

THE STORY OF MAN'S DESTINY #8

WHAT ABOUT OUR SPIRIT?

JOB 32:8; ECC. 12:7

Job. 32:8. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Ecc. 12:7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

In our last lesson on “What About The Soul”, we emphasized that the soul is the entire being of man: breath and body, including every member, faculty, sense, organ and substance. We pointed out that the only thing added to man created of dust, was the breath of his nostrils. We further emphasized that the soul was not a separate entity placed within man. Neither does the soul have inherent immortality in any sense of the term. The soul can and does die, as well as perform every physical function of life.

We also detailed the fact that the breath and dust man was made of, was the exact same material used to create the beast of the field from. And while God created some remarkable distinctions between man and beast, in many ways they are similar. These similarities include organs, breath, bodily functions and more. The most notable similarity is that “as one dieth so dieth the other”. They all have the same breath and all turn to dust again.

We also noted that the word “soul”, translated from the word “nephesh” or “psuche”, is, on many occasions, used to refer to breath, mind, heart, life, etc.

Finally, we once again repeat the fact that the Bible never refers to the soul as being immortal, or eternal. There is no such expression or entity as a “never dying soul”.

2. WHAT ABOUT THE SPIRIT?

The expressions soul and spirit are both found many times in the scripture. We have had a brief look at the “soul” and its meaning. Now let us consider the “spirit” and its meaning. Traditional theology ascribes much the same status to “spirit” as it does to “soul”. Both terms are declared to be immortal and never dying by orthodox theology.

For purposes of this study, we will only be dealing with the “spirit” of man, and not the Spirit of God. The same root words are used in reference to the “Spirit of God” as opposed to the spirit of man, yet the Bible ascribes (and we teach) a vast difference in the meaning and existence of the two. For example, the Bible ascribes eternity, immortality, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence to God’s Spirit and certainly does not to man. While the terms are derived from the same basic words, yet the differences are vast and obvious.

There are also some distinctions between “soul and spirit” that should be noted. Physical, bodily, fleshly attributes belong to the soul and are not ascribed to the spirit. The term spirit, as it applies to man, is confined to non - fleshly, non - physical attributes such as: breath, mind, life, attitude, disposition, emotions, etc.

There are also those who try to assign separate, distinctive entity existence to soul, body and spirit and have even gone so far as to declare that man is a “triune being”. There are also those who teach that the soul is mortal but that the spirit is immortal. Some teach that only the “spirit” of man is saved and it alone will inherit and inhabit eternity. These same people will also tell you that the body (which Paul describes as the object of redemption and the temple of the Holy Ghost) is worthless and will be dropped at death as a useless shackle to be disposed of.

3. THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE WORD SPIRIT.

The word “spirit” is translated primarily from the word “ruwach” in the O.T., and the word “pneuma”, in the N.T. The meaning and application of these two terms are: wind, breath, life, anger, mind, courage, vital principal, mental disposition, and such like. Within these many and varied uses of the word, it should be easy to see the wide range of verses and applications we will discover about the spirit. One thing we will not find in any verse in the entire Bible is any reference to the spirit as being immortal with the ability to carry on a more beautiful life after death than before.

In the process of our study of the spirit, we will encounter verses that “seem” to imply a kind of “living departure at death” with the assumption that this “departure” is a transition to “brighter worlds above”. We will look at such verses candidly. Conversely, there are 3 factual conditions which we should be constantly looking for in every verse dealing with this subject.

(1) We shall see that there is no bodily, organic being or entity to “spirit”. Under the orthodox theological assumption that the spirit is immortal and when it “leaves” the body, it goes to a better place, it must be remembered that the spirit (without all the organs, faculties and functions of the body) has no way of expressing character, emotion, relationship, worship, service, hurts, temptations, trials, communications, or any of the 5 senses, therefore leaving it totally inert and incommunicable.

(2) There will be no verse of scripture that ascribes immortality or eternity to our “spirit”.

(3) The uses of “spirit” will assign it to the functions of man as a fleshly being, incorporating the whole being of man to express these functions.

