

TRICHOTOMY 101

Request: I recently was in a discussion with a Christian friend who was confused about the difference between the human body, soul, and spirit. During the discussion, I realized I wasn't clear on the human spirit. Would you a study on the human spirit?

This is one of those doctrines that have different views regarding the human spirit prior to salvation but not after salvation.

This lesson will use five points to discuss the subject of trichotomy.

Trichotomy is a compound Greek word: (treis) [three] (temno) [to cut]. Trichotomy means to cut or divide into three parts.

1. Christian theologians are in agreement that believers are trichotomous.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess.5:23)

Hebrew theologians converted to Christianity were also in agreement:

(Heb.4: 12) “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Paul speaking to single adult Christians addressed it in a doctrinal issue:

(1 Cor.7: 34) “And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit.”

Paul used it in his benedictions in (Phil.4: 23; 2 Tim.4: 22; Gal.6: 18)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

There is no doubt that the saved person is trichotomous by the grace of God.

2. There is no doubt that the ministry of the Holy Spirit at salvation is the source of spiritual life in the believer's body, soul, and spirit.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” (Rom.8:15)

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” (Rom.8:11)

“And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” (Rom.8:10)

In the same way that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life to the soul and body, He gives life to the spirit at salvation (Rom.8: 9; Jude 19) “It is the Spirit who gives life.” (John 6:63; 2 Cor.3:6; 1 Cor.6:19-20).

There is no doubt that the saved person is trichotomous by the grace of God.

3. The Hebrew theologians of the OT thought of man in terms of one or unison, but they believed in the trichotomy of man.

“Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then **the dust** will return to the earth as it was, and **the spirit** will return to God who gave it.” (Eccl.12:6-7)

The breath of God (neshamah) is the life principle: “Then the Lord God formed man from the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (Gen.2:7)

“The spirit may be recognized as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul as the resulting life constituted in the individual, the body being the material organism animated by soul and spirit.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, pg.589)

“The Lord who forms the spirit of man within him.” (Zech.12:1)

“God the Lord who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it.” (Isa.42:5)

The human spirit is an issue with life and with death -“Thou dost take away their spirit. They expire and return to their dust.” (Ps.104:29; 146:4; Job 27:3; 33:4)

This is the context of James 2:26: “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without the works is dead.”

There is no doubt that all mankind is trichotomous by divine design.

4. We understand that every member of the human race is dead as a result of AOS.

(Gen.2: 16-17) “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” (Rom.5:12)

Spiritual death is 1 of 13 judicial charges of AOS. AOS separates the living from God in time and the dead from God in eternity (1 Cor.15:22; Rev.20:6, 14-15).

- The first question to ask might be “what is dead in a living human being?” Some theologians answer the human spirit? “For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. (1 Pet.4:6)
- Then the second question to ask might be is the human spirit dead literally or spiritually prior to salvation? **“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor.2:11)**
- The third question to ask might be “what is born again and saved?” (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5-7)

5. When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, we believe that He died spiritually before He died physically.

The question to ask might be “when Jesus took our sins and died, did He still have a human spirit or was it dead?”

“And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.’ And having said this, He breathed His last.” (Luke 23:46) Jesus was quoting Ps.31: 5a (John 19:30).

There is no doubt that Jesus spiritually died on the cross as a trichotomous person.