

Dear Bill,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know the difference between the soul and the spirit.

What is the soul? “The LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breathe of life (*ruach* – spirit of life), and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7) God did not give a soul to man, but He created man a soul or being. The word *soul* from the Old Testament (*nepesh*) means a *breathing* creature. Therefore, man does not have a soul, but is a soul.

What is the spirit of man? The spirit is the breath of life or the privilege of living that God gave to man. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” (Ecclesiastes 12:7) This text reminds us of the original sentence of death pronounced upon Adam for disobedience. He had been formed from the dust and therefore he should forfeit his life and return unto the dust. Adam died. The breath of life (the spirit), the energizing life principle, was removed from his body and is also removed from each of our bodies upon death and returned to God. The living soul, the person, dies, but the spirit (the life principle of the person) is returned to God, who remembers all things and will one day return that essence or spirit to each resurrected human.

Death is the nonexistence of life. All living souls die, whether they are human or animal. But there is hope for humankind beyond the grave. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) “For a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live [immortal life in heaven], and those who have done evil will rise to judgment.” (John 5:28-29)

What is the difference between the soul and the spirit? A soul is a living, breathing creature, be it man or animal. The spirit is the essence of life or the energizing life principle that each of us has. It is our uniqueness. When we die, this uniqueness is returned to God’s memory. During the Millennium when humans come forth from their graves, they will receive that spirit, or essence, of who they were. Nothing is lost with God. We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio