

“The Metaphorical Heart”
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An Excursus to *Spirit, Soul, Body: The Blueprint of Man in the Image of God*
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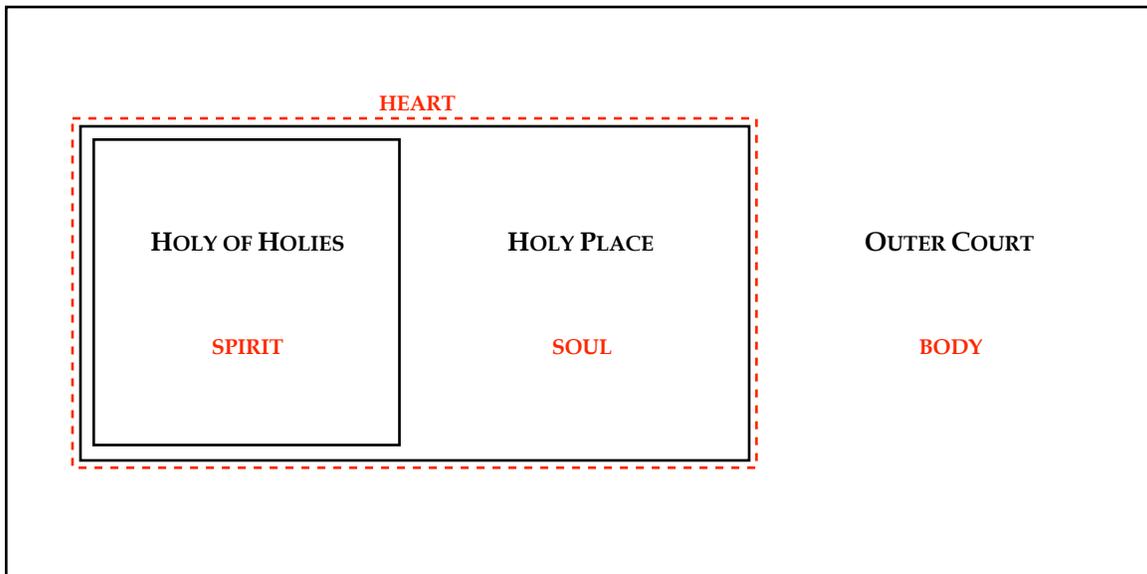
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THE METAPHORICAL HEART

Heart is a different kind of word than *spirit* and *soul*. Heart is a metaphor, whereas soul and spirit are specific elements of Man. In reality, the heart is a physical organ in the body. It is used metaphorically to describe the invisible core of Man, the two immaterial parts (soul and spirit) as a whole. On the other end of the spectrum, flesh is literally skin on the body. Yet it is used metaphorically to describe the essence or actions of Man apart from the Holy Spirit, which are dominated by soul and body together. Scripture also uses many other body members metaphorically, such as kidneys (similar usage to heart, e.g. ESV fn. of lit. Heb. in Ps. 16:7, 26:2),¹ bowels (for compassion, e.g. lit. Mt. 9:26), and hand (for power, e.g. lit. Dt. 32:36, Josh. 8:20). Hebrew language, carried over to Greek,² also used “belly” metaphorically for the inner man. The belly was considered to have two parts, upper and lower abdomen (stomach and intestines).³ For example, Proverbs 20:27 and 20:30 are translated as “innermost parts,” but the Hebrew is literally “the chambers of the belly.” Plural chambers: more than one immaterial part.

The metaphorical heart, the invisible inner core of man (1 Pet. 3:4), is spirit and soul together. Heart is paralleled with “inner man” in Ephesians 3:16-17 (lit.). Heart definitely includes spirit because the Holy Spirit is given in our hearts (2 Cor. 1:22, Gal. 4:6, cf. Rom. 5:5). On the other hand, sin can begin in the soulish heart (Mt. 15:19, 5:28; Jn. 13:2; Acts 5:3). Heart includes the soul’s thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12; Mk. 2:8; Lk. 1:51, 9:47), emotions and will (Mt. 22:37, 6:21; Jn. 16:6; 2 Cor. 9:7; Jas. 3:14).

The inner man, containing both spirit and soul, finds its type in the tabernacle. From an outsider’s perspective, the tabernacle had two parts: outer and inner. But the inner tent encompassed two parts: Holy Place and an additional hidden part, the Holy of Holies. Similarly, in a dimension deeper than our soul, we have a spirit. Together, they are “heart.”



¹ “The remaining nine references all use kidneys as a symbol of the innermost being. This is probably so since in dismembering an animal the kidneys are the last organ to be reached. In this usage it is frequently paralleled with heart....” John N. Oswalt, “*kilya*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Eds. R. Laird Harris et al. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1980) 441.

² Interestingly, John 7:38 is usually mistranslated with “heart,” but it is literally, “Out of his *belly* will flow rivers of living water.”

³ *Thayer and Smith’s Bible Dictionary*. “Greek Lexicon entry for Koilia.” The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon at biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/koilia.html.