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BODY, SOUL & SPIRIT



LORD JESUS CRIED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE, "FATHER,
INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." (LUKE 23:46)

THE SEVENTH STATEMENT OF LORD JESUS FROM THE CROSS

BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

“At the moment of rendering his spirit, Jesus opened his mouth again and cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke 23:46)

What is the significance of this statement?

Lord Jesus Christ died, not as we die when our hour of death comes. It wasn't that He was compelled to die and could not help dying. But, Lord Jesus died voluntarily and of His own free will. There is a depth of meaning that we may not fully understand. He who spoke these words was God as well as man. Earlier He had told his disciples, *"I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"* (John 10:17-18).

Interestingly, Lord Jesus borrowed these words from the Psalmist (Psalms 31:5) *"into thine hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, Lord, my faithful God"*. These words signify the restoration of the relationship between Christ and God. Lord Jesus came to the world to carry the sins of the whole world and He accomplished it perfectly. His last words signify surrender where there is no fear of death. It acts as a precedent of how His followers should approach death and reunion with the Father.

If Jesus was speaking to the Father, who is God here? How can God be three persons, yet one?

The God of the Holy Bible eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, where each person is fully God, but there is only one God.

The Apostles Creed puts it this way: *"We worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons, nor dividing their essence. For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit, still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal."*

The two key words here are 'essence' and 'persons'. When you read 'essence', think "GOD-ness". All three Persons of the Trinity share the same "GOD-ness." One is not more God than another. None is more essentially divine than the rest. When you read 'persons', think "a particular individual distinct from the others". Theologians use these terms because they are trying to find a way to express the relationship of three beings that are equally and uniquely God Almighty, but not three Gods.

Where is the doctrine of the Trinity found in the Bible?

Although the word 'Trinity' is famously absent from Scripture, the theology behind the word can be found in a surprising number of verses.

There are verses that speak of God's oneness (**Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 1:17**). Then there are the myriad of passages which demonstrate that God is Father (**John 6:27, Titus 1:4**).

Next, we have scores of texts that prove the deity of Jesus Christ, the Son—passages like **John 1:1** (*"the word was God"*), **John 8:58** (*"before Abraham was born, I am"*), **Colossians 2:9** (*"in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form"*), **Hebrews 1:3** (*"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of his being"*), **Titus 2:13** (*"our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"*)—not to mention the explicit worship Christ willingly received from His disciples (**Luke 24:52; John 20:28**) and the charges of blasphemy levelled against him for making himself equal with God (**Mark 2:7**).

Then we have similar texts which assume the deity of the Holy Spirit, that call Him an "eternal Spirit" (**Hebrews 9:14**) and that uses "God" interchangeably with the "Holy Spirit" (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Acts 5:3-4**) without a second thought.

In several places in Scripture the three persons are linked together in unity and apparent equality. One of these is the baptismal formula as prescribed in the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**): *baptizing in (or into) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Note that 'name' is singular, although there are three persons included. Note also that there is no suggestion of inferiority or subordination.

We cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. When someday we see God, we shall see Him as He is, and understand Him better than we do now. Yet, even then we will not totally comprehend Him. Because He is the unlimited Almighty God and we will always be human beings; even though perfected human beings, we will never become God. Those aspects of God which we will never fully comprehend should be regarded as mysteries that go beyond our reason rather than as paradoxes which conflict with reason.



What is man?

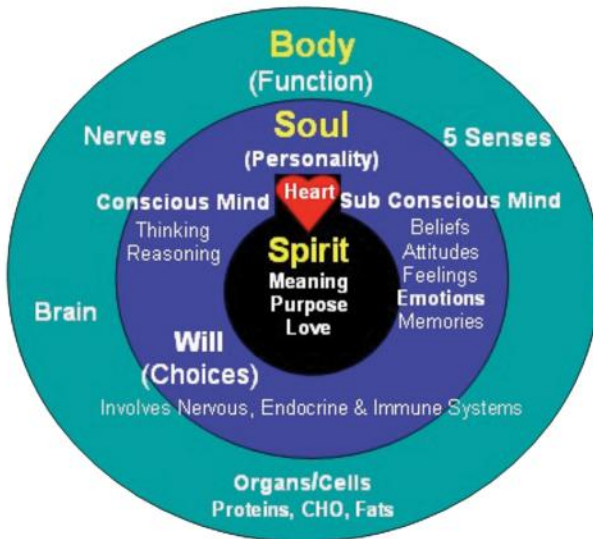
The Biblical view of man is that man is a creature of God, made in the image of God. Man has to be understood as having originated not through a chance process of evolution but through a conscious, purposeful act by God. Thus there is a reason for man's existence, a reason which lies in the intention of the Supreme Being. Man has a finite beginning but an eternal future.

"What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, (Psalms 8:4-6)

Man cannot discover his real meaning by regarding himself and his happiness as the highest of all values, nor can he find happiness, fulfilment, or satisfaction by going out in search of it. His value has been conferred upon him by God and he is fulfilled only when he serves and loves that God. It is then that satisfaction comes, as a by-product of commitment to God. It is then that one realizes the truth of Jesus' statement, *"For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it"* (Mark 8:35).

Does Man have a triune nature?

The Bible presents humans as consisting of three parts: Body, Soul, and Spirit



We are **spirit**, have a **soul** and live in a **body**

I Thessalonians 5:23, *"May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Hebrews 4:12, *"The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

The so-called "tripartite" nature of man is similar to the divine Trinity, because the three parts of a human make one being. Though distinct, the three parts of a person work together to live, exist, and interact with God and creation.

The body is the physical side of a person. It touches the material world through the five senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch.

The spirit is the spiritual side of man. It interacts with God and the spiritual realm through its own set of "senses", such as, faith, hope, and prayer.

The soul is the life of a person. It is the animating principle of a person, and is responsible for imagination, memory, reason, and emotions. As such, the soul serves as the command centre for the person. Neither the body nor the spirit can function on its own; both look to the soul for direction and action.

We are a unity of body, soul, and spirit created to worship God.

Did we exist as immortal souls before our birth?

No, we didn't. There is no support for this view in the Scriptures. Before we were conceived in the wombs of our mothers, we simply did not exist. These views were called as pre-existentialism which is similar to the ideas held by other Middle-eastern religions that popularly believed in reincarnation (re-birth or karma) of soul.

The Bible teaches us that a person comes into existence at the very moment of physical conception, not a moment before (**Psalms 139:13-16; Zechariah 12:1**). Lord Jesus is the only baby born into this world who existed before His birth (**John 1:1; 17:5; Colossians 1:17**). Jesus told the Jewish authorities, *"Before Abraham was born, I am!"* (**John 8:57-58**). His human birth was a unique event never duplicated on any level.

Several passages that speak about God knowing people before they were born, like **Jeremiah 1:5**, *"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you"*, only emphasize God's foreknowledge (omniscience) and His specific call to Jeremiah as a prophet. But they do not refer to any kind of spiritual existence of a person before their physical birth. Instead they indicate that God knows His plans that He has for a person even before that person exists, which compares to how an architect would know the building he has designed before the foundation is even set.

What makes us different from animals?

It is only said about man that he was created *“by God,”* (**Genesis 1:27** – image of God) and *“for Him”* (**Colossians 1:16** – for worship). This high purpose is only ascribed to man. Animals are also creatures of God, but they did not receive a calling to become the children of God (**John 1:12**). In contrast to the animals, man is also an eternal being; this means that his existence never ends, even after the death of the body (**Luke 16:19–31**).

The Holy Bible candidly says, *“All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another”* (**1 Corinthians 15:39**).

Why is the study of man important?

The study of man brings to completion our understanding of God’s work. In a sense, it also helps us have some understanding of God himself because we do learn something about the Creator by seeing what He has created. For only man is said in the Bible to have been made by God in his own image and likeness (**Genesis 1:26-27**). Thus, a direct clue to the nature of God ought to emerge from a study of man.

Because we carry the image of God....

- We belong to God. **Mark 12:13-17**, *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s...”* We bear His image and we belong to Him.
- We should pattern ourselves after Lord Jesus, who is the complete revelation of what the image of God is. He is the full, pure image of God whom the entire humanity needs to follow. (**Hebrews 4:15, Romans 8:29**)
- We experience full humanity only when we are properly related to God. (**2 Corinthians 3:18**)

As we are made up of three parts, how do we describe death?

Physical death is the end of life for the body but it is not the end of existence. In addition to the physical death, Scripture speaks of spiritual and eternal death. Physical death is the separation of the soul & spirit from the body; spiritual death is the separation of the person from God; eternal death is the finalizing of that state of separation (one is lost for all eternity in his or her sinful condition).

In **Matthew 10:28**, Jesus contrasts death of the body with death of both body and soul: *‘And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.’* Also in **Luke 12:4-5**: *“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him!”*

For the unbeliever, death is a curse, a penalty, an enemy. But for those who believe in Christ and so are righteous, death has a different character. The believer still undergoes physical death, but its curse is gone. Because Christ himself became a curse for us by dying on the cross (**Galatians 3:13**); believers, although still subject to physical death, do not experience its fearsome power, its curse (**1 Corinthians 15:54-57**).

For believers death became a conquered enemy and Paul says, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better"* (**Philippians 1:20-23**). Stephen knowing his death is near, prayed simply, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (**Acts 7:59**) and *"Lord, do not hold this sin against them"* (v. 60). *And our Lord Jesus said the last words from the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"* (**Luke 23:46**). For Paul, as for Stephen and Jesus, death was no longer an active enemy, but a conquered enemy who now serves not to condemn and destroy, but to free us from the dreadful conditions which sin has introduced.

WE carry the Image of GOD and belong to GOD

What happens when people die?

Once a believer dies, though his or her physical body remains on the earth and is buried, the soul and the spirit of that believer goes immediately into the presence of God with rejoicing. When Paul thought about death he said, *"We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord"* (**2 Corinthians 5:8**) (Also see **Luke 23:43**, **Philippians 1:23**, **Hebrews 12:23**). However, God will not leave our dead bodies in the earth forever, for when Christ returns the souls of believers will be reunited with their resurrected bodies and they will live with Christ eternally.

When an unbeliever dies, the soul and spirit goes immediately into eternal punishment where there is absence of God. Their bodies will not be raised until the day of final judgment. On that day, their bodies will be raised and reunited with their souls and they will stand before God's throne for the final judgment to be pronounced upon them in the body (See **Matthew 25:31-46**, **John 5:28-29**, **Acts 24:15** and **Revelation 20:12,15**)

How does Holy Spirit transform our lives?

God of the Bible takes the initiative to do the renewal work in our lives. He promises, *"And I will give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God"* (**Ezekiel 11:19-20**).

At the moment we believe in the Saviour Lord Jesus Christ and the finished work of the Cross, the Holy Spirit Himself enters into our spirit and witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God. There happens a union of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit in the act of being born again. **John 3:6**, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* In **1 Corinthians 6:17**, Paul said, "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Whoever undergoes this experience is a new creation: *"Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come"* (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Lord Jesus explained to Nicodemus that this new birth experience by the Holy Spirit is like the wind although one does not know where it comes from or where it goes, one hears its sound (**John 3:8**). The new birth deals with matters that are not perceived by the senses, but the necessity of being born again is of utmost importance as it shows that none of us is good enough in his or her natural state. We all need to undergo metamorphosis if we are to please God.

What are the topmost signs of Holy Spirit transformation in your life?

1. Having an undiluted faith and devotion to Lord Jesus Christ! (**Matthew 5:6**)

2. Reversing of a person's natural, sinful tendencies wholly. Paul says: *"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."* (**Galatians 5:24-25**) They are the direct opposite of the fruit of the old nature, the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-23**).

3. Producing the "fruit of the Spirit" as a process of spiritual maturity. Although being born again (regeneration) is instantaneous and complete, it is not an end in itself. Holy Spirit continues to sanctify you to make you more fruitful. (**Ephesians 2:10**)

4. Sharing Christ becomes a priority in your life. (**Acts 1:8**)

5. Serving God "in and through" the church. (**Matthew 23:11**)

Book References:

Christian Theology - Millard J Erickson

Systematic Theology – Wayne Grudem

A theology of the New Testament – George Eldon Ladd

If you have any further questions, please email us at info@bethelag.in or walk into the church office for any counselling regarding this issue.

67, RING ROAD, HEBBAL, BANGALORE – 560 024

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