

DO WE HAVE



AN IMMORTAL SOUL?

Contents

The Universal Idea of an Immortal Soul	2
Judaism Embraces the Idea of an Immortal Soul	3
Orthodox Christianity Embraces the Idea of an Immortal Soul	4
Some Reject the Concept of an Immortal Soul	5
Occurrences of the Word “Soul” in the Bible	6
Old Testament Study of “Soul”	7
The “Soul” in the New Testament	17
What Happens to the Soul at the Time of Death?	22
Did Jesus Christ Have an Immortal Soul?	25
Human Souls Die and Must Be Brought Back to Life	28
More Than One Resurrection	28
A Fiery Eternal Hell?	33
The Souls Under the Altar	36
The Gospel Preached to the Dead?	36
Communication with the Dead	37
The Truth About Immortality	40

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the “Global Church of God” in the United Kingdom, in collaboration with the “Church of the Eternal God” in the United States of America. Printed in United Kingdom in 2002. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the King James version unless otherwise noted.

Author: Norbert Link

What happens to us when we die? Does our soul continue to live on, while our body decays in the grave? Do the souls of bad people continuously burn in hell fire for all eternity? Do the souls of good people ascend to heaven at the time of death—or do they go to a place called limbo or purgatory, if they were not quite as good? If the answer to these questions is “yes,” then *why* do we need to be *resurrected* from the dead—or do we? Do humans possess immortality within themselves? If you are seeking to understand the truth on this subject, then the answers can be found in God’s Word, the Bible.

Early in the Bible we find that Adam and Eve were *not* created with the ability to live forever. They did not possess immortality. They were *offered* eternal life, but they did not accept the offer. After they sinned, God drove man out of the Garden of Eden so that they could *not* “take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” (Genesis 3:22, *New King James Bible*, hereafter: “NKJB”).

The story of the sin of Adam and Eve is certainly well-known, but do

you realize that it also includes the very first recorded lie in Scripture? Satan, who is the father of lies (John 8:44), enticed Eve to eat from the forbidden fruit by assuring her that she would not die if she ate it. Remember that God had previously told Adam and Eve that they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “for in the day that you eat of it *you shall surely die.*” (Genesis 2:17, NKJB). The devil, however, challenged the accuracy of God’s statement, and told Eve, “*You will not surely die.*” (Genesis 3:4, NKJB). Eve believed Satan, and she and her husband ate from the fruit. As a consequence, both of them died (Genesis 3:19; Genesis 5:5).

The fact that man was not permitted to eat from the tree of life, and that he died as a result, shows that he was not, nor did he have within him, an immortal soul that continued to live on after death. But those called by God *can* obtain what Adam and Eve were not permitted to obtain then—immortality. They do not have it yet, but God is offering it to them. 1 Corinthians

15:52–53 tells us that the dead will be “raised incorruptible,” and that at the time of their resurrection, “this mortal” will *put on* “immortality” or “deathlessness” (“*athanasia*” in the Greek). Only then will death have ceased to exist for them (1 Corinthians 15:54).

The Bible clearly teaches us that the “wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23). Since we have all sinned (cp. Romans 3:9–10), we have all “earned” death as a “reward.” God must eradicate the death penalty hanging over our heads, and grant us *eternal life*. And so we read, in Romans 6:23, second part, “. . .but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (because of His sacrifice that grants us, upon acceptance, forgiveness of our sins).” 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 42, clearly tells us *how* we can have eternal life:

“For since by man (Adam and Eve) came death, by man (Jesus Christ) came also the *resurrection* of the dead. For as in Adam all die (because all have sinned), even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . So also is the *resurrection* of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is *raised* in incorruption. . . .”

People die and must be brought back to life. *But Satan told Eve, in effect, that she could not die because she had an immortal soul and was incapable of dying.* Rather than viewing immortality or deathlessness as

something that had to be *obtained* from God, *Eve erroneously believed that she, or her soul within her, was already immortal.* She believed Satan’s first recorded lie—and almost everyone has believed that lie, or a variation of it, ever since. Even most professing Christians today believe that they have an immortal soul, a concept that is virtually *universally* accepted by almost all *non-Christian* religions as well.

THE UNIVERSAL IDEA OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL

In ancient times, people viewed the shadow of a person as his immortal soul, a belief still held today by some so-called “primitive” tribes. The natives of Greenland used to believe that every man has two souls—his shadow was one of the two souls that would leave the person during the night and return in the morning. Certain Native Americans believed that the soul, after it had left a sleeping person, would actually *experience* what the person dreamed. It was therefore prohibited to awaken a sleeping person abruptly, as it was feared that in such a state, his soul might not be able to return quickly enough to the body. Likewise, one was not allowed to carry a sleeping person to another location, or to place a mask on his face, so as not to prevent the soul from finding or rightly identifying the body.

Natives in China believed that the soul of a sick person might leave him, and it was commonly thought that the soul might leave the body when the sick person sneezed. In that case, a magical formula would be said in order to prevent the soul from departing. Natives in the Philippines once believed that the souls of dead people lived in trees, so they would bow down before trees when they heard the wind in the leaves.

Funk & Wagnall's New Encyclopedia, Vol. 24, states under "Soul": "Belief in some kind of soul that can exist apart from the body is found in all known cultures. In many contemporary nonliterate societies, human beings are said to have several souls—sometimes as many as seven—localized in different parts of the body and having diverse functions. Disease is frequently explained as 'soul-loss,' which can occur, for example, when witches steal the soul, or evil spirits capture it."

This encyclopedia goes on to say that early Hinduism identified the soul or "*atman*" with the divine, "adding an eternal dimension to the soul. Bound up with matter, the human soul is caught in the cycle of reincarnation until it achieves purification" and enters "Nirvana."

According to the teachings of Islam and of the Koran, "God breathed the soul into the first

human beings, and at death the souls of the faithful are brought near to God." On the other hand, Buddhism "has no conception of a soul or self that can survive death."

