

Do YOU Have an IMMORTAL SOUL?

Is it true that we human beings go either to heaven or to hell when we die? Hundreds of millions say YES! One of the fundamental beliefs of the mainstream "Christian " religions is that of the immortality of the soul! On this belief is based the concept of an ever-burning hell fire as punishment for the wicked, and heaven as the reward for the saved. Belief in an "immortal soul " in some form or another was commonplace among heathen nations long prior to Christianity. The pagan Greek and Roman philosophers speculated about the "soul, " as did ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians and Chinese.

The Catholic Encyclopedia admits that the doctrine has its origins in antiquity that the concept of an "immortal soul" in man long antedates Christ and the apostles.

But is this doctrine TRUE? Did it come from the Bible? Did Christ and the apostles teach the immortality of the soul?

By Garner Ted Armstrong

Do you have a soul? Are you a soul? Is there something about you that is immortal that will never die? If so, when, and how did that "soul" get into your body? Was it imparted to you at the moment of conception? Did it come into your body at some time during your fetal development? Were you given an "immortal soul" at the moment you took your first breath, shortly after birth?

If you have a "soul" can you touch it, taste it, feel it, hear it, or smell it? Can you take it out and look at it? Can you see the "souls" of others? Are You, you the real person, the innermost, private, human being with all of your thoughts, inclinations, perceptions, concepts and beliefs, hidden longings, doubts and fears, beliefs and convictions, sensory perceptions and feelings, going to SURVIVE this human flesh, and live forever?

According to the so-called "Christian" religions the real PERSON is dwelling within the temporal body. The body is seen as a temporary suit of clothes. The real person dwells within that temporary suit of clothes; and at the time of death, the now useless "suit of clothes" (the body) is discarded, buried in the ground or cremated, while the real person wafts away either to heaven or to ever-burning hell fire! (In the Catholic tradition, there are allegedly various intermediary stages called "purgatory.")

How can you KNOW, one way or the others What is your ultimate authority for determining the truth on any subject which has to do with life and death, judgment, and the hereafter?

For the purposes of this article, the absolute, final and divine AUTHORITY is the Bible, the inspired, written Word of God, as it appears in its earliest manuscripts, and in its original languages!

If your "authority" for your beliefs is myth, superstition, fables, stories of alleged death-bed visions or conversations with "departed souls"; if your "authority" is mysticism, oriental religions, heathen superstitions or esoterica, then you should read no further—for this article accepts as the only and FINAL authority on the subject of the so-called "immortality of the Soul" THE BIBLE, the written Word of God!

WHY, then, if so many hundreds of millions of human beings in so many nations are absolutely convinced they possess an immortal soul are the words "immortal soul" FOUND NOWHERE in Scripture?

What Is Man?

Obviously, the question concerning whether you have an "immortal soul" is really the question, *what are you?*

To atheists and evolutionists, man is merely a "hairless ape." God-rejecting atheists view man as the end result of aeons of blind chance; the final outcome of millennia of randomness; "natural selection," and the "survival of the fittest." Of course, those who reject the word of God are *cultists*; they have a blind FAITH in the theories of the evolutionary "fathers," and nothing is more *UNscientific* than the theory of evolution!

Those who believe in *creation*—who know and understand that life can only come from preexisting life, and preexisting life of the *same kind*, who understand that laws can only come from a great lawgiver; that perfection, symmetry, interdependency and fabulous *design* can only come from a Supreme *Designer*—know better.

They know that the human family began with one man, and that a *wife*, miraculously taken from his own body and as much a unique and original creation as was Adam himself, formed the *first family*.

In any event, even if for the sake of argument alone, those who profess the Christian religion and believe in the inspiration of the Bible *must* explain *what is man* from the perspective of the *creation* account revealed in the Bible!

When God created our first parent He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou *return unto the ground*, for out of it wast thou taken: for *DUST THOU ART*, and unto *dust* shalt thou return!" (Genesis 3:19).

God was talking to *Adam*. He was talking to the *conscious man*! He did not tell Adam that only his *body* was composed of the elements of the earth; but that "Adam" was really a "soul" locked within a temporal, physical body! No, He said Adam WAS "red clay" or, "red mud" (for that is the *real meaning* of the Hebrew word translated "dust").

Notice! "And the Eternal God formed man of the *dust of the ground*, and breathed into his nostrils the *breath of life*; and man BECAME A LIVING SOUL!" (Genesis 2:7).

Remember, the Bible was not written in the English language. Mostly, the Bible was written in Greek and Hebrew; Hebrew being used predominately in the Old Testament, and Greek in the New.

There was no such word in existence at the time the Bible was written as "soul." It is an English word, with an almost exclusively *ecclesiastical* connotation!

Actually, as you will see, the English word "soul" should be virtually expunged from the English language, and *replaced* with *many possible synonyms* which connote the *real meaning* of the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

For the Hebrew word *nephesh* is the word from which the English word "soul" is translated!

Naturally, then, our quest for knowledge and understanding centers around the meaning of the word *nephesh*!

What is the meaning, then, of the HEBREW word nephesh?

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance says, "(5315) *nephesh*; a breathing creature, i.e. *animal* or (abstr.) vitality: used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense (bodily or mental); appetite, beast, body, breath, creature, dead, desire, contented, fish, ghost, greedy, he, heart, (jeopardy of life; in jeopardy), lust, man, me, mind, mortally, one, own, person, pleasure, (her, him, my, thy) self, them (your) selves, slay, soul, tablet, they, thing, will, would have it."

What a list! You see, the Hebrew word *nephesh* has to do with "being"! As such, it has a *wide* usage, concerning the physical, animal, *breathing* LIFE of flesh and blood creatures! Notice that it can be translated "dead" or even "beast" or "creature" as well as "lust," "mortally," or "person."

Did you know that the Hebrew word *nephesh* is used *several times* of lower life forms PRIOR to ever being used concerning *man* in the Bible?

Notice Genesis 1:20 where *nephesh* is rendered, "moving creature," verse 21 where the same word is rendered, "living creature," verse 24 where *nephesh* is rendered, "living creature; and beast," verse 25 where it is rendered "beast," referring to whales, fish, crustaceans and lower life forms inhabiting *the sea*!

In this graphic description of the creation of all of the animals and sea-dwelling *creatures*, the word *nephesh* is used again and again!

Naturally even the superstitious translators who were heavily affected by Roman Catholic and Anglican doctrines in the sixteen hundreds did not *dare* render the word *nephesh* as "soul" in these passages!

Now, turn to and read Numbers 19:11: "He that toucheth the dead *body* of any man shall be unclean seven days. " In this scripture, the laws of purification under the Levites are discussed. A person would be considered "unclean" if he touched the decaying corpse or body of an animal or another man!

Notice verse 22. "And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul [*nephesh*!] that toucheth it shall be unclean until even. "

The very same word rendered "soul" in verse 22 (which *should* be translated "individual," or "person") is rendered "*DEAD BODY*" in verse 11! Get it into your mind; *firmly fixed* once and for all! The SAME WORD which is translated "soul" in literally *dozens* of places in the Old Testament is here translated "*dead body*"!

Now turn to and read Ezekiel 18, verses 4 and 20. "Behold, all souls [*nephesh*] are mine; as the soul [*nephesh*] of the father, so also the soul [*nephesh*] of the son is mine: the soul. [*nephesh*] that sinneth IT [that 'soul' or nepheshq shall *DIE*! " Here, it would be far clearer if the English were rendered "Behold all *persons* are mine; as the person of the father, so the person of the son; the individual that sins HE shall die!"

The thrust of the scripture is individual, *personal responsibility* before God! What God is saying through Ezekiel is that no one can render excuses for sin; that we cannot "pass the buck" by pointing to others as a causal factor of *our sins*!

This scripture is not given as a lesson in whether or not souls are "immortal" or mortal; yet, because the scripture very plainly says that "the soul that sinneth, *IT SHALL DIE*, " it represents a further, *powerfully conclusive PROOF* that the Hebrew word for "soul" (*nephesh*) means physical, mortal, temporal life, and has nothing whatsoever to do with immortality!

So, ask yourself "does the Bible say, *whatever the Bible means* by the word 'soul,' that souls can *DIE*?" Your obvious answer is YES!

