



LESSON 12

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE

Part 2

Old Testament "Soul"

In the last lesson we began a study into the spurious doctrine of the "immortal soul" – the concept of an immaterial entity (being) with unending consciousness which inhabits a person's living body and then vacates it at death. This erroneous teaching, illustrated in the diagram below, is promoted in the majority of churches today. It also exists, in some form, in virtually all established religions. However, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures do not support this concept: indeed, they are contrary to it.

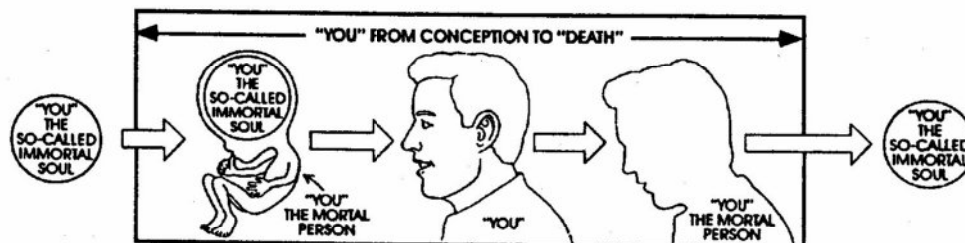
We began our study by examining the Old Testament use of the Hebrew word **nephesh** from which the English word **soul** was translated. We discovered that this Hebrew word was also translated into 43 other English words as well (including *creature, person, body, man*, and a host of *pronouns*). All of the examples we have studied so far have indicated that there is no such thing as an "immortal soul." We have seen that man's "soul" is mortal – that is, it can die. It can be destroyed. It can be killed. That is the teaching of the Scriptures.

We have also seen that the **soul (nephesh)** comprises the "whole" person – the entire person – rather than a distinct, independent "entity" that separates from the body at death and continues to live on. The Old Scriptures plainly teach that when a person dies, ALL of the person dies – not just his body.

In this lesson, we will look at the second most frequent rendering of the Hebrew word **nephesh**: "life" and "lives," as well as some other renderings. From these examples, we will gain more insight into the meaning of the word **soul**. We will also begin to examine the Old Testament concept of death and how it refutes the "immortal soul" teaching.

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE

"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:"



1. The immortal "you" (the soul) exist before you enter a physical body.
2. "You" (the immortal soul) enters a mortal body (fetus).
3. "You" #2 (part mortal and part immortal).
4. "You" (the mortal part) dies, but "you" (the immortal soul) continue living.

"You shall not surely die!" (Genesis 3:4)

Soul = Life

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word **nephesh** was translated into "life/lives" 120 times. Let's look at a few of these instances.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Joshua 2:1-21

1. In verse 13 Rahab requests, "...deliver our **lives** [nephesh – souls] from _____."
2. In verse 14 the men reply, "Our _____ [nephesh – soul] for yours..."

Rahab wanted her life (soul) and the lives (souls) of her family spared from death. The two Israelite spies also wanted to preserve their lives (souls) – escape capture and death. This passage confirms that souls can die, and there is no indication that these people's lives (souls) were immaterial spirit entities separate from themselves.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Judges 18

3. In verse 25 the children of Dan told Micah, "...lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou _____ thy **life** [soul], with the **lives** [souls] of thy household."

The context of the above verse clearly deals with the possibility of Micah and his household being killed (losing their souls). Again, there is no indication that some invisible "spirits" inside these people would be lost.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 19:8-11

4. According to verse 10, Saul sought to _____ David?
5. Verse 11 states that Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him and _____ him in the morning.
6. In verse 11 David's wife tells him, "If thou _____ not thy **life** (soul) to night, to morrow thou shalt be _____."

Obviously, Saul was not trying to kill some kind of invisible "entity" living inside David – he wanted to kill the MAN David. Likewise, David's wife wasn't concerned about David saving some type of immaterial "being" residing in him – she was interested in David saving HIMSELF from death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In 1 Kings 19, verses 10 and 14, Elijah tells God that the children of Israel "seek my **life** [soul], to _____ it away."