JUDAISM EMBRACES THE IDEA OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL

Although most adherents of the Jewish faith today believe in an immortal soul, this was not originally the case. Ancient Judah considered the soul to be "mortal." The word "soul" was associated with the concept of "breathing" and "oxygen" [similar to the Latin word "anima," from which the German word "Atem" is derived, which means "breath."]. In fact, in Job 41:21, a close association between "soul" and "breath" is clearly conveyed. When talking about the creature Leviathan, God says, beginning with Verse 20, "Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His *breath* kindles coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth." The Hebrew word here for "breath" is "*nephesh*," and as we will see later on, this word—used throughout the Old Testament—has been translated as "soul" on many occasions.

It was only after Persian and Greek philosophies influenced Judaism that we find a gradual adaptation of the concept of an *immortal* soul. The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI (1941) points out on pp.

564 and 566, “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere taught in Holy Scripture... The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with *Greek thought* and chiefly through the *philosophy of Plato*, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended.”

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* agrees, “We are influenced always more or less by the *Greek, Platonic idea* that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness, and it is nowhere found in the [Hebrew scriptures].” (ed. 1960, Vol. II, p. 812)

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY EMBRACES THE IDEA OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL

According to Catholic belief, the immortal soul enters a person at the time of conception, having been directly and individually created by God with free will and consciousness. The individual soul is present in its totality in each and every organ of the person. Proofs for the accuracy of the teaching of the immortality of the soul are mainly given in light of,

1) alleged appearances of dead people; 2) the universal belief in such a concept; and 3) the biblical statement [discussed herein] that “man cannot destroy the soul.” (Matthew 10:28). Originally, Catholics believed that the soul of a dead person enters heaven or hell immediately at the time of death—the idea of a purgatory only became dogma in A.D. 590. Most Protestant denominations, following to a large extent the lead of the Catholic Church in this regard, believe in the immortality of the soul as well.

Orthodox Christianity adopted the concept of an immortal soul from pagan beliefs. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* points out in its 1992 edition, on p. 1037, “Speculation about the soul in the subapostolic church was heavily influenced by *Greek philosophy*.”

Again, quoting from *Funk & Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia*, Vol. 24, article on “Soul”: “The Christian doctrine of the soul has been strongly influenced by the [Greek] philosophies of *Plato* and *Aristotle*... 13th century theologian Thomas Aquinas... accepted Aristotle’s analysis of the soul and body as two conceptually distinguishable elements of a single substance.”

One of the early proponents of the concept of the immortality of the soul was a Catholic church father by the name of Origen (c. 185–254

A.D.). Around 200 A.D. he claimed that “souls are immortal,” stating at the same time that he was a “Platonist who believed in the immortality of the soul.” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IV, pp. 314, 402).

Further, as we point out in our free booklet, “*Don’t Keep Christmas*,” followers of the Greek god Mythra believed in an immortal soul as well. Many of those pagan beliefs associated with Mythra were later adopted by, and absorbed into, Orthodox Christianity.

SOME REJECT THE CONCEPT OF AN IMMORTAL SOUL

We have briefly noted the many different concepts that man has held regarding the immortality of the soul, and there is, indeed, an astounding array of false ideas and misconceptions about this subject. But despite the strong universal influence, there have been some down through history who did not believe in any of these concepts. For example, Arnobius, a Catholic writer, spoke against those who held the “extravagant opinion of themselves that souls are immortal.” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VI, p. 440).

Also, at the time of the Reformation, William Tyndale put it quite succinctly when he wrote, “In putting departed souls in heaven, hell or purgatory, you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and

Paul prove the *resurrection*... The true faith putteth the resurrection; the *heathen philosophers*, denying that, did put that souls did ever live... *If the soul be in heaven, tell me what cause is there for the resurrection?*”

Another Reformer who questioned the immortality of the soul was Martin Luther. He declared that the Bible did not teach the immortality of the soul, and he suggested that the soul died with the body, and that God would hereafter raise both the one and the other. He wrote in 1522, “It is probable, in my opinion, that... *indeed the dead sleep in utter insensibility till the day of judgment*... On what authority can it be said that the souls of the dead may not sleep... in the same way that the living pass in profound slumber the interval between their downlying at night and their uprising in the morning?” (Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 133).

While most Protestants today have long forgotten these words of Martin Luther, some Christian groups today still do not teach the immortality of the soul. The Seventh-Day Adventists, for example, do not believe that the soul of a dead person continues to live a conscious life. The Sabbath-keeping Church of God organizations, likewise, universally reject the concept of an immortal soul.

With such a wide variety of ideas and opinions, how can we know what to believe? How can we conclusively determine the truth of the matter? We'll go to the source of truth, the Bible, the words of God Himself.

OCCURRENCES OF THE WORD "SOUL" IN THE BIBLE

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word "*nephesh*" has been translated as "soul" in many cases, but not *always*. "*Nephesh*" is used, either alone or in combination with other words, 723 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Authorized Version of the King James Bible, however, only translates it 428 times as "soul." Otherwise, more than 25 different renditions and variations are used. This means that *almost 300 times, the Hebrew word "nephesh" is not translated as "soul" in the Authorized Version.*

In the New Testament, the Greek word that has been translated as "soul" in many cases, and conveys the same meaning as the Hebrew "*nephesh*," is "*psyche*." The Greek word "*psyche*," or a variation of the word, is used 103 times in the New Testament. However, the Authorized Version only renders it 58 times as "soul," while it translates it 40 times as "life," 3 times as "mind," and once each as "heart" or "heartily."

We will now begin a detailed

study in *how* the Bible uses the words "*nephesh*" and "*psyche*" in order to see the meaning conveyed about the soul. In this way, we will also gain a better understanding of the subject of immortality that needs to be bestowed by God to man as a gift.

