

Jason Upchurch - Systematic Theology - Anthropology - Parts and Glory

James 2:18-26 Read

We are rounding out the study this morning of the doctrine of anthropology. I trust this has been helpful to you as we consider theologically the issues related to who we are as humans made in the image of God, how sin affects us and how we overcome it.

This morning we're looking at sort of two ends of the spectrum. First we're going to talk about who we are: are we body and soul? Or are we body, spirit and soul? Are we body, spirit, soul, mind, heart? What makes up a human?

Second we're going to look at the resurrection. What does the Bible say about who we will be in the future when the Lord Jesus returns and we have glorified bodies? What can we know?

1. Let's start with how many parts we are. This might seem a little out there. But I think the practical implications are very important.

There are 2 main views among Christians. The first view is called dichotomy. Di, meaning two. Temnein - to cut. Are we 2 parts or 3? trichotomy. Tri, meaning three parts.

Now, outside of Christianity, there's the view that most secular evolutionists hold to which is monism. One part.

Richard Dawkins believes humans are completely physical products of evolution, we have no non-material existence. "We are survival machines - robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a truth which still fills me with astonishment." (Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 1976)

Francis Crick, who helped discover the DNA structure and a neuroscientist, said: "You are nothing but a pack of neurons." (*The Astonishing Hypothesis*, 1994)

Stephen Hawking - the famous theoretical physicist who was in a wheelchair, said: "The human race is just chemical scum on a moderate sized planet, orbiting a very average star in the outer suburb of one another a hundred billion galaxies. We are so insignificant that I can't believe the whole universe exists for our benefit." (1995 Interview, cited: https://philosophynow.org/issues/89/You_Chemical_Scum_You)

"I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark" (cited: <https://time.com/5199149/stephen-hawking-death-god-atheist/>)

Tell us how you really feel. By the way, Jesus says it's not that we're afraid of the dark, it's that he's afraid of the light. He doesn't want to come to the light because his sinful deeds will be exposed and he loves those sinful deeds. **John 3**

This is what evolution does. It says we are all body, no soul. No spirit, no immaterial part at all. We're just a physical apparatus, a machine that operates at a very complex level. We also have no true value or meaning - we're just scum. We could have evolved to be bacteria or spider or a moth or baleen whale. It was all random and it's all just the same because we have no souls.

Interestingly, there's a some of popular level thinking now in the age of AI that we're just the opposite. Elon Musk often suggests that we might be living in a simulation. "I think there's a good chance we're in a simulation, not that we're definitely in one." (X Reply, 5/17/26). That we're all in a big imagination with individual consciousnesses - we have no real bodies at all. That was a reply to someone explaining how life is basically a video game, sort of like the Matrix.

So the world is offering a view on what parts make up a human. So it's not far out there, I think it's important to understand that the Christian view on these things - as we've seen with so many others - flies in the face of what the world believes.

When it comes to the physical side of us and the non-physical side of humans, I am a dichotomist. I believe the Bible teaches we're two parts: body and soul. The word "soul" can be interchanged with spirit or heart as well. But I think we're just two parts. I'll give you my case for that, then talk about the trichotomy view and then we'll talk about application.

So here in **James 2** we have one of the best definitions of death in the Bible. You might have wondered why we read this whole thing, but it's because the very last verse. **Read 26**

This is the Bible's definition of death. When is someone dead? It's when their spirit leaves their body. It's actually the very opposite of the definition of life. Remember in the Garden when God made Adam. He formed a body from the dirt, but it was only when he breathed into him the breath of life - a soul, or a spirit - that he became a living creature.

That's what we are. We are body - physical - and soul - spiritual.

Now, when someone dies the physical and spiritual are separated. But they're only separated for a time. We call this the intermediate state. I'm getting ahead of myself, we'll talk about that in a bit.

But we're body and soul. And the Bible uses these terms interchangeably.

Jesus says in **John**: My soul is troubled (**12:27**) and the next chapter it says his spirit is troubled (**13:21**). There doesn't seem to be a distinction.

It is said of people who are in heaven that their spirits are in heaven (**Hebrew 12:23**) or their souls are in heaven (**Rev. 6:9**) and there's no distinction between the two.

Luke 12:20: the foolish man who built bigger barns is told: this night your soul is required of you. He's going to die and the soul is going to be called to heaven to give an account.

When Jesus dies he gives up his what? Spirit.

So spirits or souls depart at death. And spirits or souls are in heaven - they seem to be the same thing. It's the animating inner person of who we are.

Paul says of believers in **2 Cor. 4** that the outer man is wasting away. But that the inner man is being renewed day by day. Because of the effect of sin on our bodies they break down.

I remember as a kid hearing people talk about trying to discover the elixir of life. Some potion or medicine that would make us live forever. Even now geneticists are trying to find ways to stave off death to 120 years or 150 years. Maybe with AI we'll crack the code!

You know what? Maybe we will. Maybe we'll live to 300 or 700 years like they did shortly after the flood. But we'll still die and break down. Why? Because there is no Tree of Life here on earth. That way was shut in the Garden. And it was shut as a mercy that we wouldn't live on in a sin-stained world.

Paul says our outer man is wasting away, but our inner man is being renewed. For the Christian, our inner man is becoming more and more like Jesus day by day. When we're in heaven, our inner man will be perfected. At the resurrection, our body will be perfected as well.

Two more points, and I'm borrowing this Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology - which I think you should all have on your book shelves.

Both souls and spirits are said to sin.

1 Pet. 1:22 purify your soul.

2 Cor 7:1: Paul says that our spirits can be defiled.

And finally, we see that our souls and our spirits can rejoice or be sad or be crushed or be encouraged. The terms soul and spirit are used interchangeably to emphasize the same things. If you read through the Psalms you'll see these two words used interchangeably all the time.

So all that to say, I think we are simply 2 parts: body and soul. Let me make one more comment before moving on the the trichotomy view.

CS Lewis is often quoted as saying "I do not have a soul. I am a soul. I have a body." And what I think he's trying to do is emphasize that we are primary spiritual creatures not physical creatures. I've even favorably quoted that line years ago.

But I think that's actually not accurate. What makes us unique from angels and demons is that we have a physical body. And what makes us unique from animals is that God has made us in his image to have dominion over creation. The Bible says we will judge angels and we rule over creation. We do that as embodied souls.

We're not more body or more soul. It's not as though one is more important. Which is more important: the gas pedal or the brake pedal? Well, you need them both.

Interestingly, in the Bible when we see glimpses of saints in glory they are described in bodies: Enoch, Samuel, Elijah, Moses, the saints waiting for justice in Revelation. It seems as though in heaven we have some kind of temporary embodiment until the resurrection, but we're never described as ghostly beings.

Alright, what about the trichotomy view? That idea that we're 3 parts. Body, soul and spirit. I think I held to this view for a short time and it's not without some evidence. Let me show you. **Turn to 1 Thes. 5:23**

This is a doxology that we've read as a benediction. **Read**

So the argument is why would Paul list body, soul and spirit if there wasn't some distinction between soul and spirit? The words are different in Greek. Spirit is pneuma and your soul is your psuche. From where we get psyche or psychology. More on that in a minute.

Why the difference? Is there a difference? And I think the reality is there isn't a difference. I think the idea behind this prayer is just that God would completely protect **all of who we are** until he comes. I don't think this is a definitive verse on a difference between soul and spirit.

Jesus says to love the Lord our God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. So are 4 parts? Five parts? Body soul, spirit, mind and strength? Paul says he loves the church in his bowels - in his belly - his gut feelings. Maybe we're six parts.

No, I think this is just Paul's way of emphasizing in his prayer to God that we are kept completely blameless. That there would be no sin in any area of our lives.

Turn to Heb 4. I think this passage is probably the strongest case for the trichomoist view, if I'm just being honest. Here the author of Hebrews does seem to make a distinction even though he doesn't define the distinction. **Read 12**

So even though I'm not convinced, I think this is probably the strongest argument because we do know there is a difference between joints and marrow. Joints connect bones, marrow is inside of bones. And so it makes sense that there seems to be some distinction between soul and spirit.

But I think if we step back and look at the rest of Scripture which seems to point to just 2 parts, we can answer that. First, I think it's again rhetorical. I think the point is that the Word of God lays us bare. When we hear the Word of God read or preached we often feel conviction. I don't know how many sermons I've heard where I'm

thinking “This guy is talking about me!” “How does he know all about this in my life!?” Well, it’s not me, it’s the Word of God laying my soul bare. It’s the Word of God that’s slicing and dicing causing conviction.

It’s cutting me up like a razor sharp meat cleaver. It cuts between joint and marrow, soul and spirit, and thoughts and intentions. Thoughts and intentions is basically saying the same thing. Your thoughts are the inner being of who you are. Your intentions are the inner being of who you are.

So I would say that this again is a rhetorical flourish. It’s meant not to teach a technical distinction between soul and spirit but to show that the Word of God slices and dices and lays us bare before God.