Is it logical that Elijah was afraid that some invisible entity inside him was going to be taken away from him? Of course not. Rather, he was simply stating that Israelites were trying to kill HIM – take his life (soul) – just like they did with previous prophets.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. In Psalms 31:13 David states that his enemies devised to **take away** his _____ .
3. In Psalms 35:4 David mentions those that seek after his _____ and devise to **hurt** him.
4. In Psalms 38:12 David says those that seek after his _____ lay **snare**s for him.
5. In Psalms 40:14 David speaks of those that seek after his _____ to **destroy** it.
6. All four of the answers above are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

In the above passages, David speaks of enemies that wanted to kill him. Notice how the words **soul** and **life** are used interchangeably for the same Hebrew word, **nephesh**. Both of these words refer specifically to the mortal man David. By the way, if so-called invisible, immortal entities existed within people, how could they be taken away, captured, hurt or destroyed? Obviously, they couldn't.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Jonah 4

7. Jonah says in verse 3, "Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my **life** [soul] from me; for it is better for me to _____ than to _____ ." (also see verse 8)

In the verse above, Jonah wasn't asking God to remove him from his body. He was simply asking for death – the ending of his life. Those who would have the "real Jonah" (invisible, immortal spirit being) removed from his body are simply reading that pagan concept into the passage. It is not really there.

Soul = Mind

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Genesis 23:8 Abraham says, "If it be your _____ that I should bury my dead out of my sight..."
2. Deuteronomy 18:6 uses the phrase "and come with all the desire of his _____."
3. 1 Chronicles 28:9 uses the phrase "with a perfect heart and with a willing _____."
4. Ezekiel 23:17 states, "...and her _____ was alienated from them."
5. All four of the above answers are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

In the above references, the word **mind** refers to a person's intellect or thoughts. There is no indication that this "mind" belongs to some immaterial entity separate from the person. A person's soul includes his individual thoughts and intellect (mind). There is no suggestion in the Old Scriptures that a person's mind (soul) remains alive and conscious after his body dies. Such an idea is pagan and comes from the imagination of mortal man.

Soul = Heart

FIND THE ANSWERS

6. Exodus 23:9 states, "Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the _____ of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."
7. Leviticus 26:16 uses the phrase "cause _____ of heart."
8. 1 Samuel 2:33 uses the phrase "to _____ thine heart."
9. Abner tells David in 2 Samuel 3:21, "...and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart _____."
10. Proverbs 28:25 states, "He that is of a _____ heart stirreth up strife..."

The word **heart** (soul), in each of the above passages, is translated from the Hebrew word **nephesh** and refers to a person's feelings, emotions and desires. Soul, then, includes an individual's unique emotional makeup. Again, there is no indication that these feelings, emotions and desires belong to some separate spirit being residing inside a person, or that these emotions continue to exist in conscious form after a person dies.

Soul = Desire

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 6:9, "Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the _____ ; this is also vanity and vexation of spirit."
2. Jeremiah tells the kings of Judah in Jeremiah 22:27, "But to the land whereunto they _____ to return, thither shall they not return." (see also chapter 44, verse 14)
3. Micah 7:3 states, "...and the great man, he uttereth his _____ **desire**..."
4. Habakkuk 2:5 states, "...he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his **desire** as hell, and is as death, and cannot be _____ ..."

In each of the verses above, the word **desire** is translated from the Hebrew word **nephesh** and refers to a person's wishes, longings, aspirations, cravings, yearnings, etc. These desires are part of that person's soul – their individual identity. However, these desires belong to that PERSON and not to some so-called spirit being inside him.

FIND THE ANSWERS

More words translated from the Hebrew word **nephesh**.

5. Exodus 15:9 _____ (see also Psalms 78:18)
6. Deuteronomy 23:24 _____ (see also Psalms 105:22; Jeremiah 34:16)
7. 1 Samuel 22:2 _____
8. Psalms 27:12 _____ (see also Psalms 41:2; Ezekiel 16:27)
9. Isaiah 56:11 _____
10. Ecclesiastes 6:7 _____ (see also Proverbs 23:2)

The examples above indicate additional characteristics of "soul." None of these verses indicate that these traits belong to some kind of invisible spirit entity residing inside of a person, or that they continue after the person dies. In these examples, the Hebrew word **nephesh** is used to identify personality traits of mortal people.

Soul and Blood

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Genesis 9:1-7

1. Verse 4 states, "But flesh with the **life** [nephesh] thereof, which is the _____ thereof, shall ye not eat."
2. Verse 5 declares, "And surely your _____ of your **lives** [nephesh] will I require ...at the hand of every man's brother will I require the **life** [nephesh] of man."
3. Leviticus 17:11 reads, "For the **life** [nephesh] of the _____ is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your **souls** [nephesh]: for it is the _____ that maketh an atonement for the **soul** [nephesh]."
4. Psalms 94:21 states, "They gather themselves together against the **soul** [nephesh] of the righteous, and condemn the innocent _____ ." (see also Psalms 72:14)
5. Proverbs 28:17 says, "A man that doeth _____ to the blood of any **person** [nephesh] shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him."

