, and eternal; Humans, on the other hand, are created beings who only reflect God's attributes on certain levels, such as reason, morality, love, relationships, and creativity.

Therefore, theologians throughout history have tried to find a kind of 'triple structure' in humans as a limited reflection of the Triune God. But these are only analogies, not equivalence.

1. Do people have a 'triple structure'?

The Bible does provide some 'threefold descriptions' to understand people.

First is Paul's teaching: "May your spirit, your soul, and your body be preserved." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Here, it shows that people can understand it from three levels: the body—interacting with the material world, the soul—thoughts, emotions, will, and spirit—and the level of communion with God

This distinction helps us understand the wholeness of humanity, but it must be emphasized that these three are not three 'persons' and therefore cannot be analogized to the 'human trinity.'

Another interpretation leaning more toward philosophy and theology comes from Augustine. He proposed the three functions of the human mind: memory, reason, and willpower

All three belong to one person, yet they are distinct yet inseparable, reflecting to some extent the unity and diversity within God. But this is still only a shadow, not the essence.

Therefore, it can be said that humans have 'three aspects,' but do not possess the 'trinity essence.' People reflect God, but are not the same as God.

## **2. Genesis Chapter 6: Man's Corruption and the Spirit of God**

After humanity multiplied, Genesis 6:1-3 describes a key turning point:

"When the sons of God saw the beauty of a woman, they chose and married her as a wife."

This passage has had various interpretations throughout history, with three being the most representative:

The fallen angel says—that the "Son of God" is an angel, but there is tension with the Lord Jesus' teaching that angels do not marry. The descendants of Seth—the mainstream view—are a mixture of godly and ungodly groups, symbolizing spiritual fall. The theory of monarchal tyranny—understood as the abuse of human power and moral decay.

Regardless of which interpretation is adopted, the core of the text is not the struggle over status, but a spiritual fact: people began to replace God's will with selfish desires.

This echoes the phrase in Genesis chapter 3: 'See...' A probing mode of 'beauty.' The essence of sin is always the human choice to leave God's sovereignty.

### **3. "My Spirit Does Not Live in Him Forever"**

God then declared, "Since man belongs to the flesh, my Spirit will not dwell in him forever."

The word 'Ruach' in this phrase can be understood as God's spirit, the breath of life, or spiritual inspiration.

There are mainly two explanations:

First, God no longer tolerates human sin indefinitely. His Spirit once moved, reminded, and called, but people continually refused, and thus judgment was imminent.

Second, God restricts human life. Human lifespans are no longer as long as those of early clan leaders, but are constrained.

Next, when it comes to '120 years,' most scholars believe it is the grace period before the flood, a time God gives people repentance, not simply a limit on lifespan.

This passage reveals an important spiritual principle: before judgment, God always gives grace and opportunity.

### **4. The Human Spirit: From Death to Rebirth**

The Bible clearly states that everyone has a "spirit" because God breathes the breath of life into a person (Genesis 2:7). But the issue is not whether there is "spirit" or not, but "what kind of relationship you have with God."

Paul said, "You have died in your transgressions and sins." (Ephesians 2:1) This refers to spiritual death—separation from God.

However, in Christ, people undergo fundamental transformation:

The spirit is born again—not by a new spirit, but by receiving new life and the Holy Spirit dwelling inward—God Himself dwells within people, spiritual awareness is restored, and the ability to understand God's truth and identity is renewed—becoming God's children

This is a relational transformation, not a mere structural transformation.

## **5. The relationship between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit**

It is necessary to clearly distinguish:

The human spirit—the created Holy Spirit—God Himself

After salvation, the Holy Spirit dwells within a person and communes with the Spirit:

"The Holy Spirit testifies with our Spirit that we are children of God."  
(Romans 8:16)

This is not fusion, nor is it humans becoming gods, but rather an intimate fellowship and guidance.

It can be understood with a simple metaphor: a person's spirit is like a vessel, and the Holy Spirit dwells within it.

## **6. The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments**

The Holy Spirit does not only appear in the New Testament. Starting from Genesis 1:2, God's Spirit has been at work.

But the difference between the Old and New Testaments lies in the "method":

The Old Testament—the Holy Spirit comes to man, for a specific mission—the New Testament—the Holy Spirit dwells within man and becomes life

Pentecost (Acts 2) marks a transformation: the Spirit of God no longer comes only to a few, but is given to all believers.

Therefore, one of the greatest graces for New Testament believers is the "indwelling Holy Spirit."

## **7. Conclusion: Restoration of Image**

Returning to the original question: Does a person have some kind of 'triple structure' to reflect the Triune God?

The answer is: there is some kind of 'reflection,' but not 'equivalence.'

Man is not a Trinity, but within a person there is indeed a multi-layered structure that enables people to think, love, choose, and establish relationships with God.

However, the real key lies not in the structure, but in the relationship.

Genesis chapter 6 reminds us that when people leave God, even the most complete "structure" leads to corruption.

But the gospel tells us that through Christ, the human spirit can be born again; Through the Holy Spirit, a person's life can be renewed; By walking with God, people can gradually restore His image.

As the Bible says: "Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9)

This is not just a description of history, but the call of every believer today.