



Session 22 ■ Special Interest Topic 1

What is the human soul and spirit?

The Bible says a soul is the complete person (see Genesis 2:7 KJV). The word 'soul' is translated from *nephesh* in Hebrew and *psuche* in Greek.

The word *nephesh* appears 1400 times in the Old Testament and is never said to be immortal or surviving the body at death. Some 119 times it is translated *life*. You can take the soul and kill it with a sword (see Joshua 11:11).

In Ripley's Amazing Facts Museum is found a replica of a gravestone from the United States. On it are written these words:

Under this sod, beneath these trees,

Lies the body of Solomon Pees.

Pees is not here, but only his pod.

He's shelled out his soul and went up to God.

This gravestone represents Greek philosophy that found its way into the thinking of many Christians in the early centuries of the Christian era. But such a concept is not found in the Bible.

What is the spirit? The Hebrew word *ruach* is usually translated "spirit" but can also be translated "wind" or "breath" (see Job 27:3, 33:4).

The Greek word usually translated "spirit" in the New Testament is *pneuma*. It can also be translated "wind" or "breath" (see James 2:26). *Pneuma* can also mean character (see 1 Corinthians 5:3).

The important point to remember is that nowhere in the Bible do we have the *ruach* or *pneuma* (spirit) or the *nephesh* or *psuche* (soul) surviving the body at death, or ever spoken of as a separate conscious entity apart from the body.

The Bible often describes death as the *pneuma* leaving the body, which is translated "he breathed his last" (see Luke 23:46).

Genesis 2:7 describes the creation of man in the following words:

"The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being"—*nephesh*.

In the Bible, death can be spoken of as the reversal of creation (see Psalm 104:29, 30).

At death, the breath departs and the body goes back to the earth. So where does the soul go to? We may also ask: "Where was it before the first man was created?"

The answer to both questions is: nowhere. It simply did not—and does not—exist.

An illustration to help understand this concept is the light globe.

When connected with the electric current it gives light. Take away the electric current and where does the light go? Nowhere—it simply ceases to exist.

That is why the Bible teaches that the dead remain in the grave until the resurrection. There is to be a resurrection of God's people when Jesus returns and a resurrection of those who are opposed to God at the end of the 1000 years.

As we approach the end time, knowing this has prime importance.

We cannot handle the deceptions given by the spirits of devils in the end time unless we have the correct understanding of this subject from the Bible.

Many are sure they have seen their loved ones alive. But it is not the dead with whom they are meeting; they are meeting instead with demons who impersonate the dead. Often those who appear to materialise are people who have lived immoral lives apart from God and the message appears to be given that all will have eternal life in a better world.

When Jesus died on Calvary He defeated the powers of darkness. His victory can be our victory also. In every way possible the demonic forces will try to convince people they can have life apart from being a true follower of Jesus.