We will see in this study that the word "soul," or the Hebrew word "*nephesh*," as well as the Greek word "*psyche*," applies to men and animals alike, and can refer to either a living or a dead person or animal. The soul is a "living being" as long as the being is alive. We will read where man *became a living soul* when he was created, but that when he dies, he becomes a *dead soul*, and that a *dead soul* does not continue to live. Insofar as the word "soul" describes "life," it is always temporary life. We will learn that the word "soul" can be a reference to the living, breathing person or animal, but it can also be a reference to the psyche of the living creature; it can describe the heart—the feelings and motivations. We will also learn that when the soul dies, it goes into the grave or the pit, and that death is a state of silence without consciousness, knowledge, activity or planning. We will find that a dead soul decays, or experiences "corruption," and that, in order to live again, God must bring the soul or the person back to life through a resurrection from the dead. Finally, we will learn the truth

on the grossly misunderstood subject of “hell” and the fate of the wicked, and whether or not “communication with dead people” is possible.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDY OF “SOUL”

We will begin our study with a look at Old Testament Scriptures, where we will learn conclusively that man’s soul is *not immortal*, and neither is it a conscious element or entity within man. Simply stated, **the soul is the temporary, physical person, with all of his desires, wants and feelings.**

The Hebrew Word for Soul Applies to Animals

The very first time that the word “*nephesh*” is used in the Old Testament is in Genesis 1:20 where God says, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of *living* creatures.” (NKJB). The word for “living” is a translation of “*nephesh*.” It applies here to living *water animals*. The Authorized Version translates this passage as follows, “And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath *life* (“*nephesh*” or a “soul.”).”

Continuing with verse 21, in the NKJB, “So God created great *sea creatures*.” The word for “creatures” is “*nephesh*.” The entire phrase could be translated, in context, as “*sea souls*.” Again, in verse 24, we read,

“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living *creature* according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth.’” (NKJB). The word for “creature” is “*nephesh*,” so here the word for “soul” applies to *land animals, including creeping things*.

Notice, too, this interesting passage in Genesis 1:30, “Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is *life*, I have given every green herb for food.” (NKJB). The word for “*life*” is “*nephesh*” in Hebrew. So we read here that there is a “soul” in creeping things, as well as in the beasts of the earth and the birds. But this does not say that creeping things have *immortal* souls. Rather, as long as they are creeping around, they are *alive*.

So the Bible, at its very beginning, applies the word “*nephesh*” or “soul” to animals in four places, including those animals that creep on the earth. Notice that when God created the animals, they were living souls. He did not create animals as dead bodies that He then made alive. That is why God said at the very beginning, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature which has “*life*” or a “soul.”

After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah that would have benefits for animals as well. God said in Genesis 9:9–10 and 16,

“And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth... And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” In both cases where the word “creature” is used, the Hebrew word is “*nephesh*.” God again says that living animals are living *souls*.

Notice also in Leviticus 11:10–11, where God tells us what kind of seafood we are not to eat, “And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing [or “*soul*”—“*nephesh*” in the Hebrew] which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you... ye shall not eat of their flesh.”

Again, God emphasizes in Leviticus 11:46 that animals, whether sea animals or land animals, are “souls,” when He says, “This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature [“*nephesh*”] that moveth in the waters, and of every creature [“*nephesh*”] that creepeth upon the earth.”

In Isaiah 19:10, the word “*nephesh*” or “*soul*” is again used for *sea creatures*, “And they shall be

broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for *fish*.” The word translated “*fish*” is “*nephesh*” in the Hebrew. In Leviticus 24:18, the word “*nephesh*” is applied three times to domestic animals or “*beasts*”: “And he that killeth a *beast* shall make it good; *beast* for *beast*.”

Man Became a Living Soul

When God created man, He created him as a lifeless or a dead person. God then breathed into man’s nostrils and man *became* alive. Notice how this is described in Genesis 2:7, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living *soul* [“*nephesh*”].”

When man was created, he was not yet alive, unlike the animals when they were created. Only when God breathed air into his nostrils did man become alive—he became a *living soul*. Before that, he was a *lifeless soul*.

The Life, or Soul, Is in the Blood

Notice how the Bible describes the human or animal soul in relationship to human or animal life. Genesis 9:4–5 reads, “But flesh with the *life* [“*nephesh*” or “*soul*”] thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of *your lives* [“*nephesh*” or “*souls*”] will I

require... at the hand of every man's brother will I require the *life* [*nephesh* or "soul"] of man."

Notice, too, in Leviticus 17:11, 14, "For the *life* [*nephesh* or "soul"] of the flesh is in the blood... for the *life* [*nephesh* or "soul"] of all flesh is the blood thereof."

Finally, note Deuteronomy 12:23, "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is *the life* [*nephesh* or "soul"]; and thou mayest not eat *the life* [*nephesh*] with the flesh."

First, we see from these passages that **one can eat the soul**—the blood—but that one *should not*. Then, we are told that a man or an animal is alive as long as their blood circulates within them. If one loses too much blood, one dies. So the blood keeps the person or the animal—the SOUL—alive. The soul, or the life, is equated with the blood. It is physical, and it cannot mean that the soul will keep living when the body dies.

Man IS a Soul

The concept that persons ARE souls is expressed in many passages, when they are translated correctly. Genesis 12:5 reads, "And Abraham took... the *souls* [*nephesh*] that they had gotten in Haran." Here the word "souls" describes people.

The same is expressed in Genesis 14:21, "And the king of Sodom said

unto Abram, Give me the *persons* [lit. "souls" or "*nephesh*" in the Hebrew], and take the goods to thyself."

