

What Is the Soul of Man?

(by Bob Pulliam)

The Bible teaches that man is a dual being. He has the outward body which functions only for a limited time, and then the soul (or spirit) which animates that body. Solomon wrote, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Eccl 12:7) Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mt 10:28) Paul clearly taught a difference between the body and it's processes and the spirit of man. When a man had sinned, Paul told the Corinthians to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (I Cor 5:5) Much more detail could be given on this multi- faceted word, but here we wish to simplify the subject for all of our readers.

The soul, or spirit, is what gives the physical body it's life. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (Jms 2:26) "Death" is the body without the spirit.

The Resurrection...

The risen Christ is the first-fruits of those who are dead (I Cor 15:20). What happened to Him will happen to us. He died and was raised, and so it shall be with us (If He does not return first - see *Jesus' Return*). But what did happen to Him. Some would have us believe that Jesus ceased to exist in spirit (some say even in body) when He died. But they didn't get that idea from the scriptures. The apostle Peter said, "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption." (Acts 2:31) Is there a difference between the flesh and the soul in this passage? Sure there is! Jesus spoke of His own resurrection saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (Jn 2:19) Who would raise it up? How could Jesus raise anything up if His death meant that He no longer existed in any form? But Jesus did still exist while His body lay in that tomb! Jesus had a conscious, active soul while His body slept in death!

The "Immortal Soul" Argument...

Then someone says, "You won't find one place where the Bible uses the phrase `immortal soul', so the doctrine of an immortal soul is false." The one's who usually pull out this argument have plenty of their own phrases they like to throw around. One of their favorites is "Theocratic Government". Try to find that in your Bible!

Does the Bible have to say it that way to get your attention? What if God just said, "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night,..." (Rev 14:11). How long would you take that to be? The word "torment" in this passage does not mean "to annihilate". It is a clear reference to eternal pain and misery. Misery that is suffered because their souls are *immortal*.

What if God said, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where `Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'" (Mk 9:43) What did Jesus mean? Surely He isn't speaking of eternal torment... He must be saying that it is better to cut off your hand than cease to exist. That makes sense. If he ceases to exist, there will be no pain; but if he cuts off his hand there will be excruciating pain. Jesus says, "choose the pain"! How absurd! Jesus is saying there is nothing as bad as what awaits the wicked in hell. Cutting your hand off is a walk in the park compared to the tortures that

await the wicked. It is described as a worm that never stops eating, and a fire that never dies. And the soul is there to endure it all *immortal*.

What if God gave you an account about two men who died and continued to exist beyond the grave? What if He even named one? Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19- 31. It offers such a clear picture of the soul as immortal that false teachers have to deny that it's message has any validity as given. They call it a parable. Since it's a parable, the people, places and events must symbolize something else. Now back the cart up. What is a parable? It is a story using common, everyday, recognizable objects and events to teach a spiritual lesson. So a parable has a basis in truth, right? But more than that, how was the fate of these two men a familiar subject for Jesus' hearers? Had they been to torments? Had they been to Abraham's bosom? And even if they had, does this not all confess a truth about their existence and the continuation of existence beyond the grave? Sure it does. But here is the bottom line: What Jesus offers here is *not* a parable. Nowhere do we find Jesus taking unfamiliar spiritual truths to create a lesson for other spiritual matters. Also, in no other parable do we find Jesus naming any individual. He could have in Luke 19:12, because the events fit a man named Archaelus to a tee. But here we have Lazarus named. If it were a parable, it would have worked even better as "the rich man and the poor man". An excellent contrast!

There is now, at this moment, a man named Lazarus in a place of perfect comfort and peace. There is also a rich man in excruciating torment and misery. They have been there for at least two thousand years, and they will be there for eternity. The lesson is driven home at the end of Luke 16. Very simply put, If we want to avoid the fate of the rich man, we'd better listen to God, and we'd better listen good! Only He has the power to deliver from that fate.