

Question: Hebrews 4:12 mentions the division of soul and spirit. What is the difference between the soul and the spirit?

Answer: Thank you for the great question. The two illustrations of the writer of Hebrews gave us to demonstrate just how powerful God's word really is was to be able to separate soul from spirit and joint from marrow. The very point that God's word can accomplish such a difficult task demonstrates that the difference between soul and spirit is difficult to demonstrate. Usually, in Scripture they are used interchangeably for the inner man or inner person. The only other time in the New Testament that there is a clear distinction between the two is found in I Thessalonians 5:23 "Mady God himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lor Jesus Christ".

It is interesting that the same word translated "soul" is also translated "Life" and the same word translated "spirit" is also translated "wind" or breath". Think of a few uses of both, that mig ht give us more insight. Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell".

When Jesus was dying on the cross he cried out to the father, “into your hands I commit my spirit.” Yet in Acts 2 as Peter talked about the resurrection of Christ he quoted a prophecy from Psalms that God would not leave his soul in hades, nor would he allow his holy one to see corruption. In the creation of Adam, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life or the spirit of life and man became a living soul.

When used together the soul may either be used of the Life of the person or the inner man that survives death. Remember James 2: 24-26 when James spoke about faith and works and pointed out that as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead, being alone. Death occurs when the spirit leaves the body to go be with the lord. Also, remember Paul 2 Corinthians 12 describing that time fourteen years earlier, whether in the body or out, he didn't know, he had been caught up in the third heaven and heard unspeakable words, that are unlawful for a person to utter.

Ultimately, we must go back to the fact that both soul and spirit refer to the inner being, the real person that

dwells in the body, but will survive the death of the body and live with God forever in eternity. Even hell doesn't annihilate the soul or spirit. Remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16.

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