

## Sunday, September 19, 2021 | The Shema

Week 3 | Deuteronomy 6:4-5 | "Love God With Your Soul."

Announcements:

**- No Wednesday night activities due a sound system install.**

- Sunday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, we'll be having communion and then approving our yearly budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.
- We have a vacancy in our trustees. If you would like to throw your name in the hat, contact me. Requirements: At least a member for one year, a good Christian testimony within the church, a record of consistent giving.
- John Kammann would like to give a testimony.

"The Shema" is a four-week sermon series that'll help us understand one of the most well-known Bible passages in all of the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The goal of this series is to teach you what it means to truly love God holistically—with our heart, soul, and strength.

In week 1, we covered big picture stuff in the realm of background and context. Moses wanted the Israelites to understand two things: 1.) that God is one, and 2.) that they were to love Him with their heart, soul, and might. Just as God's love for them had been expressed in loving actions, they too ought to show their love for Him in loving obedience.

Last week, we broke down what it means to love God with our hearts. And, as you'll remember when the Bible speaks about the "heart," it is really talking about the mind. Thus, when God says that we ought to love Him with our heart, He is telling us to love Him with both our mental examinations and our emotional expressions. It means marshaling a unified inner monologue in wholehearted adoration for the one true God.

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**READ: Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Okay, so we are to love God with our hearts. Got it. But what does it mean to love God with our soul? To answer that question, we have to distinguish what the term "soul" means *culturally* and what the word means *biblically*.

**What does the term "soul" mean culturally?**

As defined by Encyclopedia Britannica, the soul is “the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being, that which confers individuality and humanity, often considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self.”<sup>1</sup> The phrase "ghost in the shell" is derived from this theory about human existence, which asserts that a spectral consciousness animates the body’s function (i.e., movement, thought, feeling, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, this interpretation of the soul has its root in a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek philosopher named Plato, who in his Theory of Ideas postulated that existence is rooted in the psyche and that the soul—i.e., mind—lives on after death and is reborn into a new body over and over again.<sup>3</sup> Plato taught that the soul needed to be released from the body in order to transcend. He thought to accomplish this through various mental exercises that were supposed to “free the mind.” Meaning, this whole philosophy implies that the body is a thing to escape. In fact, Plato, in his famous Cave allegory, said, “The body is the prison of the soul.” The body's desires, such as sex, food, and sleep, prohibit us from gaining true knowledge. In Plato’s view, the mind was confined, as if in prison, by the desires of the body. Thus, he taught that the more you resisted your bodily urges, the more enlightened you would become. This philosophy can be seen in our pop culture in movies like *The Matrix* or, in *Marvel’s Dr. Strange* and, most recently, in the Disney film *Soul*.

Thus, in short, culturally, the “soul” is some immaterial essence that controls the body. In other words, you have a soul.

Now, for some, this seems like familiar territory. And while many in the church would rightly disagree with how the soul is portrayed by Plato and pop culture, the idea that we are made up of a physical part, and a non-physical part seems pretty solid. After all, a non-physical substance to human existence is not only widely known, but it is also biblically-affirmed, right? The short answer is yes. But we must separate how the world defines the soul and how the Bible defines the soul.

Philosophies that emphasize the soul, but deemphasize the body, must be rejected. In fact, throughout Christian history, disturbing teachings arose which sought to separate the body and

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<sup>1</sup> Britannica, T, Editors of Encyclopaedia, "soul," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 6, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/soul-religion-and-philosophy>, [accessed, September 17, 2021].

<sup>2</sup> General Editors, “Nephesh/Soul,” November 9, 2017, The Bible Project, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/nephesh-soul/>, [accessed, September 17, 2021].

