



LESSON 13

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 3

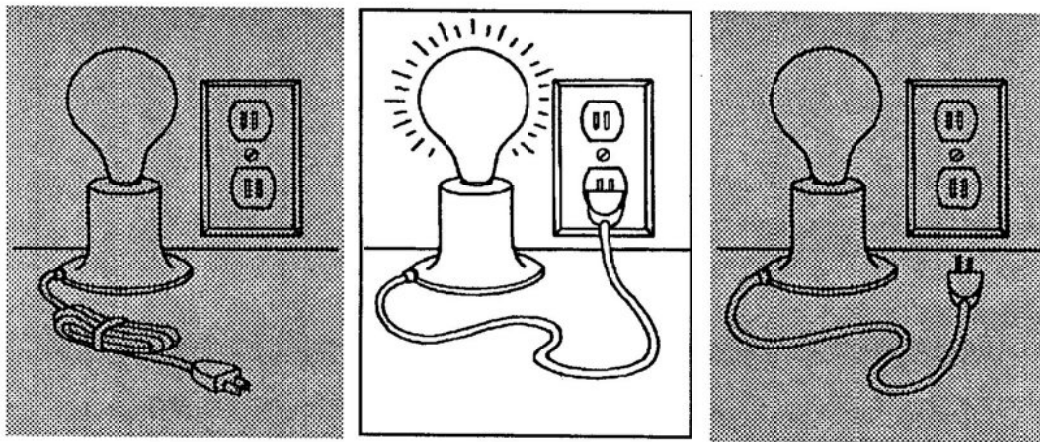
Old Testament Teaching On Death

We have found in our Old Testament study of **soul (nephesh)** that the term refers to 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," then, is **uniqueness** – it distinguishes one part of creation, or personality, from another. It is a person's, or a thing's, makeup: **its identity**.

So far in our study we have seen that "soul" includes personality, intellect and feelings. It comprises the "whole" person – the entire person – rather than a partial component with its own immortal existence. We have found no indication that an independent, immaterial entity (a so-called "immortal soul") resides inside of man. There is no scriptural evidence that any such component separates from man's body at death and continues living. Rather, we have seen that a "soul" is mortal – that is, it can die. It can be destroyed. It can be killed. The Old Scriptures plainly teach that when a person dies, he dies completely – not partially.

In this lesson, we will examine in detail what the Old Scriptures teach concerning death. In doing so, the popular "immortal soul" teaching will be clearly exposed for what it is – **a lie**. This corrupt teaching, which is so prevalent in Judeo-Christian theology, simply cannot stand against the truth of the Scriptures.

SYMBOLIC ILLUSTRATION OF LIFE AND DEATH



1.
Lifeless Soul
(Genesis 2:7a)

2.
Living Soul
(Genesis 2:7b)

3.
Dead Soul
(Genesis 3:19b)

Dust of the Ground: A Scriptural Expression

Often in the Scriptures, the expression "dust of the ground (earth)" is a reference to mortality and death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Genesis 2:7 states, "And the LORD God formed man of the _____ of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of _____ ; and man became a _____ soul."

Notice that God created man and gave him life – a "lifeless" soul became a "living" soul. There is no indication that any kind of an invisible immortal entity was placed inside a physical body. God created man as a single mortal unit. He did not create multiple components (mortal and immortal) and unite them into a man.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Genesis 3:23 clearly states that man was taken from the _____ .
3. David says in Psalms 103:14, "For he [God] knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are _____ ."
4. Ecclesiastes 3:20 states, "All go unto one _____ ; all are of the dust, and all turn to _____ again."

The above verses substantiate the fact that man was created mortal – that is, he would die. God's Word does NOT teach that part of man is mortal while another part of him is immortal. No mention is made in these verses that any separate part of man is immortal. Dust (ground) is used as a symbol of his mortal condition.

Death – A Return

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Genesis 3:19

5. God tells Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou **return** unto the _____ ; for out of it wast thou _____ ..."
6. God continues by saying, "...for _____ thou art, and unto dust shalt thou _____ ."

