

Body, Soul and Spirit

Int.

1. Aim: To explain the difference between these parts of man.
2. Gen. 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.”
3. There are many questions about the Body, Soul and Spirit:¹
 - a. If the soul actually exists, what is its origin?
 - b. Do humans possess a soul? Do animals have a soul?
 - c. If souls do, in fact, exist, are they purely temporal—thus living only as long as our physical body exists? Or are they immortal—surviving the death of the physical body?
 - d. What is the difference, if any, between the “soul” and the “spirit”?
 - e. What is the ultimate destiny of the soul?
 - f. And what part does the soul play in the biblical statement that men and women were created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1: 27)?
4. This lesson is a brief survey of the biblical information relative to this theme.
5. What is the difference between the spirit and soul of a human being?
 - a. There is no simple answer to this question because the words, “soul” and “spirit,” are used in varying ways within the different biblical contexts in which they may be found.
 - b. In 1 Thes 5:23 we read that man has 3 parts: Body, Soul and Spirit “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
6. We will discuss these 3 parts and explain the differences or relation to one another.

¹Origin Nature and Destiny of the Soul by Bert Thompson

Discussion

I. THE BODY

- A. A person's body is that which interacts with the physical world.
1. It is the "residence" of a person's soul and spirit.
 2. The body is an organized system, formed by the creative energy of God out of the dust of the earth; composed of bones, muscles, and nerves; of arteries, veins, and a variety of other vessels, in which the blood and other fluids circulate.²
- B. This is the part of us that will "return to the earth as it was:" Ecl. 12:7

II. THE SOUL

- A. The Hebrew term for "soul" is nephesh, found more than 780 times in the Old Testament.
1. Because of the variety of contextual meanings, it is not always rendered by the English word "soul."
 2. The King James Version uses 28 different words by which to translate the original term. Nephesh, therefore, signifies different things, depending upon the passage in which it occurs.
 3. Similarly, in the Greek New Testament, the original word for "soul" is psuche, found 103 times.
 4. The soul is the seat of the different affections and passions, such as love, hatred, anger, &c., with sensations, appetites, and propensities of different kinds.³

² Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 Thes. 5:23

³ Clarke's Commentary on 1 Thes. 5:23

5. A person's soul is the physical life principal -- that which gives life to one's physical body; that which interprets physical stimuli {sight, sound, touch, taste, odor}; that which is the seat of emotions {love, hate, fear, anger, and so forth} relative to beings & objects in the physical realm .⁴

B. Here are some uses of "soul" in the Scriptures.⁵

1. **A Person**

- a. "Soul" may signify merely an individual person.
- b. The prophet Ezekiel declared that the "soul" (i.e., the person) who sins will surely die (Ezek. 18:20), or, as Peter would write centuries later, "eight souls" were saved by water in the days of Noah (1 Pet. 3:20).
- c. See also Exodus 1:5.

2. **Life**

- a. In some contexts, "soul" simply has reference to biological life, the animating principle that is common to both humans and animals.
- b. All creatures have "life" (see Gen. 1:30; cf. ASV footnote). The wicked king, Herod the Great, sought to take the "life" of baby Jesus (Mt. 2:20; cf. Rev. 12:11).
- c. In one of the visions of the Apocalypse, certain creatures of the sea were said to possess psuche, or life (Rev. 8:9).

⁴ What is the Difference Between Soul and Spirit? By William P. Tisdale

⁵Soul and Spirit - What's the Difference? By Wayne Jackson - Christian Courier: Questions June 11, 2002

3. The Mind

- a. "Soul" can have to do with that aspect of man that is characterized by the intellectual and emotional (Gen. 27:25; Job 30:16).
- b. It is the eternal component of man that is fashioned in the very image of God (Gen. 1:26), and that can exist apart from the physical body (Mt. 10:28; Rev. 6:9).

III. THE SPIRIT

A. The Spirit⁶

1. In the Old Testament, "spirit" is ruach, found some 378 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and literally meaning "breath," "wind," etc.
2. The corresponding Greek term is pneuma, occurring 379 times in the New Testament (the original form being found in our English word, pneumonia). Again, though, as with "soul," the word "spirit" may take on different senses, depending upon its contextual setting. Literal meaning is breath, breeze

B. Uses in the Bible: The Air We Breathe

1. Ruach can literally denote a person's "breath."
2. The queen of Sheba was "breathless" when she viewed the splendor of Solomon's kingdom (see 1 Kgs. 10:4-5).
3. The word can also signify the "wind." For instance, some people, pursuing empty goals, are but striving after the "wind" (Eccl. 1:14, 17, etc.).

⁶ Soul and Spirit - What's the Difference? By Wayne Jackson - Christian Courier: Questions June 11, 2002

C. A Non-physical Being

1. The term "spirit" can be employed, however, in a higher sense.
2. It also is used to depict the nature of a non-material being, e.g. God. God (the Father), as to his essence, is spirit (Jn. 4:24), i.e., he is not a physical or material being (Lk. 24:39; Mt. 16:17; cf. also the expression, "Holy Spirit").
3. Similarly, angels are "spirit" in nature – though they are not deity in kind (Heb. 1:14).

D. A Person

1. "Spirit" can be used, by way of the figure of speech known as the synecdoche (part for the whole, or vice versa) for a person himself.
2. John wrote: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 Jn. 4:1; emp. added).
3. Note that the term "spirits" is the equivalent of "false prophets" in this text.

