

What is our Spirit, what is meant by the term "the Spirit of God in us."

The Hebraic View

This is also referred to as the "*indwelling of the Spirit*."

This at first might sound like an easy task, but it is a bit more complicated than one would imagine.

We will have to compare many different Scriptures in order to understand what these terms mean.

We have to understand what the word "*spirit*" means in depth, and see its many different uses.

We have to understand the difference between the "*baptism and gifts of the Spirit*" and the "*indwelling of the Spirit of God*." We will also have to examine and determine if what the Apostles experienced in reference to the Holy Spirit is the same thing that we are to expect from the Holy Spirit.

A thorough understanding of the word "*Spirit*" is needed in order to understand the many passages in the Bible in which it is used.

The most difficult challenge to most people will be to discard the engraved definition of "*spirit*" which we have been exposed to since childhood and embrace the Jewish definition of "*spirit*."

The Bible after all is a Jewish document, and we must always use the definitions of the people who wrote it if we are ever to understand its true meaning.

Unfortunately this is not what has happened in the course of history. People have interpreted the Bible with Greek philosophical definitions, or have injected their own modern day definitions into Jewish words, which of course will lead you to an incorrect conclusion.

Let us first understand Greek philosophy's definition of "*spirit*" which is the prevalent definition in our society today. This view originated with the Pythagoreans, a group that was founded by Pythagoras who was a great philosopher and mathematician in ancient Greece.

Pythagoreans - Pythagoreans believed that the soul is immortal and separable from the body. By leading a pure life, an individual might secure the release of his or her soul from all flesh.

To someone educated in Greek philosophy "*soul*" and "*spirit*" are interchangeable and mean basically the same thing, much as it does in our society today.

While Greek philosophy considers the soul (i.e. spirit) immortal, the Jews believe that **only God** is immortal, and that immortality is a gift that only God can bestow upon an individual.

We must receive immortality as a **gift from God**, it is **not inherent** in us. **1 Tim 6:16** says it clearly:

"Whom (God) alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see."

The Pythagorean's view was later adopted by Plato who adjusted it a little and through whom it became popular and ultimately became the standard definition of spirit.

Platonism - Belief that we must be capable of existing apart from our physical bodies. The flesh is evil. The body is a prison. It is bad for the soul (i.e. spirit) to be in the body. Platonism suggests the **immortality** and pre-existence of the soul, and the soul then becoming incarnate.

The Christian hope of resurrection is a **bodily resurrection** not a spiritual one.

However, the majority of people today believe that a person's spirit separates from their bodies at death and goes to either heaven or hell.

As you can see, this is the Greek concept of death which is in direct opposition to the Jewish concept of death. The Greek view thinks of the spirit as something similar to a ghost that you can sometimes see, as it is portrayed in the movies. This is evident even in some Bibles in which the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Holy Ghost. The word in Greek is "*pneuma*" which is "*spirit*" not "*ghost*." The spirit to a Greek philosopher is immortal, the Bible states that immortality belongs only to God. These Greek definitions provide fundamentally enormous consequences when injected into the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) and the New Covenant Writings (NT)..

These are the definitions that we must discard from our memories if we are ever going to understand the Bible the way it was meant to be understood.

What then are the Jewish definitions of "*spirit*."?

In Hebrew the word "*spirit*" is "*ruach*" (or ruah) and in Greek it is "*pneuma*." Hebrew was used in the Old Testament while the New Testament is written in Greek. Their definitions are almost exactly the same. The Jews used "*pneuma*" in Greek in the same way that they used "*ruah*" in Hebrew.

A. *Spirit* (ruah & pneuma) - **Breath of life**. The vital principle by which the **body is animated**.

It is the life force that God gives to people and animals which **animates** their bodies, which gives them life. When He takes it away they **die**.

