

Understanding the Spirit, Soul, & Body

Genesis 1:26-28- God's purpose in creating man & woman is that they would "have dominion."

Genesis 2:7- Man is a tripartite being: Spirit, Soul, & Body. All three are God's doing.

This should be no surprise seeing that God is a Trinity.

1 Thessalonians 5:23- Paul's prayer for the "setting apart" of their entirety and the spirit, soul, & body "kept intact," "blameless" unto the coming of the Lord for His Church. Only God can sanctify us entirely; only He can keep us blameless. This happens with the presentation of the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness as a result of our reckoning upon our identity in Christ (Rom 6:1-14).

Submission in light of redemption is the key! This is the ONLY way that true obedience occurs.

The Material Part of Man

Body- Sōma- A living body, whether of man, animal, plant, or seed. Used once to speak of "slaves" in Rev 18:13, while also being understood as a substantive reality in Col 2:17. Also figuratively used for a unified group, such as the "body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).¹ The redemption of the body is our glorification (future).

- The body of man is made of dust (Gen 2:7) and is considered the "lower" part of a human being.
- The body relates to the material world, having five senses, and is the vehicle by which man influences the world, or is found to be influenced by it.²
- The body is in a state of gradual deterioration and will eventually return to dust (Gen 3:19b). The body did NOT die at the Fall (Gen 3:21).
- It is the vehicle used for expression, either of righteous acts (believers only-Rom 8:11) or unrighteous acts (believers and/or unbelievers) (Rom 6:12).
- The body "houses" the soul and the spirit and serves as the "sanctuary of the Holy Spirit" for the redeemed (1 Cor 6:19).
- The believer's "adoption" takes place with the Rapture of the Church, also called the "redemption of our body," meaning our glorification (Rom 8:23, 1 Cor 15:53).

The Immaterial Part of Man #1

Spirit- Pneuma – "the non-material, psychological faculty which is potentially sensitive and responsive to God,"³ "the rational part of man, the power of perceiving and grasping divine and eternal things, and upon which the Spirit of God exerts its influence."⁴ The redemption of our spirit is justification (past).

- Since the spirit of man has its origin in God (Gen 2:7; Zech 12:1; Heb 12:9), it is the part of man that is either connected or disconnected to God depending on if one is regenerate (alive) or unregenerate (separated/dead). Before the Fall, YHWH breathed into man "the breath of life" which is the spirit, and it is the spirit of Adam that was separated (died) at the Fall (Gen 2:16-17; 3:7).

¹ BDAG, 983-984.

² Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ: Thoughts on the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Believer and the Church* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1888), 333.

³ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 322.

⁴ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 520.

- The spirit is considered the “highest plane” of man when connected to YHWH Elohim, for “God is Spirit” (John 4:24; 2 Cor 3:17) and He must be worshiped “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).
Proverbs 20:27- “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being.”
- It is within the spirit of man that the Holy Spirit dwells at conversion, seeing that our spirit is what is made “alive” at conversion (Rom 8:10) while also being “made righteous” (Rom 5:19).
- The Holy Spirit and the human spirit are not the same thing, seeing that both of them testify together that we are God’s children (Rom 8:16).
- Being led into Truth is done by the Holy Spirit within our spirits which then gives way to our minds for the purpose of renewal (transforming the mind so that the will and emotions follow) and, in turn, aligning the body with the spirit so that the spiritual man is discerning of all things (1 Cor 2:15-16).
- Our spirit is what leaves our bodies when physical death occurs (Eccl 12:7; Matt 27:50; Luke 8:55; 23:56; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor 5:5).

Depending on the context, this word is also used to speak of:

*“Wind”- John 3:8; Heb 1:7

*The “Holy Spirit”- John 3:8

*“An Attitude or Demeanor”- 1 Cor 4:21; 2 Tim 1:7

*“Celestial Beings”- 1 Pet 3:19

The Immaterial Part of Man #2

Soul/Life- GR. *Psucho/Psyche* 1. “life on earth in its animating aspect making bodily function possible,” 2. the “seat and center of the inner human life in its many and varied aspects,” 3. “an entity with personhood.”⁵ “The essence of life in terms of thinking, willing, and feeling—‘inner self, mind, thoughts, feelings, heart, being.’”⁶ This term is sometimes referred to as the “self-life.” The redemption of our soul pertains to sanctification giving way to glorification (present, future).

- The soul is the “meeting place” between spirit and body, and was quickened by the combination of “the breath of life” and the “dust from the ground” (Gen 2:7).
- The soul consists of mind (natural logic, consciousness, thought), will (self-determination), and emotions (internal and external expressions of what is perceived as truth at any given moment).
- Andrew Murray writes, “Standing thus midway between two worlds (body and spirit), belonging to both, the soul had the power of determining itself, of choosing or refusing the objects by which it was surrounded, and to which it stood related.”⁷ In other words, the soul is the place where choices are made, and for the believer, can either be compliant to or dismissive of the spirit.
- When considering passages that deal with “the flesh” or “sin” (singular-referring to the sin nature within every person that causes them to commit “sins”), the origin of such responses is the soul.

⁵ BDAG, 1098-1099.

⁶ Louw and Nida, 320.

⁷ Murray, *The Spirit of Christ*, 333.

- The soul did not die at the Fall. Adam and Eve’s minds, wills, and emotions still worked, although they were severely skewed (Gen 3:10-13).
- Whereas the spirit is redeemed at the moment of justification by faith, and the glorification of the body is guaranteed (Rom 8:30), the “salvation of the soul” is not a guarantee (Matt 10:39; 16:25-26; 8:35-37; Luke 9:23-25; 1 Peter 1:9; Heb 10:38-39; James 1:21; 5:19-20). **This does not mean in any way that justification is lost.** Rather, it is the result of the believer in Christ not denying himself, taking up his cross daily, and following Jesus (Luke 9:23). “Hating one’s life” is actually to despise the way of the self-life, rejecting it in favor of the leading of the spirit (John 12:25).

Murray summarizes, “The spirit is the seat of our God-consciousness; the soul of our self-consciousness; the body of our world-consciousness. In the spirit God dwells, in the soul self, in the body sense. As long as the right relation existed, and the soul with its self was subject to the spirit, and through it to God, all was well. But sin came as the assertion of self in seeking its life through sense and not obedience to the spirit. And so the soul, self, selfishness became the ruling principle of man’s life.”⁸

For the believer in Christ, it is possible for either the spirit or the body to reign. When the spirit reigns, it only does so through the soul in order to influence the body to comply with righteousness. This would be best understood in the command to “walk by the spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). When the body reigns, it is because the senses have been promoted to “the bearer of truth,” convincing the mind, will, and emotions leading to actions that reject the spirit.

The Tripartite Nature seen in Jesus Christ’s death

Jesus gives up His spirit- Luke 23:46

Jesus’ soul/life goes to Hades temporarily- Acts 2:27; Psalm 16:10; also see 1 Peter 3:18-20

Jesus’ body was buried- Matthew 27:57-60

⁸ Murray, *The Spirit of Christ*, 336.