E. The Soul

1. "Spirit" may refer to the "inward man" (2 Cor. 4:16) that is fashioned in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), and thus be a synonym of "soul."
2. A sacred writer noted that the "spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah" (Prov. 20:27); this is an allusion to that element of man that distinguishes him from the beasts of the earth.

3. Daniel affirmed that his "spirit" was "grieved" within his body (Dan. 7:15), and Paul noted that it is man's spirit that is capable of "knowing" things (1 Cor. 2:11).
4. Paul also affirmed that church discipline is designed to save a man's "spirit" in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:5; see also, 1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:1; Jas. 2:26).

F. Attitude

1. "Spirit" sometimes stands for a person's disposition or attitude – either for bad or good, e.g.,
2. It can mean the spirit of fear, etc. (2 Tim. 1:7), a meek and submissive spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 3:4), or a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1).

IV. WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN ?

A. Man has a body of flesh.

1. His Spirit is the inner man.
2. The union of the Spirit makes man a living soul.
3. He is created in the image of God not because he has a body, but because he is a personality with the power of self determination. He is a moral being.
4. The body came from the dust of the earth....
 - a. The union of the spirit that God put in him Zech 12:1 makes him a living soul. Job 33:4 and Gen 2:7.
 - b. The Lord formed man (body) of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life(spirit) and man became a living soul. (Animated body).

- c. When man dies the spirit has left the body. The body returns unto the earth from whence it came and the spirit returns to the God who gave it. Ecc 12:7
 - d. The union of the two is conception. The separation of the two is death, for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead Jas.2:26
5. A person's body is a machine made of chemicals.⁷
- a. It is electro-chemically powered.
 - b. Thus, when the soul/spirit departs the body, that body can still be made to function by heart-lung machines & so forth.
 - c. Nevertheless, unless the soul/spirit return to that body, it is just a functioning hunk of meat {brain-dead is the worldly expression}.

B. Man's soul is the life or breath.

- 1. It is his conscience, his personality.
- 2. It is who we are.
- 3. The soul is how you relate to others and how you understand yourself.
- 4. In Gen. 2:7 Moses wrote "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.
 - a. The word soul "nephesh" in this context shows that man like the birds and beasts is a living breather.
 - b. This word "nephesh" is translated in Job. 41:21 by the word "Breath".
 - c. It would have been very awkward to translate the phrase here in Gen. 2:7 as "living breather"

⁷ What is the Difference Between Soul and Spirit? By William P. Tisdale

d. But the NKJV has translated it "and man became a living being."

C. The spirit of man is the immortal spirit

1. It is the part of us that will live on beyond life on this earth.
2. The spirit is how you relate to God.
3. When you are born again, you are born of the spirit - John 3:5-6
4. Animals don't have a spirit.
 - a. They do not seek God.
 - b. Plants have a body
 - c. Animals have a body and soul - they are capable of relating to man and other animals.
 - d. But only man has a spirit.
5. When a man dies
 - a. The body goes back to the dust of the earth - in the resurrection we will have a new immortal body - 1 Cor. 15:44
 - b. Eccl. 12:7
 - c. The soul and spirit survive
 - d. The resurrected, spiritual immortal body will be judged to spend eternity in either heaven or hell. [2 Cor. 5:10]
 - e. In eternity, our immortal soul retains the memory of our time spent on earth. We will also have the knowledge and awareness of our present surroundings. Luke 16:22-25

6. When God spoke of creating "man in his own image" (Genesis 1:27), he was not speaking of the shape of the clay that he molded, but of that which is invisible which he put inside of man.⁸
 - a. God's nature is "spirit" (John 4:24), not "flesh and blood" (1 Corinthians 15:50).
 - b. It therefore follows that the part of man created in God's image is man's spirit.
 - c. One gets his body from his parents, but it is "the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9) who "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zechariah 12:1).
 - d. When death comes to man's physical body, then his "spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).
 - e. When Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, he had already committed his spirit back to his Father (Luke 23:46).
 - f. Before devout Christians had buried Stephen's bruised corpse, the Lord had already received his "spirit" (Acts 7:59).

- D. Sometimes the words "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably, referring to man's non-material and immortal nature.

⁸ Soul and Spirit by Hugo McCord Gospel Gazette Vol. 6 No. 5 May 2004 Page 8

CONCLUSION

1. A great cause of rejoicing is that there is in man something, called either soul or spirit, which came from heaven in God's own image and likeness, which is undying, and which God loves and yearns for its returning to him, cleansed, washed, purified, sanctified, regenerated, justified and glorified (Genesis 1:27; 35:18; Psalm 31:5; Zechariah 12:1; Ecclesiastes 12:7; John 3:16; 15:3; Ephesians 5:26; Colossians 1:27; 3:4; Titus 3:5, 7; 1 Peter 1:22; Revelation 1:5).
2. Many of us have read enough to be resigned to the fact that we shall leave this life with unanswered questions about the soul and spirit. However, what God has revealed we ought to find out.⁹
3. Because we have a soul / spirit that will live on beyond life on this earth, we must prepare to spend that time with the Lord.
4. The soul is our most valuable possession - it is worth more than the whole world. -

Matt.16:26

Sermon by Arthur Pigman -
 Evans Church of Christ
 515 Gibbs Road
 Evans, Ga. 30809
 706-855-1249
 arthurpigman@cybrtyme.com

⁹Soul and Spirit by Hugo McCord Gospel Gazette Vol. 6 No. 5 May 2004 Page 8