From the above verses, we see that souls (nephesh) have blood and are identified with blood. How can invisible, immortal spirit beings have blood? Logically, the blood is used in reference to mortal beings. "Doing violence to a person's blood" is an expression meaning "to kill someone." Without blood, a mortal cannot live – thus, "life is in the blood."

God's Soul

FIND THE ANSWERS

6. Speaking of Israel, God says in Jeremiah 9:9, "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my _____ [nephesh] be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Yes, God refers to His **soul** in the above verse. Does this verse mean that God has some kind of invisible entity living inside His body? Obviously, God does not have a physical body. But God does have individual identity; He does have intellect; He does have unique personality characteristics. In other words, God is a soul.

KEY POINTS

Let's review some basic facts that our study of the Old Scriptures has revealed concerning the use of the Hebrew word **nephesh** (English word **soul**).

NEPHESEH (SOUL)

1. It is used for animals (creatures), people and God.
2. It denotes the life (animation – condition of being alive) of a creature or person.
3. It is used to refer to a dead person.
4. Man's soul dies – it can be killed or destroyed (thus, it is mortal).
5. Man's soul goes to the grave.
6. Man's soul has blood.
7. The soul of man can be hurt, devoured, strangled, captured, persecuted, imprisoned and carried into captivity.
8. The soul of man can be traded (bought and sold), can eat and drink, can touch and can do work.
9. Man's soul can commit sin and trespass.
10. Man's soul is born from the womb (loins) of mortals.
11. Soul is used to denote the intellect and thoughts (mind) of a person.
12. Soul is used to denote the feelings, emotions and desires (heart) of a person.

MISUNDERSTOOD SCRIPTURES

Those who desire to cling to the false immortal soul doctrine use several Old Testament passages in an attempt to prove their position.

Rachel's Departing Soul

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Genesis 35:16-20

1. Speaking of Rachel, verse 18 states, "And it came to pass, as her **soul** [nephesh] was in _____ (for she died) ..."

The above verse is used by some to prove that when Rachel's body died, her soul (the "real" Rachel) left (departed) her dead body and continued living. However, these verses do NOT say that her "soul" kept on living while only her body died; they do NOT say that her "body" died and was buried while "she" kept on living. Rather, these verses clearly say that "Rachel" died and was buried. We have seen that **soul** (nephesh) refers to "life." The "departing of her soul" simply meant that her state of being alive ended. Her life departed. She lost her life.

The Widow's Son

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Kings 17:17-23

1. According to verse 17, there was no _____ left in the woman's son.
2. In verse 21 Elijah petitioned God to "let this child's _____ come into him again."
3. Verse 22 states that the **soul** of the child came into him again, and he _____.

Again, these verses are used by some to suggest that an immaterial entity left the boy's body and later returned to it. However, his personality and identity ceased to be. He was no longer breathing. His life terminated (left) and then was restored (returned). The "going" and "coming" of an independent entity is simply read into this passage by those who want it to be there.

Giving Up the Ghost

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Job 11:20 states, "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the _____."
5. Jeremiah 15:9 uses the phrase, "she hath given up the _____."
6. In the two verses above, the answers are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

Using the modern definition of "ghost" (a disembodied spirit), some advocates of the immortal soul teaching refer to the above verses as proof of their theory. However, the Hebrew word **nephesh** does NOT mean a so-called "disembodied spirit." The phrase "giving up the ghost (soul)" is an expression meaning "to die."

The Job passage simply says that the wicked have no hope – their hope is compared to death. The verse in Jeremiah is referring to the Israel people and is speaking of their destruction (see verse 7) – their death as an independent nation. Does it make any sense that the Israel people, as a whole (body), would have some kind of so-called "spirit entity" living inside it? Neither of these passages is speaking about a "disembodied spirit entity" leaving a person's body.

The "Calling Up" of Samuel

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 28:3-20

1. Verse 3 states, "Now Samuel was _____, and all Israel had lamented him, and _____ him in Ramah, even in his own city..."

The verse above clearly states that Samuel was dead and buried. There is NO mention or indication that only his body died and was buried while some part of him kept on living somewhere. In fact, the word **nephesh** (soul) is not even used in this passage with regard to Samuel.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Verse 3 continues, "And Saul had put away those that had _____ spirits, and the wizards, out of the land."
3. After inquiring of God and getting no answer, verse 7 indicates that Saul told his servants to seek out a woman with a familiar spirit that he might _____ of her.

Notice that Saul had removed those with "familiar spirits" (necromancers) as God had earlier commanded. But, later, Saul broke God's command by seeking after one anyway. 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 states that Saul died because of this transgression. Take note that Saul did not see Samuel, but only spoke through a necromancer (medium). Saul was either a victim of magic trickery, or God used the witch to give a warning to Saul. Samuel had not actually appeared.