The above verses clearly state that man eventually dies (returns to dust) Notice that no mention is made of only his body returning to dust (dying) while he, himself, continues living somewhere else.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. According to Job 34:15, "All flesh shall perish together, and _____ shall turn again unto _____."
2. Psalms 104:29 states, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they _____, and _____ to their dust."

Again, these passages clearly state that it is man himself who "returns to dust" (i.e. dies) – not just his body. There is no indication in these verses that some immaterial entity inside of man (the "real" person) continues living while only his body dies. The "immortal soul" doctrine contradicts the plain teaching of the Old Scriptures concerning the death of man. This erroneous doctrine promotes the pagan lie that man really doesn't die, but that only his body dies.

Death Likened To Sleep

The Old Scriptures often refer to death as a sleep.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. God told Moses in Deuteronomy 31:16, "...thou shalt _____ with thy fathers."

In the above passage, the phrase "sleep with thy fathers" is a reference to Moses' death. Notice, there is no indication that only Moses' body would sleep (die) while Moses himself would continue living. Also take note that Moses' fathers were asleep (dead) rather than still alive (awake) somewhere. (For other examples, see II Samuel 7:12; I Kings 2:10; I Kings 11:43; II Kings 15:38; II Kings 20:21; II Chronicles 9:31.)

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Psalms 13:3 uses the phrase "...lest I sleep the sleep of _____."
5. Speaking of dead people, Daniel 12:2 states, "And many of them that _____ in the _____ of the earth shall awake..."

The preceding verses describe the condition of death as a "sleep." There is no mention that only part of the person sleeps (dies) while another part stays awake (continues to live).

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Speaking of death, Job 7:21 states, "...for now shall I _____ in the _____ ; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be."

Notice that Job clearly states, "I (the whole person) will sleep (die)." It does not say "part of me" will sleep. Notice also that it says "I" shall not be. The truth is that the Old Scriptures clearly teach that the entire person dies – not just the body.

Death Ends Consciousness

Advocates of the immortal soul doctrine believe that man himself (the "real" person) retains consciousness after death. They teach that consciousness is independent of the body. They say that when the body dies, the consciousness (an invisible intelligent entity) remains alive. However, this idea is contrary to the Old Scriptures.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Speaking of man's death, David wrote in Psalms 146:4, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his _____ perish."
3. Solomon states in Ecclesiastes 9:5, "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead _____ not anything..."
4. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "...for there is no work, nor device, nor _____ , nor _____ , in the grave, whither thou goest."

The passages above clearly indicate that no consciousness remains after death. Scripture teaches that when a man dies, his thoughts (consciousness) perish – they are lost; destroyed; terminated. His knowledge and wisdom cease. The immortal soul doctrine teaches, contrary to Scripture, that only man's body perishes while his consciousness continues. This teaching, if true, would make David and Solomon liars.

Notice, also, that these verses say that man himself returns to the earth and goes to the grave – not just his body. There is no indication in these statements that man continues to exist in a conscious state somewhere while his body perishes. Scripture is clear: man's consciousness perishes along with his body. Just as man does not remain awake during sleep, he likewise does not retain life during death.

Can the Dead Praise God?

Many professing Christians today, who believe in the immortal soul teaching, fervently believe that dead believers continue to live in the presence of God in a conscious state. If that is true, then these departed souls must be joyfully praising God along with all those who preceded them. The Bible is quite clear regarding this point.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. David says in Psalms 115:17, "The dead _____ not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence."
2. Psalms 6:5 states, "For in death there is no _____ of thee [God]: in the grave who shall give thee _____?"
3. In Psalms 146:2 David says, "While I _____ I will praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any _____."

According to David, there is no praise or remembrance of God in death. As a result, he realized that he had to do all his praising of God **BEFORE** he died. If David would have remained conscious after his body died, his statements would make no sense. David knew that his consciousness (his thoughts – his mental activity) would perish with his body at death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Isaiah 38

4. According to verse 1, Hezekiah was sick unto death; Isaiah tells him, "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt _____ and not _____."
5. After Hezekiah prayed to God and wept sore, verse 5 indicates that God added how many years to his life? _____
6. In verse 18 Hezekiah states, "For the grave cannot praise thee [God], death cannot _____ thee: they that go down into the pit cannot _____ for thy truth."
7. In verse 19 he says, "The living, the living, he shall _____ thee, as I do this day..."