There are other passages but I don’t find them convincing either.

1 Cor. 14:14: Paul says my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What does that mean? Is there some big distinction between the spirit and the mind?

Well, context matters. He’s talking about speaking in tongues or praying in tongues. And the point is that if you’re praying in tongues - a foreign language that you’ve never learned but that the Holy Spirit has given you the miraculous ability to speak but maybe not understand. If you miraculously speak in tongues but you don’t have someone to interpret, the Holy Spirit is praying but your mind is not engaged.

It’s like listening to someone pray in Portuguese. They might be filled with the Spirit, but you have absolutely no idea what they’re saying and so they should be quiet in the church. That’s all he’s talking about.

Paul’s not trying to make a case that we’re 2 or 3 parts.

Alright, what do we do with this? Why does it matter? First of all it matters simply that we seek to understand the Bible rightly whether we know the weight of importance or not. Maybe it seems like a small thing that Jesus has 2 natures but in reality it’s really important. So we want to get it right.

Second, where I see this have the greatest affect is in the biblical counseling world and how psychology has crept in to evangelicalism. If you’ve been around for any time, you know I’m not a fan at all of psychology. It’s secular, it’s godless, it’s a money trap and I think it goes against almost every biblical principle there is.

Do psychologists ever make good observations? Sure. But it’s steeped in evolutionary nonsense and undermines the Christian worldview at every turn. If you want a fantastic book to read that critiques the whole therapeutic movement of the last 30-40 years, read Abigail Shrier’s book *Bad Therapy*. If you want a Christian book about biblical counseling read Jay Adams: *Competent to Counsel*.

But with Shrier, she’s not even a Christian, but she documents the ridiculousness of the modern psychological and therapeutic philosophies and how therapists don’t actually help anyone. In schools they often pit children against parents, and leave people people feeling more fragile as a result.

I mean you’d think that with the explosion of pop-psychology and therapy everywhere our whole society would be a completely well-adjusted society. But we’re a mess with safe-spaces and therapeutic puppies and micro-aggressions and all the rest.

But what has happened over the last 100 years is that Christians have said, “Well, psychology and psychiatry is a good thing. And the do this by saying: We’re made up of 3 parts: body, soul and spirit. And so your doctor takes care of the physical part. That’s not true, by the way. Your doctor is a therapist by design. The last time I went to my doctor, just to check in to a routine visit I had to answer 7 psychological questions just to check in for the appointment. “Are you depressed, are you anxious?” And there was discussion of psychotropic medications. So supposedly the doctor supposedly takes care of your body although it’s moving therapeutic.

Then they’d say: Your pastor can take care of your soul, your pneuma. These are questions related to sin and the Christian life and doctrine. But, bless his heart, he’s not equipped to take care of your psuche, your spirit, your psyche.

So here's the 3rd part - your spirit. That's why for the real problems in your life you need to go to a psychologist or a psychiatrist or a therapist. They are the high priests of the pschye, they can affect real change. The irony, of course, is that many of these people don't even believe you have a soul and they're trying to take care of it.

But they deal with the real issues. They've got labels for your problems. You're manic depressive, you've got general anxiety disorder or social anxiety disorder. Maybe you've got impulsive disorder. Or maybe you're schizophrenic. Or have gender dysphoria. You have the disease of alcoholism or a myriad of other things.

And what's happened over time is that people - even Christians and Christian pastors - have gone away from seeking biblical answers to their issues to seeking out "professionals" in the psychological world. Many pastors and Christian just have no idea what to do with someone who is diagnosed with ADD or an anxiety disorder so they just encourage them to go to a psychologist who undermines the Christian life.

And the way they've justified that is by saying we're 3 parts: body soul and spirit.

So many pastors have given in to this that now when they hear that someone has some clinical diagnoses they just assume that there's nothing they can say or do to help. That's all for with the so-called professionals who basically deny every aspect of our faith and every aspect of the biblical teaching on anthropology.

So two things: First, theology really does matter. What appears to be a trivial theological question about souls and spirits has now become one of the most dominant ways the church has referred out it's job to counsel one another.

Did you know that you - yes you - sitting there have the ability to teach someone how to overcome general anxiety disorder? Because we call that fear of man.

Did you - yes you - know you have the ability to counsel someone out of depression and anxiety? Jesus says don't be anxious. That's a command he expects us to obey. He says don't worry. That's a command he expects us to obey. So if someone is anxious all the time it's highly likely it's a sin issue. And we can drill down to what that is.

