



LESSON 15

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE

Part 5

Objections Answered

In lesson 14 we saw how the New Scriptures support what the Old Scriptures teach concerning **soul** and **death**. No evidence was found to support the pagan theory that man possesses a so-called "immortal soul" that separates from his body at death and continues living consciously in some other place or realm. We have learned that this concept is foreign and contradictory to God's Word.

A number of New Testament passages are commonly used by proponents of the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine in a futile attempt to prove their position. In this lesson we will examine a few of these passages to see what they really say in light of the scriptural meaning of soul. In doing so, we will see that none of these examples teach the spurious "immortal soul" doctrine.

MOSES AND ELIJAH ON THE MOUNT

The episode of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13) is often used by advocates of the "immortal soul" doctrine as proof that the dead are really alive – i.e. their so-called "immortal souls" continue living after their body dies. However, a careful examination disproves this notion.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 17:1-13

1. According to verse 2, Jesus was _____ before the disciples.
2. Who does verse 3 say appeared to the disciples? _____ and _____
3. What does verse 3 say they were doing? _____
4. Jesus told the disciples in verse 9, "Tell the _____ to no man ..."

Those who refer to the preceding passage, as proof that Moses and Elijah were still alive long after their physical death, invariably quote only the first few verses. They incorrectly reason that since Moses and Elijah were seen by the disciples and were talking to Jesus, they must still have been alive. After all, they say, dead people could not speak to someone. However, verse 9 (which is always avoided by these "immortal soul" advocates) clearly indicates that what the disciples saw was a vision – i.e. not actual physical men. In other words, Moses and Elijah appeared, not in person, but in a vision.

The word vision in this passage is from the same Greek word (#3705 in *Strong's Concordance*) used in reference to Peter's vision described in the tenth chapter of Acts.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 10:9-19

1. According to verse 10, Peter fell into a _____ .
2. Verses 11 and 12 indicate Peter saw a great _____ descending which contained a variety of four-footed _____ .
3. Verse 19 states, "While Peter thought on the _____..."

No serious Bible student would claim that what Peter saw was a literal, physical occurrence. Yet, some want the disciples' vision in Matthew 17 to be material. To use this passage as proof that Moses and Elijah were still alive at the time completely ignores the fact that the disciples experienced a vision. This error violates prudent study procedure and, as a result, misses the truth.

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

Some who believe in the "immortal soul" doctrine use Matthew 22:32 in an attempt to prove Jesus taught that the dead are alive. This verse, they mistakenly say, proves that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive in "heaven." However, they inappropriately use this verse out of context. Like other arguments where part of a passage is used, we must read more of it to discover the truth.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 22:23-33

4. Verse 23 states, "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no _____..."
5. In verse 29 Jesus tells these Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the _____ , nor the power of God."
6. After quoting God's words from Exodus 3:6, Jesus states in verse 32, "God is not the God of the _____ , but of the _____ ."

Jesus was refuting the Sadducee's doctrine that denied the resurrection of the dead. He was not attempting to prove that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive in "heaven" or any other place. Rather, He was proving that in order for God to be their God, their resurrection (raising to life) was necessary. Since we have seen in earlier lessons that the dead know nothing (Eccl. 9:5) and in death there is no remembrance of God (Ps. 6:5), it logically follows that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would have to be raised to life in order for them to recognize God as their God.

The entire context of this passage deals with the subject of resurrection (raising from the dead). In fact, the idea that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never died and are still alive somewhere (as the "immortal soul" doctrine teaches) does away with the resurrection. Without death, there is no need for a "raising from the dead." Thus, the "immortal soul" doctrine negates the doctrine of "resurrection." Taking verse 32 of Matthew 22 out of its context to prove the "immortal soul" concept is a twisting of the truth and is not accurate Bible study.