Hezekiah, like David, knew he could not praise God after he was dead and buried. He knew he could praise God only while he was alive. Hezekiah clearly states that a dead person (without consciousness) cannot praise, celebrate or hope; they can do these things only while alive (conscious). He did not say there was no hope of resurrection for the dead; he simply stated that the dead cannot hope because they have no consciousness. There is absolutely no indication in these verses that Hezekiah would remain conscious after his body died.

Soul vs Spirit

At this point in our study, we should discuss the relationship between soul and spirit, since some may bring up Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes 12:7 as proof that a person's consciousness continues after death and returns to God.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Solomon states in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the _____ return to the earth as it was: and the _____ shall return unto God who gave it."

The above verse is used by some teachers who support the immortal soul doctrine to prove that when a believer dies, his body perishes and returns to the earth while the person himself continues living in God's presence (usually in a place they call "heaven"). They say the "dust" that returns to the earth is the person's "body," while the "spirit" that returns to God is the "real person" (conscious soul). However, the verse does not say that. These people are reading their own meanings into Scripture.

We have already seen in our study of the Old Scriptures (lessons 11 and 12) that "soul" constitutes the whole person – the whole entity. We have learned that the soul (person) can, and does, die. We have also seen that man (a soul) came from the dust of the earth and returns to it when he dies. Therefore, the "dust returning to the earth" in Ecclesiastes 12:7 is a reference to the death of the whole man.

Spirit Is Not Soul

The word **spirit** in Ecclesiastes 12:7 is translated from the Hebrew word **ruwach** (#7307 in Strong's Concordance), which literally means "breath" (air in motion) and refers to power or force which animates or causes something to move – motivates a thing to action. Spirit, then, is that which compels action and generates movement; it gives "life" to otherwise inanimate objects.

Spirit is not the person. The "soul" (NOT the "spirit") constitutes the individual, and is the seat of the conscious personality. Spirit is the life-force or power which energizes a body and makes it a living soul. When a soul (man or animal) dies, the spirit (life-force or energizing power) is cut off (unplugged). Since the life-force originates with God, it can be said that it returns to Him (disconnects) when the soul dies. This is what is described in Ecclesiastes 12:7.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Speaking of both man and animals, David states in Psalms 104:29-30, "...thou takest away their _____, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy _____, they are created..."
3. Both answers above are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

David realized that **ruwach** (whether rendered "breath" or "spirit") was not the creature itself; rather, it was that animating power from God which gave the creature life. Spirit or breath indicates a living soul. Without it, it is a dead soul.

Breath Is Not the Person

Earlier in this lesson, we examined a passage which describes the use of the Hebrew word **ruwach** in relation to man.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Psalms 146:4 states, "His _____ [ruwach] goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish."

In the verse above, David explains the truth that it is **ruwach** (spirit/breath) which gives man life, and when **ruwach** is removed, man himself returns to the earth. David's son Solomon also knew this truth.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Ecclesiastes 3:19 states, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one _____, so _____ the other; yea, they all have one **breath** [ruwach]..."

The truth of the Old Scriptures is that men and beasts have certain common characteristics. They are both mortal – that is, they die. While alive, they possess "ruwach" (breath/spirit) – they are living souls. When they die, the breath (spirit) is removed. At that point, no conscious entity remains – the entire person or beast is dead.

Spirit Produces A Living Soul

To understand how spirit (ruwach) differs from soul (nephesh), consider the operation of a common light bulb. (Refer to the illustration on the first page of this lesson.) The unlit bulb (tangible, but without light) corresponds to a corpse (visibly complete, but without life). The electricity (power) which lights the bulb corresponds to **spirit** (life from God) which animates the body. Just as the union of the bulb with electricity produces a working lamp, the union of the corpse with spirit produces a living **soul** (a conscious being with personality, thoughts and feelings).

When the electricity is turned off, what happens to the light? Does it go somewhere – does it continue to exist in another place? No, when the electricity is cut off, light ceases to exist (it dies). Likewise, when spirit (the breath of life) is cut off from man, he dies (ceases to exist). He does not continue to live independently of the body in another state or place. (The subject of "spirit" will be studied in depth in later lessons.)