Then, with your own eyes, you are beholding the absolute *proof* that the word translated into English "soul" has *nothing whatsoever to do* with immortality or spirituality; but has to do with physical, carnal, flesh-and-blood human and animal existence!

The word *nephesh* is found in 243 different Bible passages, and translated in 11 different ways. Notice that the expression "the dead" is translated directly from the Hebrew word *nephesh* in the following passages: Leviticus 19:22; 21:1, 22:4; Numbers 5:2; Numbers 6:11.

The same word (*nephesh*) which is translated "soul" in most cases is rendered "dead body" in Numbers 9:6, 7, 10.

It is translated as "body" in Leviticus 21:U, Numbers 6:6; 19:11, 13, and also in Haggai 2:1, 3.

What About the New Testament?

The Greek word *psuche* is the only word that is translated "soul" in the New Testament. You will find the word 105 times in the New Testament, of which it is translated "soul" only 58 times, but can also be rendered "life" (40 times), "mind" (three times), and "heart," "heartily," "us" and "you" (one time each).

The Greek word *psuche* is the exact Greek rendering of the Hebrew word *nephesh* and is used in the same way throughout the New Testament.

For example, *psuche* is used of the lower animals, just as you have seen *nephesh* used of lower life forms in the first chapter of the book of Genesis! In Revelation 8:9, the Greek word *psuche* (remember this is the ONLY word which is ever used for the word "soul" in the English language) is rendered "life." Notice also Revelation 16:3, where lower life forms are spoken of, yet the word "soul" is used. Read that last scripture carefully! It describes one of the horrible plagues yet to fall upon the land and the sea, and says "every living soul DIED"! Here is one more New Testament proof that the word "soul" as it found its way into the English language means a being, or living thing, which can DIE! In this case, it is used of various forms of life (of which there are thousands) in the sea!

The Greek word *psuche* is also used for an individual. On many occasions, in making out a flight plan when I was piloting a jet airplane, we would have to include the information of how many persons were aboard that flight. All airlines dispatchers do the same things. Oftentimes, many pilots calling in their flight plans would say they had so many "souls" on board, using the word interchangeably for individuals, or persons. When a newspaper headline speaks of so many "souls" being lost in the sinking of a ship, it is using the word in much the same way as it occurs 14 different times in the Bible! For proof, read Acts 2:41-43; 3:23; 7:14; 27:37; Romans 2:9; 13: 1; 1 Corinthians 15:45; James 5:20; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:14; Revelation 6:9; 18:13; 20:4.

In those passages, the Greek word *psuche* is used for the life of man, which can be destroyed, or lost.

A classic example of where the translators have tampered with the English in translating from the Greek is found in Matthew 16:25 and 26.

Notice the way it is rendered in the King James Version: "For whosoever will save his life [*psuche*] shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life [*psuche*] for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul [*psuche*]? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul [*psuche*]?"

Obviously, since the identical Greek word is used in both passages; and since it is rendered differently in verse 26 (soul) from the way it is used in verse 25 (life), it was a translator's decision as to changing the way he rendered this Greek word *psuche* in the two verses!

To be honest, and to be fair with the word, it should have been rendered the same in both passages! Here, it is obvious the word should better be rendered "life," just as it was rendered in verse 25! For, after all, it is your life you can lose—and what can you give in exchange for your LIFE?

The point is, the Greek word *psuche* is capable of nearly as many applications as is the Hebrew word *nephesh*,

and can even be used of man's moods, passions and feelings!

The word psuche, for example, is translated "mind," "us," "you" "heart" and "heartily."

By no stretch of the imagination can this Greek word EVER connote anything which is immortal, or "extraphysical, " in the sense of being spiritual.

The English word "soul" in the Old Testament is always taken from the Hebrew nephesh and does NOT mean anything immortal; just as the English word "soul" in the New Testament is taken from the Greek word psuche, and only means mortal, temporal, human physical MAN, who is subject to death.

What Happens at Death?

It is clear from both the Hebrew and the Greek, the original languages of the Bible, that man dies in exactly the same fashion as does a beast. "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity.

"All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again!" (Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20).

Notice how the inspired Bible writers described the condition of death: Job wrote, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

"He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: He fleeth—also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1, 2).

In the same chapter, Job said, "So man lieth down, and riseth not: TILL the heavens be no more, [obviously, reference to the resurrection and the 'new heavens and new earth'] they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

"Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret, until thy wrath be passed, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!

"If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come! [Obvious reference to the change at the resurrection; 1 Corinthians 15:50-52.]

"Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands!" (Job 14:12-15).

God inspired David to write a great deal about the subject of life and death. David said, "Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: He is like the beasts that perish ... like sheep they are laid in the grave [sheol] death shall feed upon them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave [sheol] from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul [Hebrew nephesh—meaning LIFE!] from the power of the grave [notice the grave has POWER over the kind of 'life' connoted by the Hebrew word nephesh]: For He shall receive me.

"Man that is in honor. and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish!" (Psalm 49:12-20).

Because Almighty God reveals we human beings—the creation of His hands—are His children, and that we will be resurrected FROM THE DEAD, He inspired David to write, "Precious in the sight of the Eternal is the death of His saints! " (Psalms 116:15).

There are many examples in the Bible about what happens at death!

There is No case in the Bible where the words "immortal soul" appear! There is a "spirit in man" mentioned in the Bible, which is a very profound subject, and which would demand an entire booklet to thoroughly explain. In brief, the "spirit in man" (mentioned by Job and the apostle Paul who talked of how God's Holy Spirit "witnesseth with our spirit" that we are the children of God) is that spiritual essence which lifts the mind of man to a level far above the mere brain of animals!

The Bible clearly reveals that Almighty God is begetting CHILDREN!

Even as human beings are not reproduced without life begetting life; male life uniting with female life; so Almighty God reveals that His Holy Spirit does not unite with mere flesh; but that there is a "spirit in man," very likely in the frontal lobes of the brain (which is why the "forehead" is mentioned so often) where our will power; our volition, decision-making capacity and our personality exists!

When the Bible speaks, metaphorically, of "the heart" it is speaking of that portion of our human mind wherein our attitude; our CHARACTER resides! Recent scientific knowledge has revealed that the human brain is divided into many different parts. Some portions of the brain control such things as our coordination, equilibrium; our physical and athletic ability; other portions deal with our sensory perceptions such as the central nervous system, the eye, etc. Other portions deal with the memory, and the frontal lobes, behind the forehead of the human brain control the DECISION-MAKING part of the brain.

Perhaps there is greater meaning in the symbolism of those who receive the "mark of the beast" in their foreheads (meaning willingly; with their own permission, acceptance and volition!) when one understands this simple truth!

But this "spirit in man" is not "immortal"! God's Word says clearly God ONLY hath immortality! Man is revealed as being temporal, fleshly, carnal, physical—of the dust! He is said to perish and waste away! Yet, think about it deeply for a moment. Even as the pattern for all that you are was in a tiny, microscopic germ of life from your father, uniting with an egg of life from your mother; even as the "pattern" which was to determine your basic appearance, height, shape, color of eyes and hair, texture of skin, talents and abilities, was all miraculously contained in that microscopic bit of life, so Almighty God is building in our Christian lives a pattern, through the power of His Holy Spirit which can beget a "new creation in Christ" when in connection with the spirit in man!

Even as your human father stamped you with his identity—gave you his NAME—so our heavenly Father is putting His own identity, His name, and His personality within His children!

The false doctrine of the "immortality of the soul" CONCEALS THIS GREAT TRUTH !

If God is allowing you to understand deeper truths of His Word through this article then to Almighty God goes the credit! If God is revealing deeper truths to you, you should now turn to Romans the eighth chapter and read with greater understanding than ever before the entire chapter! Particularly, as you study this important chapter, read verse 29! "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He [Jesus Christ!] might be the FIRSTBORN among MANY BRETHREN! "Yes, even as Jesus Christ was the first begotten among all human kind; He was also the first BORN from the dead! How plain! How simple!

The greatest phenomenon we see around us is that of LIFE! We see the miraculous fact that life comes from preexisting life of the same kind; that life has the basic urge to perpetuate itself; that He produces like, kind reproduces after kind, and that we human beings, through love in marriage, reproduce after our own kind!

Almighty God is reproducing after His kind!

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