BELIEVERS "NEVER DIE"

John 11:25, 26 is used by some in an attempt to prove that Christians continue to live in "heaven" after their death on earth. Let's take a closer look at this passage to see what it really says.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 11:1-44

1. In verse 24 Martha says that she knows her brother Lazarus will _____ again in the resurrection at the last day.
2. Jesus responds in verse 25 by saying, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were _____, yet shall he _____:"
3. Jesus continues in verse 26 by stating, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never [not] _____ [into the age]. (Note: the phrase in brackets is omitted in the KJV Bible.)"

In verse 24 Martha refers to the future bodily resurrection. However, in verses 25 and 26 Jesus mentions a different kind of rising: a spiritual rising out of the condition of spiritual death. Here, Jesus refers to the rebirth or regeneration which comes through the New Covenant during a person's mortal life. Verse 26 is not saying that believers become immortal. Rather, it speaks of the spiritual life that Christ infuses into those who are spiritually reborn during their mortal lifetimes.

The idea of people "going to heaven when they die" does not appear in this passage. In fact, the word "heaven" is not used in any of the verses. This idea is simply read into this passage or assumed to be there. Nowhere in this passage is it stated (or suggested) that Lazarus' soul went to "heaven." In verse 14 Jesus plainly stated that the man Lazarus was dead. He made no reference to Lazarus being "alive in heaven" while only his body was dead. According to verses 17 and 39, the man Lazarus had been dead in the grave during the four days following his death, not "alive in heaven." In verse 43 Jesus made no reference to calling Lazarus back from a place called "heaven." Also, verse 44 makes no reference to Lazarus coming back from some place to re-enter his body. These pagan notions are merely interjected into this passage without any Scriptural evidence to substantiate them.

THE "SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR"

Those who teach the immortality of the soul use Revelation 6:9-11 as proof that Christian martyrs are alive in "heaven." However, a proper understanding of this passage refutes this notion.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Revelation 6:9-11

1. According to verse 9, where did John see those who had been slain? _____
2. Verse 10 indicates they cried with a loud _____ .
3. In verse 11 they are given white _____ and told to _____ for a little season.

It is important, first of all, to understand that this "opening of the fifth seal" is part of a **vision** that John saw nearly 2,000 years ago. As in the "appearance" of Moses and Elijah on the mount with Jesus, this scene occurred only in a **vision**. It is also important to realize that the language used is **symbolic** in meaning.

Those who misuse this passage as proof that martyrs are really "alive in heaven" do not attempt to explain why these souls are said to be "under the altar" instead of "in heaven." Neither do they explain why these souls were told to "rest for a little season."

The symbolic language used in this passage is very similar to that used in the case of Abel (refer back to lesson 13). Recall that when Cain murdered Abel, God did not say that Abel's soul came up to Him "in heaven" and told Him that Cain killed him. Rather, God said that Abel's blood cried from the ground. Righteous Abel certainly would be included in the symbolic souls John saw in his vision that were crying from under the altar. In fact, there is an interesting connection between "crying from the ground" and "crying from under the altar."

A martyr is one whose life (soul) has been sacrificed for his faith in Christ. In fact, any true Christian is one who has presented himself to God as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1) and who is willing to sacrifice his life for his faith. Interestingly, the word **slain** in Revelation 6:9 is translated from the Greek word **sphazo** (#4969 in *Strong's Concordance*) which means "to butcher in sacrifice."

In the law of sacrifices found in Leviticus 4, the priests were commanded to offer the bullocks upon the altar and "pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering" (Lev. 4:7). The blood of sacrificed animals was always to be poured under the altar upon the ground. In fact, even when the people killed animals for food, they were also commanded to pour the blood upon the ground and cover it with dust. Why? Leviticus 17 says that it was because the soul of the animal is in the blood; and the soul of the animal was to be put in the ground as atonement for our souls. The fact that the animal was killed and placed in the ground to atone for man's sin proves that man's soul dies and goes into the ground as well.

John did not see saints **alive** in "heaven." Rather, he saw a **vision** of the many righteous saints (symbolized by "white robes") who were "slain (sacrificed) for the word of God" and who were "under the altar" (in the ground), where they shall "rest" until the future physical resurrection.