Immortal Soul Doctrine Supports Pre-Existence

Those who insist that man is an immortal being who returns to God at death must likewise teach that man pre-existed with God. Logic dictates that man cannot return to where he has not been. Man cannot "return" to God unless he was "with" God previously. This, then, is the basic question: Did man originate in an immortal state prior to his creation, or was he created from the dust of the ground? As we have seen, the Old Scriptures plainly teach that man returns to the dust of the ground from which he came. Pre-existence is refuted by God's Word just as plainly as his continued existence after he dies. (The doctrine of pre-existence will be studied in depth in later lessons.)

Immortal Soul Doctrine Destroys Resurrection

Resurrection is a return (or rising up) from the state or condition of death. The Scriptures say nothing about resurrecting men's so-called spirits or souls from a place called "heaven." According to logic, the living cannot be resurrected, for only the dead can be raised from death. Without death, there can be no resurrection. If man really doesn't die, as the immortal soul advocates teach, then man has no need of resurrection.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14

1. Concerning the bones (dead people), verse 10 states, "...and the **breath** [ruwach] came into them, and they _____, and stood upon their feet..."
2. Verse 12 states, "...Behold, O my people, I will open your _____, and cause you to come up out of your _____ ..."
3. Verse 14 says, "And shall put my **spirit** [ruwach] in you, and ye shall _____ ..."

Notice two crucial points in this passage of Scripture. First of all, it says that breath (ruwach) came in to them and caused them to live. It does not say that their "immortal (never-dying) souls returned to their bodies and caused them to live. Secondly, God says, "I will...put my **spirit** (ruwach) in you, and ye shall live." He does not say He will put some kind of entity or being inside their bodies. What caused them to come out of their graves and live? Verse 10 says it was "breath," while verse 14 says it was "spirit" – both are translated from the same Hebrew word: **ruwach**. These verses, in the form of a vision, describe the death and resurrection of people (souls). If man never dies, then what is the point of such dialogue. (The term "resurrection" will be studied in depth in later lessons.)

MORE MISUNDERSTOOD SCRIPTURES

In addition to those cited in the previous lesson, other Old Testament passages are misused in an attempt to prove that man does not really die.

Elijah's So-called "Translation" Into Heaven

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read II Kings 2:1-11

4. According to verse 11, "...there appeared a _____ of fire, and horses of fire, and _____ them [Elijah and Elisha] both asunder..."
5. Verse 11 also says that Elijah went up by a _____ into _____.

The preceding verse is used by some to prove that Elijah was taken to heaven alive (translated) and that he did not die. However, a closer examination of the facts will show otherwise.

First of all, the word **heaven** in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word **shamayim** (# 8064 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "the sky" – i.e. the atmosphere or space above the ground. This same Hebrew word is rendered "air" many other places in the Old Scriptures. This verse simply says that Elijah was lifted up into the air, or sky. Unfortunately, many have been deluded into the pagan belief that "heaven" is a mystical place of bliss somewhere in outer space where God lives along with His angels and the departed souls of believers. This false concept is automatically read into this account, leading to misinterpretation. (The term "heaven" will be studied in more detail in later lessons.)

Secondly, Elijah did not ride to "heaven" on a fiery chariot, as many have been led to believe. The account says that "a chariot of fire...parted them asunder." In other words, the chariot of fire separated Elijah and Elisha, putting distance between them. At that point, a "whirlwind" (not the chariot of fire) lifted Elijah into the sky. The word **whirlwind** is translated from a Hebrew word (#5591), meaning "a hurricane" – i.e. a tempest or violent wind storm. Since there is no wind in outer space, it is not logical that a whirlwind could transport Elijah all the way to "heaven."

Lastly, Elijah could not have been in a place called "heaven," because the Bible records that he was still alive on the earth some 20 years later during the days of King Jehoram.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read II Chronicles 21:12-15

1. II Chronicles 21:12 says that a _____ came to Jehoram from _____.

It is obvious from the above verse that Elijah was neither dead nor in heaven at this time. This letter indicates that Elijah was still alive on the earth and was acquainted with contemporary events years after the "whirlwind" event. It is absurd to think that Elijah sent a letter from a place in outer space called "heaven." Thus, we can conclude from the evidence of Scripture that God moved Elijah from one location on earth to another earthly place by means of a strong wind. Logic dictates that Elijah died at some later time just as all other mortals do. In their attempt to prove Elijah never died, many combine their erroneous interpretation of Elijah and the whirlwind with Elijah's appearance on the mount with Moses and Jesus (Matthew 17:1-3), which we will examine in detail during our New Testament study of soul.