Familiar Spirit

The words "familiar spirit" are translated from the Hebrew word 'owb (#178 in Strong's Concordance), which defines it as "a necromancer (ventriloquist)." Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon defines this word as "a soothsayer, who evokes the manes [spirits] of the dead by the power of incantations and magical songs, to give answers as to future or doubtful things." Magic (trickery and deception) was the mark of their trade. Because the belief in "spirits of deceased persons" and the practice of calling them up (necromancy) were heathen, God specifically forbade Israel from associating with such pagan practices. (See Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:10-12.) Death was the penalty for such association.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Verse 13 states that Saul asked the woman, "What _____ thou?"
5. In verse 14 he asked her, "What _____ is he of?"
6. Verse 14 also indicates that Saul _____ it was Samuel.

The preceding verses clearly indicate that Saul himself did not see any person; rather, he had to ask the woman what she saw. It is obvious that Saul was completely dependent upon the information supplied by this woman. From her description, Saul apparently believed it was Samuel. She evidently deceived Saul into believing she could see and talk to Samuel's ghost, the same way spiritist mediums do today. Accepting her description as being that of Samuel would have led him into the further error of accepting the voice as that of Samuel.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Verse 15 states that Samuel said to Saul, "Why hast thou _____ of me, to bring me up?"

The above verse is used by some as proof positive that the "real" Samuel (his "ghost" or "spirit") was indeed alive and speaking to Saul. However, according to spiritism protocol, "called-up" spirits speak through the medium (necromancer). Thus, it was the woman speaking and not Samuel. This passage is simply written from Saul's point of view, who believed it actually was Samuel who was speaking to him. God apparently used the voice of the woman to deliver a message to Saul and prophesy his forthcoming death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. In verse 19 the supposed voice of Samuel tells Saul, "...and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with _____ ..."

The above verse is used by some to prove that Saul's body would be killed and his conscious "soul" or "spirit" would join Samuel. However, we have already seen that Samuel himself (not just his body) was dead and buried; the same end came to Saul and his sons as described in chapter 31 of 1 Samuel.

This whole narrative was simply about a king who violated God's command and died because of it. As we saw, God did not accuse him of talking to Samuel but, rather, of talking with a necromancer (medium). That the medium spoke words which later came to pass does not prove it was Samuel. God could have caused this woman to speak truth as easily as He caused Balaam's donkey to speak, and later caused Balaam to pronounce good upon Israel in Numbers 22-24 even when Balaam's intent was to pronounce evil.

Another point to consider is that if Samuel actually appeared alive to the woman and Saul, then we would have to attribute to this evil woman the power to resurrect godly men from the grave, even if only temporarily. The Scriptures attribute no such power to anyone claiming to be a necromancer. Christians need to be on guard against anyone who misuses this passage of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

Putting together what we have learned from lessons 11 and 12, we can conclude that soul IS the composition of traits, characteristics and form which defines a thing's or person's individual identity. The soul of something IS its essential, unique identity. "Soul" IS uniqueness – it distinguishes one part of creation, or personality, from another. It IS a person's, or a thing's, makeup: its identity.

"Soul" is NOT some invisible section of a person. It is NOT some "spirit entity" inhabiting a person's body. It does NOT keep on living after the body dies – it is NOT immortal. Rather, at the death of a person, "the living soul" ceases ("identity" and "personality"; "mind" [intellect and thoughts] and "heart" [feelings, emotions and desires]; it becomes a "dead soul." In the next lesson we will see what the Old Scriptures teach regarding "death," and how it destroys the immortal soul doctrine.



ANSWER KEY

LESSON 12

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 2

Page 112

1. death
2. life
3. lose
4. smite
5. slay
6. save; slain

Page 113

1. take
2. life
3. soul
4. life
5. soul
6. nephesh (#5315)
7. die; live

Page 114

1. mind
2. mind
3. mind
4. mind
5. nephesh (#5315)
6. heart
7. sorrow
8. grieve
9. desireth
10. proud

Page 115

1. desire
2. desire
3. mischievous
4. satisfied
5. lust
6. pleasure
7. discontented (bitter of soul)
8. will
9. greedy (strong of soul)
10. appetite

Page 116

1. blood
2. blood
3. flesh; blood
4. blood
5. violence
6. soul

Page 117

1. departing

Page 118

1. breath
2. soul
3. revived
4. ghost
5. ghost
6. nephesh

Page 119

1. dead; buried
2. familiar
3. inquire
4. sawest
5. form
6. perceived (meaning he "believed" it)

Page 120

1. disquieted
2. me

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Notes: