

Let's Ask the New Testament About the Spirit in Us

By

George Aldridge

1. How often does the word translated "spirit" (Greek, *pneuma*) occur in the New Testament? Over 380 times.

2. Is it identical in meaning with the word in the Old Testament?

Yes; in the Greek version of the Old Testament it is the word invariably employed as the equivalent for *ruach*, and if Luke 23:46 be compared with Psa. 31:5, it will be clear to all that the two terms are really one: "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit" (Luke 23:46); "Into thine hand I commend my spirit" (Psa. 31:5).

3. Has it any term attached which signifies immortality?

No, neither immortality nor consciousness (apart from the body) is predicated on it.

4. How is it rendered in our Authorized Version (KJV)?

By "spirit," 288 times; "ghost," 92 times; and by "wind," "life," "breath," and "spiritual," once each.

5. Under the fuller light of the New Testament is there one instance where it is synonymous with "man"?

No, it is a possession of man, "my spirit," the "spirits of men."

6. But it does refer to intelligent beings, does it not?

Yes, in such cases it applies to God or to angels, good or bad, as: "God is *Spirit*" (John 4:24). "Are (angels) not all *ministering spirits* sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). "Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other *spirits* more evil than himself" (Matt. 12:45).

7. Are we then to understand that the spirit of man is separable from the person?

Yes, it is the body always which, living or dead, carries personality. For examples, "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and *yielded up His spirit*" (Matt. 27:50). "Here, Jesus, as a man is distinguished from the spirit which was in Him. He gave it up; He was separated from it; He was, therefore, not that which was separable and separated from Him. When the spirit was gone to God, Jesus, the man Jesus, was left, without the spirit, yet still Himself. The spirit of Jesus was not Jesus Himself" — Constable.

8. Does the New Testament agree with the Old in ascribing life to its presence in the organism?

"And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately" (Luke 8:55). "And after three days and a half the *breath* (Greek, *pneuma*/spirit) of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" (Rev. 11:11).

9. In harmony with this, then, its absence will be death?

“For as the body, *apart from the (pneuma) spirit is dead,*” even so faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:26). “When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, He said — it is finished; and He bowed His head and *gave up His (pneuma) spirit.*...When they came to Jesus and saw that *He was dead already* they brake not His legs” (John 19:30, 33). From these instances we observe that the spirit of a man is that which vitalizes the organism. Its presence gives life; its withdrawal causes death.

10. But does not Acts 7:5, 9 afford warrant for the consciousness of the spirit in the death state, “Lord Jesus, receive my (*pneuma*) spirit”?

No; because spirit does not carry the personality. Compare the following: — “And devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him: (Acts 8:2). If Stephen was buried, Stephen did not go to heaven; else death made two persons out of one.

11. But Heb. 12:23 speaks of the spirits of just men made perfect.

True; but this affords no assistance to common belief, inasmuch as a reference to the original shows that the participle, “made perfect” agrees with “just men” and not with “spirits.” If it is therefore the just men who are “perfected,” and as this does not take place before resurrection, this passage affords no support to the common spirit theory.

Conclusion:

From the above findings we conclude that the usual orthodox affirmations regarding the spirit of man are anti-Scriptural, and that there is not a particle of evidence either for natural immortality or a conscious intermediate state, there being no passage which affirms consciousness of the spirit when it is separated from the body. Combining the facts of the New Testament with the facts of the Old we find (a) that the word “spirit” in the Hebrew and Greek occurs about EIGHT HUNDRED TIMES, and in no single instance is there a usage of the common terms “immortal spirit” or “never-dying spirit;” (b) in no single instance is it employed to designate a man; (c) and nowhere does it refer to a man in the death state.

Here then the theory of natural immortality can find no foothold.

Note: George Aldridge was a pioneer advocate of Resurrection Theology in New Zealand. This article first appeared in the Jan., 1888 issue of British publication *The Bible Standard*, which since then has become *Resurrection* magazine. The author draws most of his scriptural quotations from the 1885 *British Revision Version*.

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