

The verb *μερίζω* is used fourteen times in the New Testament. It means "to divide, to distribute." With one exception it is always used of dividing up singular things, such as a kingdom, a city, a house, Satan, an inheritance, Christ, a married man, and spoil. The one exception is in Mark 6:41, where we are told that Christ "divided up the two fish among them all." In this case Jesus doubtless broke each of the two fish into fragments and distributed the fragments to the five thousand. It is very unlikely that He divided between the two fish and gave one fish to one group of disciples and the other fish to another group of disciples! It is instructive to note that *μερίζω* is never used of dividing between two distinct things, while leaving them intact.

Note: Dividing between distinct things while leaving them intact is expressed by the verb *διαμερίζω* used twelve times in the New Testament, and by *διαμερισμός* used once.

However, if Hebrews 4:12 does not mean dividing between the soul and the spirit, then what does it mean?

The sword of the word of God may be understood to be so powerful and sharp as to be able to pierce the soul and spirit. Of course it will be objected that this implies the piercing of two distinct entities. But this objection rests on the (unwarranted) supposition that different words imply distinct entities.

Now it is true that Hebrews 4:12 speaks of the Word of God piercing as far as the division of the joints and marrow, which means that it divides the joints and divides the marrow. This could be used to argue (by way of parallelism) for the soul and spirit being as distinct as are joints and marrow.

However, the verse also speaks of the Word of God piercing to the division of the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and it could be difficult to show the distinctness of thoughts and intentions.

If the terms "heart" and "soul" and "mind" in Matthew 22:37 do not imply the existence of three distinct, nonoverlapping entities in man's nature, then this reference need only be understood as stressing the piercing of the Word of God to the innermost recesses of man's being in its totality, the whole man's nonmaterial nature expressed in the terms "soul and spirit."

4. Objections to this view

a. With respect to the usage of "soul" and "spirit" in Scriptures other than the five mentioned above, it has already been mentioned that an inductive study of these terms finds a number of cases of synonymous usage and interchangeability of terms. If it could be shown that the Scriptures connect certain functions or characteristics with one term but not the other; or if it could be shown that the human spirit has "higher powers" while the soul has "lower powers"; or if it could be shown that the spirit is man's "God consciousness"