

What is the Human Soul?

The Bible teaches that in the beginning, God created humans with both body and soul ([Genesis 2:7](#)). The soul is the immaterial spiritual part of each person that is taken to heaven when a believer dies ([Ecclesiastes 12:7](#)), or to hell when an unbeliever dies ([Ezekiel 18](#)). On Judgment Day, each person will have their soul reunited with an imperishable spiritual body that will live forever in heaven, or die in hell ([1 Corinthians 15](#)).

The Bible differentiates between a believer's soul and their spirit ([Hebrews 4:12](#)). A person's spirit is that portion of their soul that is occupied and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and that desires to live in accordance with God's will ([Romans 8](#)). After conversion, there remains in each Christian a portion of their soul that remains hostile to God, i.e. their "sinful nature" or "sinful flesh" ([Romans 7:7-25](#)). Each Christian's life is a struggle between their spirit and their sinful nature, until the time of their death, at which point their spirit is taken to heaven, and their sinful nature dies ([Romans 8:6](#)).

From the Concordia Self-Study Bible Commentary comment on [Psalm 4:7](#):

In Biblical language, [the heart] is the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action – the "wellspring of life" [[Proverbs 4:23](#)].

The psalmist Asaph comments on the eternal nature of the believer's spiritual heart:

Who else is there for me in heaven? And besides you, I desire no one else on earth. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever. [[Psalm 73:25-26](#)]

From the descriptions of souls in heaven, we understand that God has blessed our souls with rationality, reason, will and emotions ([Luke 16:25](#), [Revelation 6:9-10](#), [Revelation 7:9-16](#)). Among the greatest of these blessings are eternal love ([1 Corinthians 13:8](#)) and joy ([Revelation 21:3-4](#); [22:3-5](#)).

From the perspective of meaningfulness, the soul is the only part of our current being that is meaningful, since it is the only part of our current selves that lasts forever. So if we want to find meaningfulness in our lives, then we want to understand as much as possible about our soul. Of course, much of it is beyond our understanding since it is immaterial, but there is a portion, or aspect, of the soul that we can understand with our earthly minds, namely the patterns of information that define our being.

From modern science, we understand that we develop and grow based on information coded within our bodies, along with information and events that we encounter as we experience life. The biological information and machinery in our bodies work with the material substances found on earth, and within the laws of nature defined for our universe, to develop each individual's body. Our bodies are material, changeable and destructible, but the patterns of information used to produce them are not. When a new human being is conceived and develops, the patterns of information for that human become defined and incarnate in our universe. Even if the body dies, the patterns of information that define that body remain existent and known by God.

The most important part of your body is your mind. If you are a Christian, then the Holy Spirit has used words and ideas in the Bible to convict your mind's thought processes that you are a sinner in need of salvation, and He has created in your mind's thought processes a faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You have become a child of God. The word of God in the Bible has been combined with the information that produced you and the information processed by your mind to give you the mind of Christ ([1 Corinthians 2:16](#)). God's kingdom has come to you personally ([Matthew 6:10](#)), and you have developed a relationship with God. The rationality, reason, will and emotions experienced by your mind reside in your soul. And the rationality, reason, will and emotions in your soul that submit to the will of Christ reside in your spirit.

When your body dies, your spirit is taken to be with God in heaven. What do you experience as a spirit in heaven prior to Judgment Day when your spirit is united with a glorified body? Does your spirit have the same conscious awareness as when your body was alive? Or do you rest in an unconscious "soul sleep" as you await that day? The Bible doesn't answer that question directly. But the Bible does give some descriptions of heaven, and of the people there, that allow us to make some inferences.

For example, the Wikipedia article on [Christian mortalism](#) cites the following comments from Martin Luther on "soul sleep":

"Solomon judges that the dead are asleep, and feel nothing at all. For the dead lie there, accompanying neither days nor years, but when they are awoken, they shall seem to have slept scarce one minute."

"So the soul after death enters its chamber of peace, and sleeping does not feel its sleep."

"As soon as your eyes are closed, you shall be awoken, a thousand years will be as if you had slept but a little half-hour. Just as at night we hear the clock strike and know not how long we have slept, so too, and how much more, are in death a thousand years soon past. Before a man shall turn around, he is already a fair angel."

“Nevertheless, there is a difference between the sleep or rest of this life and that of the future life. For toward night, a person who has become exhausted by the daily labor in this life enters into his chamber in peace, as it were, to sleep there; and during this night he enjoys rest, and has no knowledge whatever of any evil caused either by fire or by murder. But the soul does not sleep in the same manner. It is awake. It experiences visions and the discourses of the angels and of God. Therefore the sleep in the future life is deeper than it is in this life. Nevertheless, the soul lives before God.”

“It is certain that to this day, Abraham is serving God, just as Abel, Noah are serving God. And this we should carefully note; for it is divine truth that Abraham is living, serving God, and ruling with Him. But what sort of life that should be, whether he is asleep or awake, is another question. How the soul is resting we are not to know, but it is certain that it is living.”

The Wikipedia article goes on to cite a confessional Lutheran church statement that:

The [Lutheran] Confessions rule out the contemporary view that “the soul sleeps between death and the resurrection in such a way that it is not conscious of bliss”.

Whatever the conscious status of their souls may be in heaven, Christians can be sure that in some way, the information that defines their being is written in the Lamb’s book of life ([Revelation 21:27](#)), and that that information will one day be used to unite their spirits with glorified bodies that will live perfect lives forever in paradise ([Revelation 22:1-5](#)).