4. WHAT IS THE SPIRIT?

Armed with the meaning and uses of the word “spirit”, we now turn to the scriptures to see how this word is incorporated in the structure of Biblical texts. Thus we can answer the question: “What Is The Spirit?”

a. Ex. 6:9. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of *spirit*, and for cruel bondage. *The people of Israel were in great anguish and trouble because of the oppressive life under Egyptian bondage. Anguish of spirit would mean that they were troubled in heart and mind. They were worried, burdened, bowed down and suffering from cruel bondage.*

b. Ex. 28:3. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the *spirit* of wisdom ----- . *This certainly does not mean that God put some additional “spirit” into some people. It simply tells us that God endowed some with wisdom; that is, their spirit or mind or understanding was excellent to do God’s will.*

c. Num. 5:14. And the *spirit* of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the *spirit* of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled. *Spirit in this case refers to a mental disposition, attitude or characteristic of jealousy. You have seen many people who have manifested the spirit of jealousy, over some matter toward someone.*

d. Num. 14:24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another *spirit* with him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went: and his seed shall possess it. *Caleb had another spirit! This means that he had a different outlook or attitude or conviction or mind, when he went into the land of promise to spy it out with the others. In this case, his different spirit was because he had a different faith and trust in God. It has nothing to do with any immortal entity within him.*

e. Josh. 5:1. And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there *spirit* in them anymore, because of the children of Israel. *First it says that their hearts melted. Does that mean that the organ that pumps blood throughout their bodies just melted like butter or does it mean that fear gripped them and they had no more courage because of the power of God on behalf of Israel. Then it says that there spirit was not in them anymore. Does this*

mean that some immortal entity has exited their bodies and gone to another world? Hardly! It means the same thing as the melting of their hearts: fear gripped their lives and they did not have the heart, courage, strength, or spirit to face the power of God which was with Israel.

f. I Sam. 1:15. And Hannah answered and said, no my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful *spirit*: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. *Both the words soul and spirit are used in this verse. They give us an excellent illustration of how they both can be used. She was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, because she was barren and broken hearted because she had borne no child. Then she says that she has poured out her soul before the Lord. This illustrates just how impossible it is to define the soul or spirit as an immortal entity, since it could not be literally "poured out". She emptied her anguish before God in prayer. Also, note that the words soul and spirit are used interchangeably in this case.*

g. I Sam. 18:10. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil *spirit* from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. *Saul got mad and jealous at David and tried to kill him. The evil spirit was a mental disposition or attitude of anger, hate and jealousy. It was not some "demon" from another world sent to invade Saul, it was his own unsanctified spirit and mind toward David.*

h. I Sam. 30:12. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his *spirit* came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. *He was not dead, obviously, but it says that his spirit came to him again. If our spirit is an immortal element within us, and it is gone, then surely we would be dead. What has happened is that the person is about starved for food and water. They fed him and gave him water to drink and he revived. It is interesting that food and water brought his spirit back to him. If you go 3 days and 3 nights, in the burning heat, without food or water, you will also be famished and about to die. Food and water will revive you.*

i. I Kgs. 10:4-5. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom and house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more *spirit* in her. *Where did her spirit go? If it is gone, is she dead? Is there anything here that says that her spirit was immortal? The simple answer is that she was overwhelmed when she saw all that Solomon had. Sometimes you see something so amazing that you exclaim that it "took your breath away". The queen of Sheba had no more questions or doubts about the greatness of Solomon: she was amazed at it all.*

j. II Kgs. 2:15. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, the *spirit* of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. ----- *This cannot possibly mean that an existing entity was taken from Elijah and placed upon Elisha. Instead it means that the same kind, power and work of the spirit of Elijah was now given to Elisha for his consecration and service. You can train someone to function in the same manner and pattern as you have and God can anoint someone to serve in the place of another and in a similar fashion and spirit as another, but you cannot take a living entity out of one being and place it within another.*

k. Ezra 1:1. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the *spirit* of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing ----- . *Isaiah had prophesied that Cyrus would be the instrument used of God to bring about the deliverance of the captive Jews. In order to accomplish this, God stirred up his spirit. That is, God moved upon the thoughts, mind, will, and circumstance of Cyrus, so that he was moved to grant liberty to all the Jews. From historical fact, we know that Cyrus did make such a proclamation, freeing the Jews to return to Palestine, as many as wanted to. Some 50,000 returned. God influenced the mind of Cyrus to do this.*

