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SOULS THAT WERE BEHEADED FOR THE WITNESS OF JESUS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
NUMBER 35
REVELATION 20:4

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REVELATION 20:4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Revelation 20 is one of the key chapters of the Word of God and when we arrive at this chapter we have to slow down a bit. In this verse, which is a whole paragraph, we have the statement, "The souls of them that were beheaded". We need to stop here and study the human soul.

EIGHT POINTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL

1. IN A HUMAN BEING THE REAL PERSON IS THE HUMAN SOUL.

The real you is your soul.

GENESIS 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This verse says, "God breathed into man the breath of lives". That word is plural. Man has physical life and he has spiritual life. This makes man different from all other creation. Remember that the words, "The Lord God" always refer to Jesus Christ. God created man and gave him power to create, to reproduce. Only two people were created, Adam and Eve. From these two all the human family came. Adam and Eve received an old sin nature by an act of disobedience. This was an act of their volition. But we receive an old sin nature at the point of birth. We are born spiritually dead.

EPHESIANS 2:1 "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"

ROMANS 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"

But Adam and Eve were created in innocence, but by an act of their volition they acquired an old sin nature. The Scripture says that man was formed (jatsar) out of the dust of the ground. The body and the soul are separate. The real you is not your body. What you really are is the soul. You just happen to live in a body. When you die the physical body returns to the chemicals out of which it was made. Actually the human body is worth about 98¢ of chemicals. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body". But he reminded us that we are to be afraid of those who can kill body and soul. So we are to keep our bodies in good condition for the bodies are the containers of our souls. When the Bible says, "God breathed into man the breath of lives", it really refers to soul and spirit. The Bible is the only book that makes a distinction between the soul and the spirit. Adam and Eve were created with a body, a soul and a spirit. When they sinned they lost their human spirit and got an old sin nature. But when they turned and believed in Christ they got back their spirit but they also kept their old sin nature.

We do not have volition involved in acquiring an old sin nature. We were all born with an old sin nature. The Spirit makes it possible for a man to have fellowship with God. The human spirit is the repository for doctrine. The human soul is the repository for all human phenomenon. The old sin nature is a part of the soul. So the real person, the real you, is the soul. The body is alive in the mother's womb before birth, yet that body is not a person. That little body becomes a person at the point of birth when the soul enters it. Is it a real person before birth? No! The body comes first, then the soul. Adam got his body first then God breathed into him a soul and a spirit.

2. LOOK AT THE ESSENCE OF THE SOUL.

Adam at first had only five elements in his soul. We have six elements in our soul.

a. Self-consciousness

1 KINGS 17:21 "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."

ACTS 20:10 "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him."

GENESIS 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

GENESIS 35:18 "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin."

MATTHEW 10:39 "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

JOHN 5:39-40 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Christianity is the only life designed to be lived in the soul. All religions designed to be lived in the body. The body is designed for religion. The real you will always live, the soul. The soul never dies. This is true of believers and unbelievers.

b. The soul has mentality or thinking.

The soul does the thinking. It has perceptive ability. In the essence of the soul you start with mentality and it has to develop. You can't compare a baby's mind with the mind of an adult.

LUKE 12:19 "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

ACTS 15:24 "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment"

c. The third essence quality is free will or volition.

ACTS 3:23 "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

Your free will operates in the soul from the moment of birth until the time of the new birth. The human spirit is the repository for doctrine. You become aware of God in your spirit. When you fill your spirit with doctrine the Holy Spirit teaches your human spirit--this gives you the chance to make decisions from the divine viewpoint rather than from the human viewpoint.

d. The fourth characteristic is emotion.

Emotion is the appreciator of the soul. Everything that goes into the mind emotion tells you whether you like it or not. When you appreciate something, it overflows into the body and you are stimulated. The emotion is in the soul. Emotion is soulish. Emotion is stimulating, but it is not a spiritual activity. It is an experience that allows the body to get in on the act--but it is a soulish reaction to a spiritual phenomenon.

JOHN 12:27 "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."

2 PETER 2:8 "(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)"

LUKE 12:19 "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

e. The fifth quality is conscience, or norm or standard.

This is a ruler, a norm or standard and it is in the soul.

ACTS 24:16 "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

ROMANS 2:15 "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;"

ROMANS 9:1-2 "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart."

Now this is what Adam had in his soul when he was created and placed in the Garden of Eden. He had these five qualities named above. Then when he sinned he got something additional, he got an old sin nature. Adam disobeyed and acquired an old sin nature, but we are born with an old sin nature. That is why five times in the Bible the old sin nature is called the heart. The heart is never spoken of as the emotions. The heart is the mentality of the soul.

JEREMIAH 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

PSALM 58:2 "Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth."

MATTHEW 15:19 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"

MARK 7:21-23 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

The old sin nature was added as the sixth quality of the soul.

So the soul looks like this--

CONSCIENCE
 SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS
 MENTALITY
 VOLITION
 EMOTION
 OLD SIN NATURE

(The compassion of Christ was without the old sin nature. Compassion is a thought pattern of grace, not an emotion.)

In the Millennium the mentality will reach the maximum "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea".

3. DISTINCTION MUST BE MADE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE SPIRIT.

HEBREWS 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Only the Bible makes this distinction. The unbeliever is born with an old sin nature and a soul and does not have an activated spirit. The new birth reactivates the spirit.

The believer is trichotomous.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The unbeliever is dichotomous.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

So spiritual death means the loss of the human spirit and the acquiring of an old sin nature. Adam went from trichotomous back to dichotomous then back to trichotomous.

4. IN SALVATION IT IS THE SOUL WHICH IS SAVED, NOT THE BODY.

PSALM 19:7 "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

PSALM 34:22 "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

HEBREWS 10:39 "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

1 PETER 1:9 "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

MARK 8:36-37 "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

What happens to the body of the believer at death? His soul and spirit leave the body and go to be with the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:8 "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

The body is deserted. The body decomposes and goes back to dust. In death we too often make too much of the dead body. But remember, your soul and your spirit is in the presence of the Lord. The only thing you get rid of in death is the body.

(One illustration of how too much has been made of physical bodies has been the bodies of Lenin and Stalin in Moscow.)

In the resurrection we will get a new body.

PHILIPPIANS 3:21 "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The human spirit when it is saved goes up with the soul with all the ability of conscience, self-consciousness, mentality, volition, emotion but no old sin nature. The soul and spirit come down and pick up a resurrection body.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"

This changed means the body will be completely renovated. It is beyond our comprehension. The old sin nature is wiped out for the believer at death. The soul and the spirit are conscious of only that which is going on in heaven

5. THE SOUL IS THE SEAT OF HUMAN MISERY.

PSALM 106:15 "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."

Now the body has nerves and there is physical pain in the body but real misery is in the soul.