

# **Let The Bible Speak Series**

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## **The Nature of Man**

Our discussion today will concern the nature of man. Just what are we anyway? Of what do we consist? Long ago David asked in Psa.8:4-6 "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet."

In first Thessalonians 5:23 Paul wrote "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." How can we distinguish between the body, soul, and spirit? To define or distinguish the body from the spirit is easy, but what about the difference between the soul and spirit? Just what is that difference?

Paul in this concluding prayer, implores the Lord to sanctify and consecrate every part of the entire being of each disciple. Their initial obedience to the gospel had sanctified and set them apart 1Cor. 6:11 "...but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

This passage makes it clear that sanctification is not a one-time completed action, but rather a process. As the child of God grows to higher levels of maturity, he becomes more thoroughly dedicated and consecrated to God's service.

### **I. With reference to the nature of man, three possibilities demand our attention.**

1. Materialists deny that man has an immortal spirit that survives death.

He believes that man is wholly mortal, with no immortal spirit that can be distinguished from the body. The religious version of this idea is expressed in a book titled: "Let God Be True" they write "also we see that the claim of religionists that man has an immortal soul, and therefore differs from the beast, is not scriptural." The secular version of this idea is held by the atheistic humanists.

2. Some people believe and teach that man is a dual being of body and spirit. That the terms soul and spirit are used interchangeably and synonymously in the scriptures. Those who hold that view are called dichotomists.

3. Some believe that man consists of body, soul, and spirit. These people are called trichotomists.

As Christians and bible believers, we must flatly reject the view of the materialists.

Scriptures are abundant that teach the immaterial, spiritual nature of man. Solomon says, "...and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it." 2Cor. 4:16 "...though our outward man is decaying yet our inward man is renewed day by day. 2Cor. 5:8 "We are willing to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

With reference to the second and third options, it must be said that while there are some scriptures such as Mt. 10:28 which speak only of "soul and body" we cannot ignore those passages that suggest the threefold nature of man. Our text certainly does.

For example the Hebrew writer speaks of the word of God "dividing soul and spirit." Heb. 4:12 If it is impossible to consider the soul and spirit separately, then the Holy Spirit must have made some kind of mistake.

Gen. 2:6 also seems to distinguish three aspects of man: "...God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Here we see the clay,

the physical frame; the breath of life, the spirit; and the living being, the soul.

## II. Definition of Terms.

### (a) Body.

The body is referred to as a temple. 1Cor.6:19 "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" The body is referred to as a home. 2Cor.5:6 "So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (what is at home in the body?) The body is referred to as the outward man. 2Cor.4:16 "...our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." The body is referred to as being weak. Mt.26:41 "...the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." The body comes from a human father. Heb. 12:9 "...Furthermore we have had human fathers who corrected us..." The body dies James 2:26 "For the body without the spirit is dead."

The body returns to the earth. "The dust will return to the earth as it was." The body will be raised in the resurrection; incorruptible, glorious and in power suited to live with God in immortality.

1Cor.15:54 "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory." The human body must be sanctified. It provides a sanctuary for everything that is holy. It also provides an avenue for everything that is animal. The body is home to the sins of passion. There is a provoked and commercialized spread of sensuality. It is marketed by the media. It produces corruption on stage and screen, in book and magazine. It defiles the body. 1Cor.6:18 "flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits fornication sins against his own body."

There are sins of appetite. Alcohol and narcotics "defile the temple of God."

Certain portions of the nervous system become artificially stimulated and demand a continuance of that stimulation. It is the worst form of slavery. The body becomes master of mind and will. Gluttony is a sin of the body. A slave to his stomach is in just as abject situation as a slave to his purse or to his imagination. Moderation, temperance is the answer. Table-control, that is the idea.

There are sins of adornment. What we hang on our body is a matter of importance to our soul. What we strip from our body can jeopardize our welfare. We must be careful about this physical frame, given us by God. It is not ours to use as we please, we cannot disregard God's instructions concerning it. God does care what you wear: Some are underdressed and some overdressed.

"In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but what is proper for women professing godliness with good works." 1Tim. 2:9-10

1Peter 3:3 "Do not let your adornment be merely outward, arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel... rather let it be the hidden person of the heart."