THE "TRANSLATION" OF ENOCH

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Hebrews 11:5 says, "By faith Enoch was _____ that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him..."
5. Hebrews 11:13 plainly states, "These all [including Enoch] _____ in faith..."

Some say that Hebrews 11:5 proves that Enoch never died, but that God took him directly to "heaven." However, the word "heaven" is not even used in this verse. But, verse 13 clearly includes Enoch among those that **died**. These two verses seem contradictory until it is realized that the phrase "he should not see death" does not automatically mean "that he should never die." It logically means that God moved Enoch out of the hands of wicked men who sought to kill him. It is clear from Hebrews 11:13 that Enoch did indeed die eventually.

Hebrews 11:4-5 corroborates Genesis 5:24 which was discussed in lesson 13. The word translated is rendered from the Greek word *metatithemi* (#3346 in *Strong's Concordance*) which means to transfer or transport. Enoch was spared death temporarily, but he died later. Enoch's translation (transfer) can be viewed in much the same manner as Elijah's transfer (11 Kings 2) as explained in lesson 13.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

One of the most well known passages used in an attempt to prove the "immortal soul doctrine" is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). This passage, it is said, proves that the so-called "souls" or "spirits" of deceased persons continue to live. This passage, it is claimed, shows that the righteous go to a place called "heaven" after they die, while the wicked go to a "burning hell." However, a close study of this passage reveals some important inconsistencies and errors in such a misinterpretation.

Parable vs Literal Story

First of all, it is important to realize that this passage of Scripture is not a historical account of the fate of two literal people. Rather, it is a **parable**. Therefore, like all parables, it is figurative (symbolic) in meaning and should be understood as such. However, some say that because this passage speaks of a "certain" rich man, it refers to a literal man. However, other parables, which no one would take literally, begin the same way. Consider the following examples.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Mark 12:1, Jesus began the parable of the vineyard with the words, "A _____ man planted a vineyard..."
2. In Luke 15:11, Jesus began the parable of the two sons with the words, "A **certain** _____ had two sons..."
3. In Luke 16:1, Jesus began the parable of the unjust steward with the words, "There was a **certain** _____ man..."

No serious Bible student would interpret the above three parables literally. Yet, many want to do so with the rich man and Lazarus story. This is simply not consistent Bible study. Obviously, as the above three examples illustrate, the use of the word "certain" is no indication that a story is to be understood literally.

No "Heaven"

Many claim this parable states that the beggar went to "heaven." Yet, the word "heaven" never appears in the story. This word is simply assumed to be there or else read into the account.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Luke 16:22 states that the beggar was carried to Abraham's _____ .

Some, who believe this is a literal story about "heaven" and "hell," will say that "Abraham's bosom" is symbolic of "heaven." However, if it were literal as they claim, why would symbolic language be used in a literal story? Again, this is inconsistent. Also, nowhere in Scripture is the term "Abraham's bosom" used to refer to a place called "heaven." This false notion is simply interjected into the passage. In addition, if the so-called "heaven" is symbolically represented, then why was the so-called "hell" not so represented? Here is another unexplainable inconsistency.

Misuse of "Hell"

Those who try to use this story to prove that wicked people go to a fiery place called "hell" when they die do not understand the meaning of the Greek word translated as hell.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. According to Luke 16:23, where was the rich man? _____

The word **hell** in the above verse is translated from the Greek word **hades** (#86 in *Strong's Concordance*). This word **hades** is used nine other times in the New Scriptures, and in none of them is it connected in any way with the dead in a state of conscious torment. Let's consider these examples.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. In Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15, the city of _____ , which was "exalted unto heaven," was to be brought down to hell [hades].

This town was located in Galilee. It was not off in some place in outer space called "heaven" and then sent down to a burning hell and consciously tortured there. Obviously, the paganized concept of "hell," as commonly taught in most churches today, does not fit the meaning of this verse.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus states that the _____ of hell [hades] would not prevail against His ecclesia.

Since the word "gate" refers to the seat of government and its courts, this is a reference to man's centralized government not being able to prevail against the government of Christ. The idea of a torturing, burning place of conscious torment for dead people makes absolutely no sense in this verse.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Acts 2:27 and 31 state that God did not leave Christ's _____ in hell [hades].