They're body and soul. So maybe they need be reminded in truth, reminded to stop bad, sinful habits. Maybe there's unconfessed sin. Maybe they need to be reminded of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God - that's how Jesus combats anxiety in **Matt 6**. God is sovereign and cares for us. Aleviates all worry and anxiety.

It could be a truly physical issue. They're depressed either because of a physical issue, which a doctor can diagnose - low thyroid, low vitamin D, maybe you're a lady and your homone levels are off. It's a physical issue you can read on a chart.

I counseled a guy who was diagnosed with acute anxiety disorder. He would be fine and then in the heat of stressful moments he would just snap and barely be able to operate. He didn't want to do anti-depressants or therapy but he felt stuck.

So we met a few times and dug into the issue. I had him journal about this specific issue and it turned out he just feared what his colleagues would think of him if he messed up at a critical moment. It was fear of man.

I counseled a guy with depression and fatigue. All the labels. Turns out his biggest problem in life wasn't that he needed zoloff. He just really wanted to be married but wouldn't muster up the courage to ask girls out. So his life wasn't going the way he wanted it to go. He was making good money, involved in the church, but just needed a push. So we talked about courage and the need to be diligent to go find a wife. Go make that your number 1 priority.

Here's what's happened: the secular world has co-opted the ministry of Christians and Christian pastors. They've replaced biblical counsel and teaching and rebuke with therapy. Where we just sit around and talk about problems all day, labeling stuff, instead of actually taking responsibility for our behavior and living life to the glory of God.

They've replaced Christian doctrine with theories. Thrown some drugs in there - actually a lot of psychotropic drugs - to make people feel better to chase some chemical imbalance that they never measure and is just a theory, all the while not addressing the real issue and devoid of any biblical teaching.

And just a note: I'm not your doctor so I'm not giving you any medical or prescription advice. Some of these drugs you can't just hop off. You have to wind down because they're so powerful and pervasive.

But if we have everything we need in the Word of God for life and godliness, then we don't need to see the secular high priests of psychology to solve our problems.

Romans 15:14 Paul says that he is confident that we're filled with doctrine - knowledge - and we are all able to teach one another, able to counsel one another through the most difficult issues of life.

Ladies if you need counseling, who does Titus 2 tell you to go to? Older, godly ladies. Not a shrink, not Instagram, not some mommies therapy group. Godly ladies who have been in the trenches where you've been and can help you navigate the way.

Men, if you need counseling and direction who does Titus 2 tell you to go to? Godly men. Men who can get in your business - in love - and urge you to have self-control. That's literally what Paul says.

We are body and soul. And God has given us everything in his Word to know how to take care of both.

2. What is the end result of our bodies? This is usually under the heading of eschatology, but I want to touch on this here because it has to do with our being.

When a Christian dies, their soul goes immediately to be with Jesus. Paul says he's going home to the Lord. When an unbeliever dies, they go immediately to hell, to torment. They are separated from their bodies until the Lord comes again. When the Lord comes, the souls of Christians are reunited with our bodies. **Turn to 1 Thess. 4:13-18**

This is Paul talking to the Thessalonians about what happens to people when they die. We're all waiting for the Lord to return. When he does we'll get glorified bodies. But what about those who die before he returns? Will they get a resurrected, glorified body? Yes. **Read 13-18**

So the hope of Christians is not just that when someone dies they go to be with Jesus in a spiritual floaty world on a cloud strumming a harp. The ultimate hope of Christians is that one day the Lord will come back with the souls of all those who have die - fallen asleep. And when he does, their bodies will rise from the grave - a mass resurrection. And their bodies will meet their souls in the air with Jesus and return to the New Earth.

After that happens, those who are alive when Jesus comes back will be transformed. We won't be resurrected, per se, because we won't have died. We'll simply be transformed.

1 John 3:2: Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears - 2nd coming - we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Phil 3:20: But our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.

Tit. 2:13: Says we're waiting for our blessed hope - the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

That's our blessed hope. The Christian hope isn't just dying and going to be with Jesus in heaven. Someone once said, this earth is not my home, I'm just a passin through. Like this is temporary.

To which someone else joked, heaven is not our home, we're just a passin through. When we die and go to heaven to be with Jesus, that's just a temporary place. That's why it's called the intermediate state.

The true Christian hope, is for Jesus to come back with all the saints, change all of our bodies into glorious bodies, purge this earth of all stain of sin, and we'll live and work and rejoice in the new City of God, the new Garden of Eden, the New Jerusalem for ever and ever around the Tree of Life with bright glory of Jesus at the center.

A glory so bright and brilliant we don't even need the sun, because he will be our light forever and ever.

Pray