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia contributors, "Plato's theory of soul," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Plato%27s\\_theory\\_of\\_soul&oldid=1042858987](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Plato%27s_theory_of_soul&oldid=1042858987), [accessed September 17, 2021].

soul entirely. In these teachings, the body was viewed as irredeemably corrupt, and the soul was considered the only perfect thing about our existence. For instance, the monastic movement, asceticism, Gnosticism, and sophistry all taught, in one way or another, that the more you deprived your body of its necessities, the more spiritually accepted you were in the eyes of God. Paul's writing in the book of Colossians was, in part, meant to combat these ideas (cf. Col. 2:16-23).<sup>4</sup> And early Christian apologists had nothing but contempt for such philosophies, which sought to marry Greek philosophy and Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, the Catholic's teaching about purgatory finds its conception in these ideas.<sup>6</sup> Because, at its core, any teaching which proposes self-denial as a means to attain God's favor is a salvation by works philosophy.

### What does the term "soul" mean biblically?

As Christians, the most important distinction we must make is that while there is a spiritual dimension to our existence, we are also physical beings. Contrary to how the world views the soul, our identity isn't solely attached to some immaterial essence; it is comprised of both the material and the immaterial. Meaning that while yes, there is clearly a separation in our existence, human beings are creatures of both a soul and a body (cf. Genesis 35:18; Psalm 31:5; Matt. 17:1-3; Luke 16:19-31; 23:43, 46; Acts 7:59; Philippians 1:23-24; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 6:9; 20:4).<sup>7</sup> After all, in Genesis, it was only after God made mankind from the dust of the ground (i.e., the material) and He breathed into His creation the breath of life (i.e., the immaterial) that man became a living soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). Thus, when the term "soul" is used here in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Moses does not distinguish between the physical and non-physical. Instead, Moses is referring to the *whole being*. In other words, biblically, a soul is not necessarily something to possess but "a way to be."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in short, biblically, the "soul" is the material essence that makes up the body. We do not simply have a soul; we are a soul.

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<sup>4</sup> Sproul, R. C., "Episode 3: The Duality of Man," in *A Shattered Image* audio series, Ligonier Ministries, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/shattered-image/the-duality-of-man>, time stamp: 20:15, [accessed, September 17, 2021].

<sup>5</sup> Borchert, G. L., "Gnosticism," *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition, Edited by Walter A Elwell, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2009), p.485-488.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 487.

<sup>7</sup> Bloom, Jon, "God Made You for a Body: How Resurrection Will Make Us Whole," May 20, 2020, *Desiring God*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-made-you-for-a-body>, [accessed, September 17, 2021].

<sup>8</sup> Green, Joel B., *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, Studies in Theological Interpretation, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 64.

Now, like the Hebrew term for "heart," the term used for "soul" is a very common word. In fact, *nephesh* shows up 743x's! But it almost always refers to a physical thing.<sup>9</sup> Thus, unlike the Hebrew word for heart, *nephesh* is far broader and can be used to refer to several different things. But, primarily, it relates to a thing's life or vitality.<sup>10</sup>

Here are 50 examples of how *nephesh* refers to the material soul: Gen. 1:20, 21, 24, 30; 2:7, 19; 9:12; 12:5; 14:21; 17:14; 19:17, 19; 19:20; 23:8; 32:30; 36:6; 46:15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27; Ex. 12:15; 16:16; Lev. 5:1-2, 4, 15, 17; 6:2; 7:18, 20, 21, 25, 27; 11:10, 43, 44, 46, 17:10-12; 19:8; 20:25; 23:30; 24:17-18; Num. 19:22; 31:19; 35:30.

And here are few examples where *nephesh* refers to a dead body: Lev. 19:28; 21:1, 11; 22:4; Num. 5:2; 6:6, 11; 9:6-7, 10; 19:11, 13

Here are few examples of how *nephesh* refers to the immaterial soul: Gen. 34:3, 8; 35:18; Lev. 26:16.

In Gen. 2:19, *nephesh* refers to animals.

**READ:** Genesis 2:19 (ESV)

Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature [*nephesh*], that was its name.