If the word **hades** in the above verse referred to a burning place of torment for the deceased wicked, then that would mean Jesus was one of the wicked and He suffered burning torment during His short stay there. Obviously, this makes no sense and is a blasphemous thought. Since we have learned that "soul" refers to that which defines a person's individual identity, and since Jesus was dead three days and three nights in the grave, this verse is simply saying that God did not allow Jesus to remain in a state of death and non-existence, but raised Him up.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. Revelation 1:18, 6:8, 20:13 and 20:14 all speak of "_____ and hell [hades]."

None of the above references in Revelation make any mention of a state of conscious torment in some burning abode. This pagan idea is simply read into these verses. Where did such a revolting idea come from? In Greek and Roman **mythology**, the word "hades" was used to refer to a place where the dead lived on in a conscious state. Unfortunately this mythical concept, which is a cornerstone of Babylonian mystery religion, has crept into Christendom and has distorted the truth of Scripture. (The subject of "hell" will be studied in more detail in future lessons.)

The concept of "hades" in the New Scriptures in nine out of ten examples says absolutely nothing about either a conscious state of the dead or conscious torment in fire. Rather, these nine references all fit the concept of **sheol** in the Old Scriptures as a place of darkness, silence, and death. Discarding all plain Bible teaching, by taking this one **parable** in a literal manner, is neither logical nor justifiable.

Misunderstanding of "Torment"

Some argue that the phrases "in torments" and "place of torment" in this story prove the existence of a literal place of conscious suffering of the wicked dead. This error is caused by interpreting figurative language in a literal manner in addition to misunderstanding the Greek word from which the English word "torment" is translated.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Speaking of the dead rich man, Luke 16:23 states, "And in hell [hades] he lifted up his eyes, being in _____."
2. Luke 16:28 says, "...lest they also come into this place of _____."

The words "torments" and "torment" are rendered from the Greek word **basanos** (#931 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning "a touch-stone." Literally, a "touch-stone" is a stone used in the trial (examination) of metals to test for purity. This word is figuratively used for the examination, scrutinizing, trying or testing of a person – his motives, character, integrity, etc. This word does not suggest endless burning fire, as some like to think. *Strong's Concordance* notes that this Greek word is associated with "the notion of going to the bottom." This corresponds to our phrase "getting to the bottom of it," in reference to testing things. The rich man was obviously in a status of being tested.

Other Inconsistencies

If this passage were really only a literal story of two men, one in "hell-fire" and one in "heaven," then consider the following questions:

1. Why did Jesus use so many symbols: purple, fine linen, gate, sores, crumbs, table, dogs, five brethren, etc.
2. Why does the Bible not mention anywhere else about people speaking between "heaven" and "hell"?
3. Logically, how could a person in "hell" see another person in "heaven" – and speak to him?
4. Why did Abraham refuse to testify to the five unbelieving brethren?

There is much more to this story. Space in this lesson does not permit a detailed explanation of this tremendous kingdom parable. (It will be dealt with in more detail in later lessons.)

THE THIEF IN PARADISE

One of the favorite passages used as proof that people continue living after they die (i.e. they possess an immortal soul) is the story of the repentant thief on the cross. However, a close study of the context proves otherwise.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 23:39-43

3. In verse 42 the repentant malefactor (wrong-doer, i.e. criminal) told Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy _____."
4. Jesus told him in verse 43 that he would be with Jesus in _____.

These verses are interpreted by many to mean that Jesus took the repentant malefactor with Him to "heaven" (paradise) immediately after they died – i.e. they continued living after death. However, this conclusion is based upon two faulty assumptions. First, they assume that the word "paradise" refers to a place called "heaven" – the mythical dwelling place of God, the angels, and the spirits (immortal souls) of the righteous after death. Secondly, they assume the word "today" indicates they went to heaven that very day – i.e. the day they died.

