

The Components of a Man

Exactly what makes up a man (person)? The atheist would say that man is monistic in nature. Some say that man is dualistic in nature usually stating the body and soul make up the parts of the individual. Still others state that man is triune meaning there are three different components to the individual (body, soul, and spirit). Still others contend that mankind is multi-faceted stating several different parts of the individual such as the body, soul, spirit, mind, heart, intellect, emotions, and the image of God.

The monistic idea could only be accepted by a limited number of people. The atheist could accept this idea as he or she believes in no afterlife. The spiritual person who accepts the idea that our current physical bodies are present in the afterlife might be able to accept monism. The first part of 1 Corinthians 15:50 flies against this thought: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

As for the idea of dualism, consider 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There are several aspects of this passage which need to be considered.

First, it is true that some passages seem to use the terms soul and spirit to refer to the eternal part of mankind. Even some use them interchangeably such as the poetic nature of Job 7:11, Isaiah 26:9, 42:1, and when Matthew quotes one of the Isaiah passages in Matthew 12:18. Other passages use the word spirit to refer to the life that is in man, not the eternal part of man. It is interesting that the NNJV and the NASB use spirit in Genesis 7:22 where the KJV uses breath. This idea seems to be the usage of 1 Corinthians 2:11. Other passages use the word spirit in reference to the eternal part of a man the most obvious of which is Jesus’ statement on the cross in Luke 23:46, “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.”

Now, some contend that the words soul and spirit in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 both refer to the eternal component of a person. They further explain that this puts emphasis on the eternal and not the physical. However, this idea does not come without problems. Linguistically, when one composes a list as is the case in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, one does not generally list the same thing twice. This would especially be true of a written list. Theologically, the Bible teaches that in order for one’s eternal component to be saved, he or she must live right physically (Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 5-7, and a host of other passages). It seems unlikely that Paul would downgrade the physical especially in light of Romans 6.

Next, some add components to the makeup of a person such as the mind (thoughts), heart (Matthew 5:8, 1 Peter 1:22-25), intellect (Mark 11:23, Luke 2:19), emotions (John 13:1, Acts 21:13), volition (will) (Hebrews 4:7, Romans 2:5), conscience (Hebrews 10:22), and even the image of God (Genesis 1:26). All of these are certainly biblical concepts as seen from the passages stated. Further, it could be that these components are actually components of the spirit or soul. In any case, it would seem that they are not separate components from the body, soul, and spirit.

Thus, it would seem that the triune makeup of individuals would make the most sense. The body is the physical component. The spirit is the animations. The soul is the eternal component of a man.