### (b) Spirit

Concerning the spirit Jesus said "a spirit hath not flesh and bones. Luke 24:39

The spirit is eternal 2Cor.4:16 "outward man is perishes, the inward man is being renewed day by day." The Spirit is invisible. John 3:8 "The wind (spirit) blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." The real meaning here is "The Spirit breathes (expresses himself) through the word of truth (the gospel), in full harmony with his will and you receive the expression of this will by means of this word; and while you cannot see the Spirit and are thus without visual evidence of his coming and going it is by means of hearing his voice (as expressed through his word) that you are born anew."

The spirit is that part of man that is made in the image of God. Gen.1:26-27 "Then God said 'let us

make man in our image, according to our likeness..."

The spirit resides within the body in this realm of life. Daniel's spirit was grieved in the midst of this body Dan. 7:15.

God is the father of our spirit Heb.12:9 "shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the father of spirits and live?"

God forms the spirit within us Zech. 12:1 "The burden of the word of the Lord against Israel, Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him:"

At death the spirit returns to God who gave it. Eccl. 12:7 (body to dust, spirit to God)

In death the spirit retains consciousness Luke 16:23-24

It is immortal, being eternal in existence. 2Cor. 4:16 (the inward man is renewed day by day).

(c) Soul.

This word is assigned 10 various meanings in the lexicons. It differs from the spirit and generally means "life," "the natural life of the body."

## II. The Soul and Spirit Distinguished.

P.J. Gloag (Pulpit Commentary) "Each of the two words is sometimes used for our whole invisible nature, but, when distinguished from the spirit, the soul is the lower part of our immaterial being, which belongs in common to the whole animal creation, the seat of the appetites, desires, affections." "The spirit is the highest part of man, that which assimilates him to God; renders him capable of religion, and susceptible of being acted upon by the Spirit of God. The 'soul' is the inferior part of his mental nature, the seat of his passions and desires, of the natural propensities. The body is the corporeal frame."

Henry Alford "the spirit is the highest and distinctive part of man, immortal and responsible soul in our common parlance (i.e. style of speaking). The soul (here) is the lower or animal soul, containing the passions and desires which we have in common with the brutes, but which in us is ennobled and drawn up by the spirit."

W. E. Vine "The spirit may be recognized as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul is the resulting life constituted in the individual."

James 2:26 "the body apart from the spirit is dead." Conversely the spirit's presence in the body equals life. This is demonstrated in Gen. 2:7 when God breathed into the lifeless body of Adam the breath (spirit) of life, he became a living soul or alive.

Hence the soul in the more technical sense is the biological life which we share in common with all other creatures. The spirit is that which makes us distinctly God's offspring Acts. 17:29 "Therefore since we are the offspring of God..."

T. P. Brown illustrates the differences between body, soul, and spirit by an analogy of an electrical light.

Bulb=our body, the electrical energy represents the human spirit.

When the spirit enters the body, the resulting light and heat represent our soul.

Applying this analogy to Gen. 2:7: God formed a light bulb of the elements of the earth and channeled into it electricity and it became a shining light.

In death the spirit leaves the body (James 2:26) and returns to God (Eccl. 12:7).

It awaits the resurrection in the hades realm Luke 16:22-26.

This results in death, which is the end of physical life (soul) and disintegration of the physical body.

In heaven our inward man or spirit will receive a glorious body (1Cor. 15:42-44) and the resulting life will go on eternally (1Cor. 15:54).

The fact that the terms soul and spirit are often used interchangeably, and each with a wide variety of meanings, makes this topic one of the most difficult in scripture.

The word "soul" is a generic or general word and its meaning must be determined, in any given instance, from the context in which it appears.

(If I asked you to define "bark" for me, you could not possibly know whether I mean by it the sound a dog makes, or the outer covering of a tree.)

If I said "the bark is thicker this winter than usual" you are able to determine the meaning of the word by the context in which I use it. So also the word "soul." Its meaning depends upon the context in which it is used. It may refer to the whole person, the physical life which man possesses in common with the lower creation, the intellectual nature and higher spiritual nature, and synonymously with spirit. Awareness of these facts and careful attention to the context are the keys to a proper exegesis of a given text. We must remember that we are not only a physical being, but that we have an eternal spirit that will spend eternity somewhere. The future of our spirit should be the primary focus of our attention in this life.