Note how Genesis 46:15–27 equates "souls" with "persons": "(15) These be the sons of Leah... with his daughter Dinah: all the *souls* [*nephesh* throughout] of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three... (18) These are the sons of Zilpah... even sixteen *souls*... (22) These are the sons of Rachel... all the *souls* were fourteen... (25) These are the sons of Bilhah... all the *souls* were seven. (26) All the *souls* that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the *souls* were threescore and six; And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two *souls*: all the *souls* of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten."

Exodus 1:5 confirms this, "And all the *souls* [*nephesh*] that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy *souls* [*nephesh*]: for Joseph was in Egypt already."

In Exodus 12:4 we read God's instructions regarding the Passover, "And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the *souls* [*nephesh*]."

Notice also in Exodus 12:16 and realize how the word "soul" describes

the physical person—it does *not* at all describe anything that is immortal. “...no manner of work shall be done in them [on the first and seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread], save that which every *man* must eat, that only may be done of you.” The word “*man*” is a translation of the Hebrew word, “*nephesh*.” So, the correct rendering would be, “...save that which every *soul* must eat.” **The soul must eat something in order to stay alive. It’s not immortal, but rather physical.**

Note these additional examples, clearly proving that the word “soul” describes the physical, temporary person—not something immortal within the person:

(1) “Or if a *soul* [“*nephesh*”] touch any unclean thing... he also shall be unclean.” (Leviticus 5:2). “...the *soul* [“*nephesh*”] that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.” (Leviticus 7:18). “But the *soul* [“*nephesh*”] that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings... even that *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall be cut off from his people.” (Leviticus 7:20). “Moreover the *soul* [“*nephesh*”] that shall touch any unclean thing... even that *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall be cut off from his people.” (Leviticus 7:21). “For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast... even the *soul* [“*nephesh*”] that eateth it shall be cut off from his people.” (Leviticus 7:25). “Whatsoever *soul* [“*nephesh*”] it be that eateth

any manner of blood, even that *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall be cut off from his people.” (Leviticus 7:27). “And every *soul* [“*nephesh*”] that eateth that which died of itself... he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.” (Leviticus 17:15). “The *soul* [“*nephesh*”] which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water.” (Leviticus 22:6). **These scriptures show that a soul can physically touch something unclean and be considered unclean as well. The soul can also eat food and bathe.**

(2) “Or if a *soul* [“*nephesh*”] swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce...” (Leviticus 5:4). “For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the *souls* [“*nephesh*”] that commit them shall be cut off from among their people.” (Leviticus 18:29). “...his life abhorreth bread, and his *soul* [“*nephesh*”] dainty meat.” (Job 33:20). **We learn from this that a soul can swear and that a soul can abhor food. Again, all of these characteristics describe a physical being—not something immortal within the physical being.**

The Soul CAN Die!

Notice in Ezekiel 18:4, “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 shall die...**” And God repeats this fundamental statement in verse 20 to make sure we understand Him. **Once dead, the living soul has become a dead soul.**

The biblical teaching is that the soul can be put to death. Leviticus 24:17 reads, “And he that killeth any man [*“nephesh”* or “soul”] shall surely be put to death.” In other words, the *soul* that kills another *soul* must be *killed itself*.

Notice, too, the following two statements from the books of Exodus and Leviticus:

“Ye shall keep the sabbath [the weekly Sabbath—the time from Friday evening to Saturday evening] therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that *soul* [*“nephesh”*] shall be cut off from among his people.” (Exodus 31:14). “And whatsoever *soul* [*“nephesh”*] it be that doeth any work in that same day [the Day of Atonement—an *annual* Sabbath], the same *soul* [*“nephesh”*] will I destroy from among his people.” (Leviticus 23:30). **Here we see again that a soul is subject to death.**

David knew, too, that his “soul,” his life, *could* be killed. In Psalm 22:20, he prays, “Deliver my *soul* [*“nephesh”*] from the sword.” David also expressed

this thought, “...none can *keep alive* his own *soul* [*“nephesh”*].” (Psalm 22:29). A strange statement indeed, if man *already had an immortal soul!*

Job, too, made a revealing statement showing that he did not believe in the immortality of the soul. This is interesting, as he did believe, on the other hand, in a resurrection from the dead (cp. Job 14:14–15). In Job 7:15, we read, “So that my *soul* [*“nephesh”*] chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.”

Another revealing statement is made in Deuteronomy 19:11–12. Reading from the Authorized Version, one would not realize that the original text shows the *mortality* of the soul, “But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him *mortally* that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities [of refuge]: then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.” The Hebrew word here for “*mortally*” is “*nephesh*.” The rendering “*mortally*” accurately reflects the meaning conveyed in this passage—namely, that the soul is mortal and can die—it is not immortal, living on forever. The *New Revised Standard Version* translates it this way, “... and takes the *life* of that person...” The *Revised English Bible* says, “...and strikes him a *fatal blow*...”

The Hebrew Word for Soul Also Applies to DEAD Persons

We find that the word “*nephesh*” is used for *dead* persons, as well as living persons. This should not surprise us by now, as the soul referred to can be alive or dead. We read in Leviticus 19:28, “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the *dead* [“*nephesh*” or “soul”], nor print [tattoo] any marks upon you.”

In relationship to the special Nazarite vow, a Nazarite could not touch a dead person for the duration of his vow. We read in Numbers 6:6, “All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD he shall come at no *dead body* [“*nephesh*” or “dead soul”].”

Notice, too, in Numbers 19:11 and 13, “He that toucheth the *dead body* [“*nephesh*” or “soul”] of any man [here the emphasis is on man, rather than animals] shall be unclean seven days... Whosoever toucheth the *dead body* [“*nephesh*” or “dead soul”] of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall be cut off from Israel...”

Note that one can touch the soul of a dead person! Think about it! How could this be, *if* the soul were the immortal part of the man within the man? According to Orthodox Christianity, the soul departs from the dead person at the time of his death. There is no way

that one could *touch a departing soul*. But the Bible teaches that the *soul* can be touched, and it can be dead or alive. So then, the ***soul is the person***. Again, it is not something immortal within the person.

The Hebrew Word for Soul Can Describe the Entire Person

As we have already seen, the word “*nephesh*” or “*soul*” describes many times the entire person—his whole being. Notice the following additional examples:

Genesis 12:13, “[Abram told Sarai:] Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall live because of thee.” Here, Abram equates “his soul” with himself. In saying that *his soul* should stay alive, he wished that *he* would stay alive. This shows, too, that he, as well as his soul, could die.

Notice, too, in Genesis 27:4, “[Isaac told Esau:] And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] may bless thee before I die.” Later, though, we are told that *Isaac* blessed Jacob, thinking it was Esau (v. 23). So again, Isaac’s statement that *his soul* would bless Esau meant that *he*, Isaac, would bless him. Isaac’s soul and Isaac were *one and the same*—in fact, Isaac *was* a soul.

In another example, Lot asked

the angels who had come to destroy Sodom and Gomorra to be able to flee to a nearby city, rather than into the mountains. In Genesis 19:20, he says, “Oh, let me escape thither. . . and my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall live.” He wanted to stay alive and to be as content as possible under the circumstances. It was *he* who wanted to “live”—and he equated himself with “his soul.”

The Hebrew Word for Soul Can Describe Human Feelings

We also find that the word “*nephesh*” or “soul” can emphasize the emotions or feelings of a person. In other words, the emotional or psychological aspects of a person are sometimes identified with his “soul.” The word “soul” still describes the person,—not something in the person—but it may emphasize from time to time what could otherwise be described with the “*heart*.”

Notice it in Genesis 34:3, 8, “And his [Shechem’s] *soul* [“*nephesh*”] clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel. . . And Hamor [father of Shechem] communed with them, saying, The *soul* [“*nephesh*”] of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter. . .”

A person has feelings. These feelings are sometimes described as originating in, and coming from, the *heart* or the *soul*. But this does not make the soul or the heart some-

thing separate from the person, something immortal that lives on when the person dies.

Notice in Genesis 44:30, “Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his *life* is bound up in the lad’s *life*. . . he will die.” A literal translation is, “seeing that his *soul* is bound up in the lad’s *soul*.” In both cases, the word is “*nephesh*” in the Hebrew. One could say in today’s language, “The two were one heart and one soul.” They had deep love and affection for each other.

Another example shows that when we become extremely frightened or fearful, it is sometimes presented in the Bible in such a way that “our soul” becomes afraid. Genesis 42:21 states, “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his *soul* [“*nephesh*”], when he besought us, and we would not hear.” Also, note Leviticus 26:16—a prophecy for today, addressing the modern tribes of Israel: “I [God] also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of *heart* [*soul* or “*nephesh*” in the Hebrew].”

The Authorized Version translates the Hebrew word “*nephesh*” 15 times as “*heart*.” In several cases, the emotional side of anguish, fear, grief

and anxiety is emphasized in those passages. Note a few examples:

“And the man of thine... shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart [“*nephesh*”].” (1 Samuel 2:33).

“Give... wine unto those that be of heavy hearts [“*nephesh*”].” (Proverbs 31:6).

“...and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart [“*nephesh*”] and bitter wailing.” (Ezekiel 27:31).

Consider, too, the following expression about the “soul,” showing that it can refer to the emotional part of man. The Israelites were complaining about lack of food in the wilderness stating, “But now our soul [“*nephesh*”] is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.” (Numbers 11:6).

Later, Moses would reassure the Israelites that they would have flesh to eat in the Promised Land. Note, though, how he expresses it in Deuteronomy 12:20, “When the LORD thy God shall enlarge your border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul [“*nephesh*”] longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatever thy soul [“*nephesh*”] lusteth after.” Again, Moses could have said, “...whatsoever you lust after.” The soul, then, is describing the person, with a certain emphasis, at times, on the emotions and desires of the person.

Note, too, Deuteronomy 23:24, “When thou comest into thy neighbour’s vineyard, then thou

mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure.” The word “*pleasure*” is translated from the Hebrew “*nephesh*,” showing the desires of the person.

In two places, the Authorized Version even renders the word “*nephesh*” with “*appetite*,” showing again the aspect of the fleshly desires of man. We read in Proverbs 23:2, “And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to *appetite* [“*nephesh*”].” Also, note Ecclesiastes 6:7, “All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the *appetite* [“*nephesh*”] is not filled.” The *Elberfelder Bibel* has the following annotation to Ecclesiastes 6:7, “Literally, ‘his *soul* is not filled.’”

Perhaps now, we can better understand why God commands us to seek Him with all of our heart [Hebrew, “*lebab*”] and soul [“*nephesh*”] (Deuteronomy 4:29), and to love Him “with all thine heart [“*lebab*”], and with all thy soul [“*nephesh*”] and with all thy might [Hebrew, “*meod*”].” (Deuteronomy 6:5). This is just another way of saying that our entire being—everything we are, including our desires and emotions—must seek God and love Him beyond anyone or anything else.

The Hebrew Word for Soul Can Describe Emotions of Animals

We should also note that the word “soul” or “*nephesh*” does not

only describe the “emotional” side of man. This word is also used to describe the emotional side of *animals*.

Let’s read Jeremiah 2:24, describing a wild ass in its sexually active times. “A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her *pleasure*; in her occasion who can turn her away?” The word “*pleasure*” is a translation of the Hebrew word “*nephesh*”; the passage could therefore be literally translated, “. . .according to the lust of her *soul*.”

Notice, too, this passage in Proverbs 12:10, “A righteous man regardeth the *life* of his beast.” The word for “*life*” is the Hebrew “*nephesh*.” Here the thought is conveyed that the righteous person looks after the “soul” or the physical needs of his animals.