In Psalm 105:18, *nephesh* refers to the neck (cf. Ps. 69:1).

**READ:** Psalm 105:18 (ESV)

His [Joseph's] feet were hurt with fetters; his neck [*nephesh*] was put in a collar of iron

Interestingly, *nephesh* is used in several places to refer to the whole person. This is sort of like when we speak about people on a ship that goes down. We'll typically say that there were \_\_\_\_\_ souls on board when it went down.

**READ:** Genesis 12:5 (ESV)

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<sup>9</sup> Mackie, Tim, & Jon Collins, (Hosts), November 13, 2017, "Nephesh/Soul E1: You are a soul," [audio podcast episode], in *The BibleProject Podcast*, <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/you-are-soul/>, (time stamp – 45:00).

<sup>10</sup> McConville, J.G., *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, Volume 5, Editors, David W. Baker and Gordan J. Wenham, (Downers Grove, ILL; InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 142.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people [nephesh] that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.

**READ:** Genesis 42:21 (ESV)

Then they said to one another, “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul [nephesh], when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.”

**READ:** Numbers 11:4-6 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat? <sup>5</sup> We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; <sup>6</sup> but now our whole being [nephesh] is dried up; *there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!*”

When the Bible speaks about the soul, it is referring to our material existence; it is talking about our very life and identity. Whoever we are...whatever we do...however we identify ourselves...that, all of that, must be dedicated to God. We must take our “soul-life” and love-treasure-worship the Lord with the person He created us to be.<sup>11</sup>

**So, what's the takeaway?**

To love God with our soul means marshaling a unified physical existence in wholehearted adoration for the one true God. That is, our entire being—the material and immaterial—is deployed in a genuine pursuit of God. Put simply, it means loving God with your everything.<sup>12</sup> He wants our whole life, every prospect, every aspect, and every facet to be wholly devoted to Him.

**READ:** Psalm 42:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul [nephesh] for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul [nephesh] thirsts for God, for the living God.

In short, if who you are as a person is not defined, in some aspect, by your attachment and association to God, then your soul—whole being, life, desires—is not loving God. The soul that

<sup>11</sup> Christensen, Duane L., *Deuteronomy 1-21:9*, Second Edition, The Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 6-A, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2001), p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> DeRouchie, Jason, “Love God with Your Everything,” October 10, 2013, *Desiring God*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/love-god-with-your-everything>, [accessed, September 17, 2021].

loves God will find ways to attach every aspect of their identity to God. Our entire being is to display, in some way, our allegiance to and love for God.

This is what Paul means when he says,

**READ: 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**READ: Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

In addressing the different roles and gifts of the church, Peter says that in whatever way you serve, you out to serve to bring glory to God.

**READ: 1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

When Moses told the Israelites to love God with their hearts, he told them to love the Lord with their inner self. Now, when Moses tells the Israelites to love God with their souls, he is telling them to love the Lord with their whole self.

**So, what's the takeaway?**

To love God with our soul means marshaling a unified physical existence in wholehearted adoration for the one true God.

## Video Description

The Shema | Week 3 | "Love God With Your Soul."

TEXT: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

When Moses told the Israelites to love God with their hearts, he told them to love the Lord with their inner self. Now, when Moses tells the Israelites to love God with their souls, he is telling them to love the Lord with their whole self. **To love God with our soul means marshaling a unified physical existence in wholehearted adoration for the one true God.** That is, our entire being—the material and immaterial—is deployed in a genuine pursuit of God. Put simply, it means loving God with your everything. He wants our whole life, every prospect, every aspect, and every facet to be wholly devoted to Him.

If who you are as a person is not defined, in some aspect, by your attachment and association to God, then your soul—whole being, life, desires—is not loving God. The soul that loves God will find ways to attach every aspect of their identity to God. Our entire being is to display, in some way, our allegiance to and love for God.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: <https://docdro.id/BXHfTK4>