"Kingdom" = "Paradise"

First of all, notice the relationship between the words "kingdom" (verse 42) and "paradise" (verse 43). Immediately after the malefactor asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom, Jesus told him he would be with Him in paradise. This indicates Jesus understood these two terms to be closely related, if not identical. Jesus' kingdom refers to His "reign."

Notice that the word "heaven" appears nowhere in this passage. The idea that "paradise" means "heaven" is simply read into the passage or is assumed without any Scriptural evidence. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Greek word for "paradise" (#3857 in *Strong's Concordance*) used for some mythical place of bliss called "heaven" somewhere off in outer space.

Jesus did not tell the repentant criminal that he would go to a place called "heaven" when he died. Rather, Jesus assured him that he would be resurrected (raised to life) into the kingdom – i.e. he would be "remembered" and not forgotten.

Kingdom

The word "kingdom" is translated from the Greek word "basileia" (#932 in *Strong's Concordance*) which means "royalty, i.e. rule." It comes from the Greek word meaning "a sovereign." Thus, "kingdom" refers to the "reign" of a sovereign.

Use of the Word "Today"

Some will argue at this point that Luke 23:43 clearly states that Jesus and the malefactor would both be in paradise on the day of their crucifixion – i.e. on the same day they died. The way this passage is improperly structured in most modern versions seems to support this idea. However, a closer study of the original Greek text reveals a totally different story. The following literal translation shows the Greek text with the corresponding English words written below each Greek word.

Literal Rendering of Luke 23:43

και ειπεν αυτω Αμην σοι λεγω σημερον μετ εμου εση εν τω παραδεισω
And he said to him Amen to you I am saying today with me you will be in the Paradise

Notice that the literal reads "saying today," rather than "you will be today in the paradise." In other words, Jesus told the dying malefactor that day: "You will be with me in paradise" (the kingdom). This point is illustrated in the following translations:

"And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee this day: With me shalt thou be in paradise."

(Rotherham's Emphasized Bible)

"And Jesus said to him, Verily, to you I am saying today, with me shall you be in paradise."

(The Concordant Literal New Testament)

The Companion Bible contains the following notation on Luke 23:43: "To day. Connect this with 'I say,' to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion; not with 'shalt thou be.'"

The phrase "I am saying today" may sound awkward according to modern vernacular. However, Scripture often used the words "today" or "this day" to emphasize a noteworthy or special day, as the following example illustrates.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Deuteronomy 30:15-16 states, "See, I have set before thee **this day** life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee **this day** to _____ the LORD thy God..."

Luke 23:43 teaches that the repentant malefactor on the cross was to receive a place in the Kingdom of God at the physical resurrection. Jesus gave him that promise that day – the same day he died. This passage cannot honestly be used to prove that the criminal was still alive in a place called "heaven" following his death on the cross.

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this lesson that the typical New Testament arguments used to prove the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine are nothing more than misinterpretations and misapplications of Scripture. In fact, these same passages, when interpreted correctly, disprove the "immortality of the soul" and support the Biblical truth that men's souls are indeed mortal. They die and go to the grave. They do not continue living in some pagan mythical place called "heaven" or "hell-fire." Man's only hope for immortal life is in his reigning King, Jesus Christ, and that will be received at the future resurrection.

Now that we understand the correct meaning and use of the word "soul," we are ready to study the words "heaven" and "hell" as used in the Scriptures. In the next lesson we will expose the misconception that they refer to literal places where the so-called "immortal souls" of the deceased continue living in consciousness.



LESSON 15

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 5

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1. transfigured (indicating a change in appearance)
2. Moses; Elijah (Elias)
3. they were talking with Jesus
4. vision

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1. trance
2. sheet; beasts
3. vision
4. resurrection
5. Scriptures
6. dead; living

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1. rise
2. dead; live
3. die

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1. they were "under the altar"
2. voice
3. robes; rest
4. translated
5. died

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1. certain
2. man
3. rich

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1. bosom
2. in hell
3. Capernaum

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1. gates
2. soul
3. death

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1. torments
2. torment
3. kingdom
4. paradise

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1. love

Notes: