

Soul and Spirit Not Always Synonymous

by Danny Brown

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." --Hebrews 4:12.

Soul and spirit do not always refer to the same characteristic of man. The spirit refers to that which is immortal while the soul may refer to various characteristics such as emotions, animal life or the whole person. The Bible informs us that there is a difference between the soul and the spirit. (Heb 4:12) For instance, demons are sometimes referred to as evil spirits (Mark 5:2), but never as souls, good or evil. The word "spirit" sometimes refers to the wind or air (John 3:8), the word "soul" does not.

The terms soul and spirit are not always synonymous terms. Yet, materialists and annihilationists assume that they are. This is a false assumption. In the New Testament the Greek word *pneuma* is translated by the English word spirit nearly four hundred times. The Greek word *psuchee* is translated by the English word soul one hundred and five times. *Pneuma* is never translated soul, nor is *psuche* ever translated spirit, in any common version of the New Testament. It is true that sometimes the word soul is used as an equivalent to the word spirit. For example: "Fear not them that can kill the body, but who cannot kill the soul." (Matt 10:28) Here the immortal part of man is called the soul. It is evident that in this case it cannot mean the animal soul or life; for man can kill that. Again, "I saw under the alter the souls of them that were slain for the word of God," (Rev 6:9) Again, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded." (Rev 20:4) These, of course, are disembodied immortal souls, or spirits.

In the Bible, when anyone in dying gives up or commends himself to the Lord or the Father, not one of them ever commended his soul into their hands. It is always the spirit that is committed to their care "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59) "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46) This shows an essential difference between soul and spirit. The body returns to dust with its animal life and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Eccl 12:7) The word of God does "divide asunder," or separate between soul and spirit.