l. Job. 4:1. Then a *spirit* passed before my face: the hair of my flesh stood up: V16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a

voice, saying. *A very interesting scripture. But if you consider this in the context of I Sam. 30:12 and others that speak of the transitioning of the spirit, it will have a clearer focus. First, there is nothing about this instance that speaks of any sign of immortality. Job is being impressed by the “spirit” or inspiration that had a moving impact on him. Even the hair on his flesh stood up. Then, V17, Job received a message about the mortality (not immortality) of man. Sometimes you have been so moved by some circumstance or inspiration that you have talked in terms of your hair standing up: it may have been from fear or from excitement. Job had this kind of an experience. By the way, if we say that this was some living entity, I wonder where it went.*

m. Ps. 31:5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. The psalmist committed the keeping of his life into the Lord’s hands. Have you? If not you should. It means that you have trusted the care of your life into the providence of God.*

n. Ps. 34:18. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. To be contrite means to be humble. To have a contrite spirit means that you have a spirit that you have humbled before God. You are not of a proud spirit but of a contrite spirit. Your mind, disposition, attitude and being are contrite before the Lord.*

o. Prov. 16:18-19. *Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. This is in the same sense as the previous verse in Ps. 34:18. You speak of someone having a proud spirit: attitude, disposition or expression. It is better to have a humble spirit: attitude, disposition, mind, etc.*

p. Ecc. 3:21. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? This passage should command our attention in light of the fact that every funeral you attend, the preachers will talk about the “spirit” as having gone up higher or to a better place. Well, this scripture raises a very poignant question in the face of such expressions. The Amplified Bible raises the question: “who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes downward”? The NIV asks the question: “who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth”? The Living Bible says: “For who can prove that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward into dust”? The Revised Standard Version of the Bible uses the same question as the Amplified Bible. The point is this: After all of the preaching about a “spirit” ascending up into heaven at death, no one has the slightest proof that such takes place. After all, this word spirit in this verse, for both man and beast, comes from the same original word, and in this case, it means breath! Now look at the question again: “who knows whether the breath of a man goes up and the breath of a beast goes down”?*

q. Ecc. 12:7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. The only element that leaves your body at death, when you expire, exhale, is your breath. The breath returns to God who gave it. Look at Gen. 2:7. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God gave to man the very air or breath that he breathes. An interesting point to this verse is that, not only does the spirit (breath) of man return to God who gave it, but the spirit (breath) of the beast does too.*

r. Is. 26:9. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early..... Here is an example of seeking after God with all of your heart and mind. With my spirit within me, means with all of my inward thoughts and passions and desires, I will seek the Lord. Note that it is impossible to pray unto the Lord without using your mind and speaking ability. It is not a matter of some inward entity talking with God while you are (physically) talking with someone else.*

t. Dan. 6:3. *Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Haven’t you seen people that had an “excellent spirit”? They would fit well in most any circumstances; they understood the tasks at hand; they went about it with zeal and organization and they were above all, godly. No wonder the king set Daniel over all the others, he had so much going for him. His attributes were summarized in the expression: “excellent spirit”. Excellent mind, demeanor, attitude, knowledge, wisdom, etc.*

u. Mt. 26:41. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the *spirit* indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Paul said it another way: “When I would do good, evil is present with me”. In other words, we can easily discern what is right by the thoughts of our minds, but our hands and feet just don’t want to carry it out. The “flesh” is the domain of the lusts of the flesh and hardly can we overcome them with the will and knowledge of our minds. The *spirit* (mind, knowledge) is willing, but the *flesh* (with its passion and lusts) is weak.

v. Acts 7:59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my *spirit*. We read in Ecclesiastes 12:7, that our *spirit* returns to God who gave it. In this verse, Stephen, being stoned to death, cries out to God that the Lord would hold his life. “Receive my *spirit*”, does not imply a departure of anything from his body other than his breath. It is a petition that his life would be in the care of the Lord. Nor is there anything here that suggests that the *spirit* is “immortal”.