Enoch Taken By God

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Genesis 5:24 states, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was _____; for God _____ him."

Some try to use the above passage to prove that Enoch did not die, but that God took him directly to "heaven" where he remains to this day along with Elijah and all the other men of God. As was the case with Elijah, we will see that Enoch also died. The phrase "he was not" is used in the Bible to denote death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Jeremiah 31:15 states, "Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel _____ for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were _____."

The phrase "they were not" obviously refers to the death of the children, which explains the bitter weeping. The children "were not" because they were no longer alive. Job used similar wording in Job 7:21 in referring to his death ("I shall not be"). In like manner, when Genesis 5:24 says "he was not," it means that Enoch died. God took away Enoch's breath (spirit) and he died. There is no mention of "going to heaven" in this passage. In their attempt to prove that Enoch never died, many combine their misinterpretation of Genesis 5:24 with Enoch's "translation" spoken of in Hebrews 11:5, which we will examine in depth in our New Testament study of soul.

Abel Crying To God After His Death

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Genesis 4:8-10

2. In verse 10 God says to Cain, "...the _____ of thy brother's blood _____ unto me from the ground."

Some try to use this verse to show that Abel really didn't die, that only his body died while he went to "heaven." The fact that he was able to speak, they say, proves he was still alive. Note that God did not tell Cain, "Your brother Abel's soul has come up to heaven and told me that you killed his body." Rather, God told Cain that Abel's blood cried from the ground. Obviously, blood cannot literally speak. This is symbolic language referring to the fact that Abel had been murdered (killed unjustly). There is no indication that Abel was in any way still alive in some place called "heaven."

CONCLUSION

In our study of the Old Scriptures concerning "soul," we have found no evidence to support the so-called "immortal soul doctrine." In fact, the Old Scriptures refute the notion that man (or a part of him) lives on after his death. We have seen that the Old Scriptures confirm that when a man dies, ALL of him dies – no conscious entity or being remains. Man returns to the dust of the ground from which he came. He does not go to some place called "heaven" where he allegedly originated. We have seen from the Old Scriptures that there is no consciousness in death – no thoughts, no feelings, no hope, no praising, no awareness of anything.

The Old Scriptures teach that man does not possess an immaterial entity or being called a "spirit." Rather, spirit is the life-force (breath of life) from God which animates or enlivens a body, giving it life. When that spirit is withdrawn, man dies (ceases to be alive). Spirit, then, is not the man. Rather, soul constitutes the man – the whole man – and soul dies with the body. Soul does not exist independent of the body. Soul does not continue living after the body dies. That is the truth of the Old Scriptures. According to the Old Scriptures, the "immortal soul" doctrine is a lie, without Scriptural foundation.

Beginning with the next lesson, we will see what the New Scriptures have to say about this crucial subject.



ANSWER KEY

LESSON 13

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 3

Page 122

1. dust; life; living
2. ground
3. dust
4. place; dust
5. ground; taken
6. dust; return

Page 123

1. man; dust
2. die; return
3. sleep
4. death
5. sleep; dust

Page 124

1. sleep; dust
2. thoughts
3. know
4. knowledge; wisdom

Page 125

1. praise
2. remembrance; thanks
3. live; being
4. die; live
5. 15
6. celebrate; hope
7. praise

Page 126

1. dust; spirit
2. breath; spirit
3. ruwach (#7307)

Page 127

1. breath
2. dieth; dieth

Page 128

1. lived
2. graves; graves
3. live
4. chariot; parted
5. whirlwind; heaven

Page 129

1. writing; Elijah (the prophet)
2. not; took

Page 130

1. weeping; not
2. voice; crieth

We suggest the following books for additional study:

Spirits on Trial - by Ben Williams
Doctrine Of Salvation - by Ben Williams

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Notes: