

**The River of God**  
by  
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**Chapter 5 Treasure in Clay Pot**

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**A. Thesis**

- The changed views of the cosmos and understanding of God, from the material to a spiritual, that God was infinite spirit (Monad) and not a measurable body, brought changes to the way human beings perceived themselves. From the old perception of material body only to the body with soul.

**B. Problem**

- **New Perception of the human being.**
- In the earlier view, the body was simply made up of materials, clay pot (earth) with breath, which is a temporal.
- The new view was that the humans were not just a clay body, but also a soul (spirit), which lived on.

**C. Argumentation**

- **Earlier Babylonian, Mesopotamia and Roman Views**

- The world and gods has arisen out of **Chaos**.
- *Marduk* creates clay humans for lesser gods to serve everyday task for them.
- To build cities and temples to the gods and serve food and drinks, the offerings. Humans were mere replaced worker. (epic of *Enuma Elish*).
- (For example in today's terms, humans were: Android, humanoid, like Clone army in Star Wars epics)
- Humans can be expire at any time by the will of god.
  - The flood stories of Epic of Gilgamesh and Noah and the ark.
- Later, gods and humans had a symbiotic relationship. If the gods received their due ceremonies and offerings, gods were obligated to protect and provide wealth and children. If not, gods will bring wrath on the entire community.
  
- Mortal human beings
  - In the views of monistic universe of Mesopotamia, Israel and early Greece, humans were a mortal beings.
  - Old age and death for human beings were God's will. (epics of Gilgamesh, Homer's Iliad and Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden).

- **Egyptian and Zoroastrianism view of the judgement of the dead and afterlife**

- Egyptian and Zoroastrian had concept of afterlife and judgment of the dead. A Concept of God and Devil.
  - Osiris, “the king of the dead” vs. Amemet, the “Swallower” of the dead. (egyptian story)
  - Paradise: a place of light and pleasant scents vs. dark and deep narrow pit with noxious fumes and tortures. Mithra, the judge. (Persian story).

### • **Body and Soul in Greece**

- The Early Greek tradition and the Old Testament had no concept of the soul separate from the body. (“soul” *psyche*, =”breath” or “wind”). Human breath.
- Later in 6th century BCE, *Thumos* (the warm blood and breath of the chest and lungs, signifying the thoughts and passion) or the *Ker* (the heart) were collected into the one word *psyche*, whole inner person. The air.
  - Anaximenes: scientist and philosopher in mid to late 6th century BCE, speculate that air is the principle element of the cosmos.
  - Both God and human soul were composed of air.
  - Both God and the soul was upgraded to spirit or **fire** or ether.

### • **Orphism, Pythagoreanism and Plato**

- Dualism of body and soul.
  - The body is of the earth (temporal) ; the soul is divine, an immortal.
  - Both Aristotle and Anaximenes views soul as an air.
  - It is something from outside the body that enters the newborn at its first breath.
  - Soul is kept in the body like in a tomb/grave (*sema*)
  - Soul goes from body to body in reincarnation. Rewards and punishments.

### • **Plato’s Purgatory**

- Plato believed in the fundamental goodness of the divine nature.
- God cannot be merely mechanical. Cannot only be the judge.
- The third alternative: a place of temporary punishment for **curable**.

### • **The Resurrection**

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#### • **Plato’s views:**

- Holy and purified life can be release and set free of soul from confinement in the regions of the earth.
- The bodies cannot be tolerated in the presence of the entirely spiritual Monad.

#### • **The church’s view (Greco-Roman empire)**

- The Yahweh, Zeus and Jupiter had a bodies and sat on a throne on the top of the sky.

- **The Jesus and Paul's view**

- Bodies like those of the angels.
- "for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:44,50)

- **Body and Soul in Pre-Christian Israel**

- Israelite shared views of Canaanite and Near Eastern culture: that human beings has no souls.
- Later slowly getting influences from the conquering cultures mostly by Persian and Greek, with two types of dualism, God and the Devil and opposition of body and soul.
- Small group of Jew and combined Persian and Greek with stories of Abraham, Moses, and David.
- For example: Philo of Alexandria, "spiritual interpretations of the literal text.(Father = earth, water, air and fire, the Plato's four elements)
- Aristotle has taught that the four lower elements moved in a straight line, heavenly fifth element moved a circular motion.

- **The common Fate of All**

- A new paradigm was difficult to achieve in the Mediterranean world at the time of Jesus.
- Popular saying at the time in Mediterranean was:
  - "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."
  - "You can take it with you"
  - "I have only what I ate and drank: everything else is lost" etc...
- Common belief was no afterlife, and death was the end of all life.

- **Galilee of the Gentiles (Isa.9:1)**

- Galilee

- Galilee had long been a important crossroads between Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- Easily accessible and main trade route of north and south.
- Rich in water and agricultural resources.
- Prized by the many great empires.
- Occupied nearly 750 years by foreign empires
- (busy and bustling town, many different group with different views. Perhaps was a very liberal city.)

- Judah/Jerusalem

- It was isolated
- Located in the high and barren mountains.
- No natural resources
- Many empires preferred to leave it alone.

- Held traditional Israelite conception as expressed in the Torah that all the rewards and punishments are in this world with no afterlife.
- Sadducees held most of the power at the time.
- Jesus' Teachings of Body and Soul
  - His messages were different from his contemporaries believes that of, no life after death.
  - "New wine requiring a new wineskin" (Mark 1:27; 2:22)
  - Fundamental to the teachings was the **unique** dualism of body and soul.
  - Combining both the Greek and Zoroastrians views into something new.
  - Similarity and differences of death of Socrates and Jesus. (Devil killed Jesus.)
  - Body can deceive the soul. Desires and worries for things in the material world.
  - Material world is dangerous . ( central to the Mark's Gospel)
  - Spiritual world behind the material world. The one to fear is God.
  - spiritual over against the material (Treasures in Heaven)
  - New family
    - From the immediate family to the communal.
  - Reversal of Values
    - Kingdom of God. "not of this world"
    - Material world is a kingdom of darkness.
    - Material world is transitory and subject to dissolution and deception.
    - Spiritual world is divine and real origin and destiny of the soul

- Critique

The changes in God understanding were the result of a new view of the world and human beings from material to a spiritual. This new understandings overcame the persecution from the ruling authorities of the government and religion.

Christian adopted the view of clay pots, keeping the eternal souls and that the souls were higher and superior than the material bodies. This new view was result of martyrdom of some for their new belief and their Leader.

- Meditation

- How do we need to understand and apply the concept of clay pot body and soul today?