w. I Cor. 7:34. There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in *spirit* ----- . “Both in body and in *spirit*”, speaks of purity within and without. It teaches us a truth that so often is ignored or discounted in today’s Christianity and that is that it is important that our outward life be pure as well as our inward life. Inward thought, desires, character, all come within this idea of being pure in *spirit*.

x. Jas. 2:26. For as the body without the *spirit* is dead, so faith without works is dead also. This is a great verse on this subject. The body without breath is dead. With all of the organs, faculties, senses, and every member of the body, without breath it is dead. It is not dead if it has the wrong attitude; the wrong disposition; the wrong courage; the wrong life. But without breath it is dead. The body without the *spirit* or “breath” is dead. And the great object lesson here is that, faith without works, obedience, fruit, productivity, is also dead. Just to claim salvation by faith without works, is empty and dead.

y. I Pet. 3:4. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet *spirit* which is in the sight of God of great price. This refers to a *spirit* of meekness; a characteristic, disposition or quality of life that one possesses. It means to demonstrate a quiet and meek disposition.

z. I Jn. 4:1. Beloved, believe not every *spirit*, but try the *spirits* whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Everything that says that it is of divine inspiration is not. There are many false prophets proclaiming things that God has not sent them to teach. Try the voices and teachings and dispositions to be sure that they are of God.

5. SUMMARY.

- a. Spirit, means life, breath, mind, attitude, courage, disposition, emotion, anger, and such like.
- b. It is never mentioned as being immortal or eternal.
- c. The only thing that leaves the body at death is our breath.
- d. It is not a separate entity within us, but is totally dependent upon our body and all of its functions in order to project its various meanings.
- e. The way that it returns to God at death is in that our breath returns to him.

6. The marvelous creation of man includes all of the functions and meanings of his “spirit”. God desires to transform our *spirit* from a sinful nature to godliness. We can learn much for our own lives from this simple study of the *spirit*.

The psalmist prayed (Ps. 51:10), renew a right *spirit* within me. Paul admonished (Rom. 12:2) that we would experience a renewing of our mind (*spirit*). It was said of Daniel that he had an “excellent” *spirit* and of Caleb that he had a “different” *spirit*. In each of these references, there is great inspiration for each of us today. There are sorrowful *spirits*; dumb and deaf *spirits*; false *spirits*; and jealous *spirits* and more.

It would be a good time for us to examine our “spirit”, to see just what kind we are projecting out to others and to God. Some times in a very subtle way, our spirit may be adversely affecting others. Likewise, our spirit can also be the means of inspiring others to good. Many people have an evil spirit; worldly spirit; carnal spirit; vulgar spirit; godless spirit and a lukewarm, indifferent spirit. Solomon began his life with a wonderful, humble spirit, but ended his life with an idolatrous spirit. Nebuchadnezzar had a proud spirit. Ahab had a childish, pouting spirit. Judas had a selfish spirit while Mary Magdalene had a faithful, devoted spirit. Paul had a committed, sacrificial spirit and John had a loving spirit. Elisha had a holy spirit while Manasseh had a wicked spirit. The psalmist had a contrite and truth - loving spirit and a spirit that rejoiced in the house of the Lord. Peter had a hasty, sometimes rash spirit, but it was harnessed and used of God as a spirit of leadership.

These expressions could continue on, but the point to be made is, what kind of a spirit do you and I have. Take a look at your own spirit; analyze it; change it where necessary, build it up where needed. Do you have a faithful spirit; a gentle, kind spirit; how about a spirit of joy and good will? Do you need a courageous, strong spirit for truth and the church? Do you have a longsuffering, forgiving spirit or a jealous, ill tempered spirit? Is your spirit controlled by selfishness, self will, self righteousness; or is it a thoughtful, caring, helping spirit.

We all need the same spirit that dwelt in Christ, who humbled himself and became obedient to the cross. While it is very important that we learn the meaning of what the spirit is, it is much more important that our spirit be renewed to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. Paul admonished the Ephesians: “Be filled with the Spirit”. What a need in every life.