The Hebrew Word for Soul Can Describe God’s Feelings

God uses the Hebrew word “*nephesh*” to describe even His own emotions and feelings. However, it should be clear that there is not an immortal soul living in the immortal God, and it should be also clear that, insofar as God is concerned, His life is not dependent on blood circulating in His body. Rather, the meaning is conveyed here that “*nephesh*” or “*soul*” describes the very being of God, with His emotions and desires.

For example, in Leviticus 26:11, God says what would happen if Israel

would obey Him, “And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall not abhor you.” Conversely, if Israel should disobey, the consequences would be quite severe as given in Leviticus 26:15, 30, “And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your *soul* [“*nephesh*”] abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments. . . I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] shall abhor you.”

As Israel’s *soul* would abhor God’s judgment, so would God’s *soul* abhor Israel. The word “*soul*” here describes the innermost feelings of the persons, both of God and of man, not something immortal within the person.

Both Humans and Animals ARE Souls

There are passages in the Bible that refer to both animals and men as “souls” in the same context. Early in the Bible, right after we were introduced to the concept that the word “*nephesh*” can describe men in Genesis 2:7, we are told that the same word “*nephesh*” also describes animals. As we know by now, animals, too, are souls. We read in Genesis 2:19, “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air. . . and whatsoever Adam

called every living *creature* [*“nephesh”*], that was the name thereof.”

Notice in Numbers 31:28, “And levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: one *soul* [*“nephesh”*] of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves [cattle], and of the asses, and of the sheep.”

Also, Job 12:9–10, “Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? In whose hand is the *soul* [*“nephesh”*] of every living thing [including both men and animals], and the breath of all mankind.”

We learn that man and animals are alike when it comes to their physical composition. They are all souls, made out of the dust of the ground, and will all become dust again when they die. Ecclesiastes 3:19–20 points out, “For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.” (NKJB).

Unless God grants man immortality, or deathlessness, man will die just the same as the animals do. Both man and animals are souls. Man has no advantage over the animals *in this regard*. They all go to one place. [We should point out here, though, that

there *does* exist a fundamental difference between man and animals, but that difference is not the soul. To find out more about this extremely important subject, request our free booklet, “*The Theory of Evolution—A Fairy Tale for Adults?*”]

Does the Soul Depart at the Time of Death?

There is at least one passage that says that the soul departs from a person when the person dies. We read in Genesis 35:18–19, “And it came to pass, as her *soul* was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-o’-ni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried...”

This passage does not teach us that the soul of a person is immortal and continues to stay alive after the person has died. Remember, we learned that the *blood is the life*, or the soul, of the person. Once the blood stops circulating, the person dies. So this passage in Genesis tells us that the soul, or the LIFE, of the person departed—another way of saying that the person died. The German *Luther Bibel* translates this as, “When her *life* departed from her and she had to die...”

There are two additional passages that may imply, if not analyzed carefully, that the soul “departs” when a person dies. Jeremiah 15:9

reads, “She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the *ghost*; her sun is gone down while it was yet day.” Then in Job 11:20 we read, “But the eyes of wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the *ghost*.”

In both passages, the Hebrew word for “*ghost*” is “*nephesh*.” Does this mean that the soul, after it “departed,” continued to live? No, this is just another way of expressing the thought that the person *died*, that the person’s *life* ended. Note how the *New Jerusalem Bible* translates Job 11:20, “Their only hope is to *breathe* their last.” The *Revised English Bible* states, “Their only hope is *death*.”

Thus, we see that the word “*nephesh*” or “soul” can refer either to the fleshly person or to the life [blood] of the person. **“*Nephesh*,” then, describes our temporary, physical life, which we have in common with the animals, and which is supplied by the transfer of oxygen through the blood.**

THE “SOUL” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We will return to a few more Old Testament passages, involving the soul or related concepts, later in this booklet. At this point, let us turn to the pages of the New Testament. Do we learn something different there

about the soul? Does the New Testament teach us that our soul is immortal, and that it goes to God or to the devil at the time of our death? The Greek word translated as “soul” in the New Testament Scriptures is “*psyche*.” And, as we will see, it is used in the same way as the Hebrew Scriptures use the word “*nephesh*.” We will find confirmation in the New Testament of what we learned in the Old Testament.

Animals are Souls that Can Die

As in the Old Testament, we find proof in the New Testament that animals are called “souls” and that those souls can die. Revelation 8:9 states, “And the third part of the *creatures* which were in the sea, and had life, died.” The word for “creatures” is “*psyche*” in the Greek. So we could say, “The *souls* in the sea that had life, died.” Although men are included, the primary emphasis here is on sea *animals*.

Revelation 16:3 applies the word again to sea animals. Notice, “And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man, and every living *soul* died in the sea.”

The Greek Word for Soul Describes People

The New Testament also reveals that *people are souls*. Souls are not something *within* the people—rather,

souls *are* people. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, when talking about the resurrection from the dead, Paul quotes from the book of Genesis, telling us what man is and how man came into existence. We read, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul [“psyche”].” But this living soul, as well as all other living souls since Adam, *died, and have to be made alive again* (cp. v. 22). They have to be “raised up.” (vv. 35, 42).

And, as the man Adam was a soul, so other humans are also called “souls” in the New Testament. Stephen makes clear that the Hebrew word for soul, “*nephesh*,” is totally identical in meaning with the Greek word for soul, “*psyche*,” when he says in Acts 7:14, “Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen *souls* [“*psyche*].”

Notice this additional reference to the Old Testament in 1 Peter 3:20, “...when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight *souls* [“*psyche*”] were saved by water.” These eight “souls” or people, i.e. Noah, his wife, his three sons and his three daughters-in-law, were “saved” from the flood. They survived it, they stayed alive. This is not talking about eternal salvation, but rather preservation of their physical bodies.