Examples:

Psalms 104: 29-30: "*When you take away their breath (ruach), **they perish** and return to the dust from which they came. When you send forth your breath (ruach), they **are created**.*"

Ecclesiastes 12:7: "*And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the **life breath** (ruach) **returns to God** who gave it.*"

Psalms 33:6: "*When his **spirit** (ruach) departs he returns to his earth; on that day his plans **perish**.*"

This definition is extremely important when one interprets a verse such as **Luke 23:46:**

*"Father, into your hands I commend **my spirit** (pneuma);" and when he said this he **breathed his last**.*"

If you use the Greek philosophical definition as most people do, you will arrive at the conclusion that at that moment Jesus' Greek type spirit went to heaven to be with God. This of course is not possible because after three days when Jesus was resurrected, he appeared to Mary of Magdala and told her:

*"Stop holding on to me, for I have **not yet ascended** to the Father" (John 20:17).*

If we use the intended Jewish definition of spirit it will make perfect sense. Jesus' **breath of life** returned to God and **he died**. This is in accordance with the Scriptures and definition listed above and does not conflict with John 20:17. It is the intended Jewish meaning. A second very important meaning of "*spirit*" is:

Spirit (ruach) - is often used of a man's **mind-set**, disposition, or temper. The word is used of one's **mind or thinking**.

Spirit (pneuma) - the Spirit is said to **dwell in the minds** of Christians..

Paul uses spirit and mind interchangeably as he quotes Isaiah 40:13 in the New Testament. Let's take a look at these verses.

Isaiah 40:13: *"Who has directed the **spirit of the LORD**, or has instructed Him as His counselor?"*

Romans 11:34: *"Who has known the **mind of the Lord**, or who has been His counselor?"*

1 Corinthians 2:16: *"For who has known the **mind of the Lord**, so as to counsel Him?"*

It is clear that for Paul, the spirit of the LORD is the mind of the LORD. These definitions are crucial in order to understand many verses of the Bible. If you are one in spirit with Jesus it means that you are **one in mind** with Jesus. That you have the same **mind-set**, the same disposition, that you **think** the same as he does. This after all is what a Christian strives for, to try to reach the example of faith that Jesus showed us. To be able to discern the will of God as Jesus did so perfectly. We are told to have the same **mind**, the same **attitude** as Christ.

Examples:

1 Corinthians 2:16: *"But we have the **mind of Christ**."*

Philippians 2:2: *"Complete my joy by being of the **same mind**, with the same love, united in heart, **thinking** one thing."*

1 Peter 4:1: *"Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the **same attitude**, for whoever suffers in the flesh has broken with sin, so as not to spend what remains of one's life on human desires, but on **the will of God**."*

Philippians 2:5: *"Have among yourselves the same **attitude** that is also yours in Christ Jesus."*

With these definitions we can better understand a verse like

1 Corinthians 6:17:

*"But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in **spirit**."*

In other words, whoever unites himself with the Lord is one with him in mind, mind-set, attitude, thinking, or in purpose, which are all synonymous. Here are some other examples. Try substituting one of the given definitions where it says "*spirit*" and you will get a clearer meaning of the verse.

Numbers 5:14: *"Or if a man is overcome by a **spirit** of jealousy."*

Galatians 6:1: *"Even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one with the **spirit** of gentleness."*

1 Corinthians 2:12: *"We have not received the **spirit** of the world but the **Spirit** that is from God."*

Deuteronomy 34:9: *"Now Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the **spirit** of wisdom."*

Genesis 41:8: *"Next morning his **spirit** was agitated."*

This definition of "*spirit*" is still very popular even among our own society.

A recent article in Flying Careers magazine was about how some pilots volunteer their time for such programs as Young Eagles or Angel Flight. The title of the article was "The Spirit of Volunteering." Another way of saying the same thing is, "*The mind-set of Volunteering.*" A paragraph in the article says, "*Many organizations provide opportunities for those in the spirit.*" This phrase sounds like something right out of the New Testament, but as we all know, the writer is simply saying that many organizations provide opportunities for those in the right frame of mind.

With this understanding, and by comparing some other verses we can now comprehend more fully what Jesus meant when he told Nicodemus in **John 3:3-5**:

*"No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" ...no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and **spirit**"*

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that unless you make a commitment to God (which is demonstrated by baptism) and be born again of **the mind**, you will not enter the kingdom of God. Our **minds** have to be **born again**, they have to think differently than they did when they followed the flesh. Our **minds** have to be **renewed** in order to be able to discern and follow the will of God.

Romans 12:2: *"Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the **renewal of your mind**, that you may discern what is the **will of God**."*

Ephesians 4:23: *"And be **renewed in the spirit** (purpose) of your **minds**."*

2 Corinthians 4:16: *"Although our outer self is wasting away, our **inner self** (spirit i.e. mind) is being **renewed** day by day."*

Colossians 3:9-10: *"Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the **new self** (new mind), which is being **renewed**, for knowledge in the image of its creator."*

Romans 7:6: *"Dead to what held us captive, so that we may serve in the **newness of the spirit** (mind) and not under the obsolete law."*

You will notice that in many of the verses that we are reading, the adjectives that are attributed to renewal are adjectives that are associated with our minds, such as knowledge, discern, etc.

Jeremiah 31:31-33: *"The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant (Mosaic covenant) I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt... But this is the **covenant** (ushered in by Jesus) which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law **within** them, and write it upon their hearts."*

Hebrews 8:10: *"I will put **my laws** in their **minds**."*

2 Corinthians 3:5-6: *"Rather, our qualification comes from God, who has indeed qualified us as ministers of a **new covenant**, not of the letter but of **spirit**" (of the mind).*

Romans 2:28: *"One is not a Jew (follower of God in this context) outwardly. True circumcision is not outward, in the flesh. Rather, one is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the **spirit**, not the letter."*

Romans 7:25: *"Therefore, I myself, **with my mind**, serve the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin."*

Christianity is a war in fought in **our minds**. The war is between good and evil. We strive to follow the will of **God** over the will of **our flesh**.

Romans 7:22-23: *"For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self (mind), but I see in my members another principle at **war** with **the law of my mind**, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."*

Romans 7:25: *"I myself, with my **mind** serve the law of God but, with my **flesh**, the law of sin."*

This understanding of **spirit** in relation to the **mind** is essential if one is going to understand what Paul meant when he said in **Romans 8:9:**

*"Whoever does not have the **Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. But if Christ **is in you**."*

What does Paul mean when he says *"Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him?"*

What Paul is saying is that whoever does not have the mind-set or mind of Christ does not belong to him.

John 15:7: *"If you remain in me (Jesus) and my **words remain in you**."*

Colossians 3:16: *"Let the **word of Christ dwell** in you richly."*

Ephesians 3:17: *"And that **Christ may dwell** in your hearts through **faith**."*

2 Corinthians 11:10: *"By the **truth of Christ** (his words) that is **in me**."*

Colossians 1:17: *"It is Christ **in you**, the **hope for glory**."*

Ephesians 4:21: *"assuming that you have heard of him (Jesus) and were taught **in him**, as truth is **in him**."*

Colossians 2:6: *"So, as you **received** Christ Jesus the Lord, walk **in him**, rooted **in him** and built **upon him** and established in the faith as you were **taught**."*

This is the Hebraic meaning of Christ **dwelling** in us. It is vastly different from the Greek philosophical point of view.

When we truly believe and accept the **word** (will) of God with our minds and hearts, the **Spirit** (mind-set) of God **dwells in us**. It is an integral part of our being. It is **in us**. We are now **one** in mind with God.

With this understanding, we should see that the mind, soul and spirit are in a sense the same thing.

Reference:

A synopsis of an article "Indwelling of the Spirit" by Juan Bauxeras. See also *Body and Soul: Greek and Hebraic Tensions in Scripture* by Dennis Bratcher

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