Luke writes in the book of Acts

about Paul’s warning of a great storm and Paul’s subsequent reassurance to the shipmates that they would not die in the storm, “...Paul admonished them, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our *lives* [Greek “*psyche*” or “*souls*”]... And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s *life* [“*psyche*”] among you, but of the ship... And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen *souls* [“*psyche*].” (Acts 27:9–10, 22, 37).

In the 18th chapter of Revelation, the commercial side of the modern city of Babylon is described. In Verse 13, some of the items are listed with which modern merchants will trade, “...And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and *souls* [“*psyche*”] of men.” We see that they will trade with people—not only with slaves, but also with “free” men. They are not trading with some immortal element within the men.

Greek Word for Soul Describes Human Feelings

As with the Hebrew word “*nephesh*,” the Greek word “*psyche*” may describe the entire human being, or aspects of the person. It

may emphasize the feelings, emotions and desires of the heart, while other aspects of the person might be described in different terms.

We read in Acts 2:43, “And fear [awe or respect] came upon every soul [“*psyche*”]: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”

Romans 2:9–10 shows, too, that although the person *is* the soul, a special relationship is expressed or described between the soul and the person’s feelings, “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul [“*psyche*”] of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.”

The “soul of man” in the passage above is equated with “man,” and with “persons.” It’s all one and the same—but here it is especially the “soul” that will experience “*anguish*.”

Note, too, Revelation 18:14, “And the fruits that thy soul [“*psyche*”] lusted after are departed from thee.”

Again, the soul is equated with lusts for physical food, and with special feelings. It is the person, of course, who has those desires and feelings, but special emphasis is given to the psychological aspect of a person here, describing it as the “soul.” (Interestingly, the English word “*psychological*” is, in fact, derived from the Greek word “*psyche*.”)

When these psychological aspects are to be emphasized, the word “soul” is sometimes used in combination with other human aspects—but this does not make the “soul” an immortal element or entity within the man.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit [Greek “*pneuma*”] and soul [Greek “*psyche*”] and body [Greek “*soma*”] be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In dividing the person into three aspects or “components,” Paul did not address the issue as to whether some of the aspects were mortal or immortal. Rather, the “spirit” of the person describes his mind, the “body” describes his physical flesh, and the “soul” describes his “temporary physical life.” The Christians were asked to preserve blameless their minds, bodies and lives. To say that this verse teaches the immortality of the soul would mean that the “flesh” or the “body” would also have to be “immortal,” which it clearly is not, as we will prove from Scripture.

Matthew 6:25

Notice another “distinction” between the “soul” and the “body.” Jesus warned us in Matthew 6 not to

worry about our physical life. If we focus on God and His righteousness first, all necessary physical needs will be supplied (cp. also Matthew 6:33), “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought [of a worrying nature] for your *life* [Greek, “*psyche*”], what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body [Greek, “*soma*”], what ye shall put on. Is not the *life* [“*psyche*”] more than meat, and the body [“*soma*”] than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25).

Our *lives* or *souls* need to eat and drink in order to stay alive. Our bodies need to be clothed in order to be warmed and not get sick. God knows that we need food and clothing. But Christ tells us that we don’t exist *just* to look after our physical needs. We don’t *live* by bread alone, but by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Man’s *life* does not consist in, or depend on, the abundance of the things that he may possess (Luke 12:15). Our focus must be on GOD to meet our needs, rather than on the needs themselves.

If Matthew 6:25 teaches that the soul is immortal, does it also teach that the body is immortal? After all, Christ said in Matthew 6 not to worry about our *life* or our body. Nobody claims, though, that our bodies are immortal. We read in Romans 6:12: “Let not sin therefore reign in your *mortal* body [Greek “*soma*”].”

The Greek Word for “Soul” Refers to the Temporary Life of a Person

As we saw regarding the Hebrew word “*nephesh*,” the Greek word “*psyche*” also describes the physical life of people. Again, this life is always temporary—it never applies to immortal or eternal life.

We read in Acts 15:26, “Men... have hazarded their *lives* [“*psyche*”] for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is clearly a reference to *physical* life—it could not refer to any *immortal* soul, as the idea of an eternal soul within the person would of course not allow that the person could endanger his or her “immortal soul” by standing up for Jesus Christ—quite the opposite would be the case.

The same statement is made in Revelation 12:11, “And they [true Christians] overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their *lives* [“*psyche*”] unto the death.” Again, this refers to temporary lives—“*souls*” that could die. This cannot be a reference to a lack of love for their “immortal” souls. True Christians must be willing to *die* for Christ, if necessary. They must value their *physical* life less than Christ, so that they can *obtain* [not, give up or disregard] eternal life (cp. Luke 14:26, “If any man come to me, and hate not [a better rendering is,

“love less in comparison”] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, *yea, and his own life* [*psyche*] *also*, he cannot be my disciple.”)

Notice Matthew 16:24–26, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his *life* [*psyche*” or “*soul*”] shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his *life* [*psyche*” or “*soul*”] for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul* [*psyche*]”? or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul* [*psyche*]?”

Note that the translation is quite inconsistent here. The first two times “*psyche*” is translated with “*life*,” while it is subsequently rendered twice with “*soul*,” so as to imply some kind of “eternal” or “immortal” life. When looking at the entire passage in a consistent rendering, we see that it refers strictly to physical life. If one would want to accept the false concept of an immortal soul, it would be incomprehensible that one could lose his immortal soul “for the sake of Christ.” Christ tells us here that if we love our physical life more than Him, we will die—without the possibility of living forever. And then He explains that even from a logical human standpoint, this kind of “love” for one’s own physical life and

the world does not make sense—because our physical life could end in the next moment.

Christ makes this very point abundantly clear in Luke 12:18–20, showing that human souls can die, and that the soul and the person are one and the same. In this parable, a rich man had been blessed with a plentiful harvest. Rather than using it for the benefit of others, he contemplated how he could use it for himself, “And he said, This will I do: I will put down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my *soul* [*psyche*” throughout], *Soul*, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy *soul* shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”

Again, the reference to soul is as to a physical being, not an immortal being. The rich man said that his soul was to eat, drink and be merry because he had provided well for himself. Yet this man was going to die that same night. He was not willing to lay down his life for others, or, in his case, to share his wealth with others. He was not concerned about giving up his possessions for Christ. And so Christ gives the lesson in v. 21, “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward

God.” (Cp. Matthew 6:19–21, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”)

Let’s notice Paul’s example, showing his willingness to give up his “soul” for the sake of Christ *in order to obtain eternal life*. **He understood that the soul he was willing to “lose” was NOT an “immortal” soul.** Reading Paul’s words in Acts 20:22–24, “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit [he already foresaw this in a vision] unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost [Spirit] witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my *life* [“*psyche*” or “*my soul*”] dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Paul wanted to finish “his course” with joy, even if that meant to give up his physical life or “soul.” He knew what awaited him once he *had* finished his course, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a

crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6–8).

Paul knew that God would give him eternal life at the time of the “appearing”—the return of Christ and the resurrection of the just. He had shown God that he loved Him more than even his own physical life.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SOUL AT THE TIME OF DEATH?

We have seen biblical proof that the word “soul” refers to both man and animals, and that we all die the same. But what does happen to the soul at death? What is that “place,” referred to in Ecclesiastes 3:19–20 (discussed before), to where the souls of men and animals go? Does the Bible give so much as a hint that they would go to heaven or to an ever-burning hell, or to a place called purgatory or limbo at the time of death? Actually, the Bible reveals quite a different destination.

Notice Psalm 89:48, “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his *soul* [“*nephesh*”] from the hand of the grave?” The soul goes to the grave at the time of death. The Hebrew word for “grave” is “*sheol*.” It conveys the meaning of a grave or a pit. In fact, death is equated with the grave.

Notice Psalm 30:3, “O LORD, thou hast brought up my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] from the grave [“*sheol*”]: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” The Hebrew word for “pit” is “*bowr*” and has the meaning of “a pit hole.”

We read in Job 33:22, “Yea, his *soul* [“*nephesh*”] draweth near unto the grave [Hebrew “*shachath*”—a pit, corruption, destruction, ditch, grave—cp. Strong’s #7845], and his life to the destroyers.” When the soul goes to the grave or to the pit, it will be corrupted, or will decay. Again, this shows that the soul *is* the person.

Christ’s Soul did not See Decay and Corruption in “Hell”

Let’s notice how the New Testament describes the death of Christ. Christ’s soul—that is, the human being Jesus Christ—would go to the grave as well. However, Christ would not *stay* in the grave *to see corruption*, but He would be *resurrected* from the dead after three days and three nights. Acts 2:27 refers to Christ when quoting from Psalm 16:10: “Because thou wilt not leave my *soul* [“*psyche*”] in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption [decay].” The dead person or “soul”—Christ—was in the grave, in fact, in a tomb in which no one had been laid before. The Greek word here for “hell” is “*hades*” and means the grave. Christ would

not *stay* in the grave for such a long time that his body would decay.

Note how the *New International Version* (NIV) translates Acts 2:27, “You will not abandon *me* [Greek “*my soul*” or “*psyche*”] to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” The Greek word “*hades*” means the same thing as the Hebrew word “*sheol*”—it describes “the grave.”

Note, too, how the *Revised English Bible* (REB) renders this verse, showing that they understand, too, that the word “*hades*” describes the grave or death in general, “. . .for you will not abandon *me* [again in the Greek “*my soul*” or “*psyche*”] to death, nor let your faithful servant suffer corruption.”

The translation of “*hades*” as “hell” is misleading today, given the wrong association with the false modern concept of “hell.” However, when the King James Bible was written, the word “hell” simply meant a “hole in the ground”. People would talk about putting their potatoes “into hell” during winter. In German, the word for “hell” is “Hölle” and is closely associated with the word “Höhle,” meaning a “cave.”

We might also note something else: In replacing the term “my soul” with “me” in their translations of Acts 2:27, both the NIV and the REB show their understanding that these terms describe

one and the same—the person and the person’s soul are identical. It is the person who goes to the grave!

WE—Our Souls—Go to the Grave!

When we die, *we* go to the grave. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says to *you* that *you* won’t do anything “in the grave, whither **thou** goest.” Now notice Psalm 94:17, “Unless the LORD had been my help, my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] had almost dwelt in silence.” In other words, unless God would have helped, the soul would have died and gone to the grave.

Again, we see that the person and the soul of the person are one and the same. *Both* go to the grave, where there is silence and total lack of consciousness or activity. In other words, both *die*. That is why the Bible describes death consistently as a *dreamless sleep* [cp. John 11:11–14; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 27:52; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17]. God must awaken us out of that sleep of death in order for us to live again—and God will do so at the resurrection of the dead.

King Hezekiah fully understood what would happen to him and his “soul” when he died. Listen to his heart-rending prayer to God, pleading with Him to let him stay alive for a while. It’s recorded in Isaiah 38, beginning in Verse 10, “I said in the cutting off of my days, I

shall go to the gates of the grave [“*sheol*”]: I am deprived of the residue of my years. (11) I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living... (12) from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me... (17) Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my *soul* [“*nephesh*”] delivered it from the pit [Hebrew “*schachath*”] of corruption.”

The soul that dies will decay, or will see corruption, in the grave or the pit. The soul does not continue to live, nor does it go to heaven or to an ever-burning hell, ruled by Satan and his demons.

The Grave is a Place of Silence and Unconsciousness

The grave is described as a place of silence, without any activity, thought, or consciousness. The dead do *not even remember* God their Creator. Psalm 6:5 points out, “For in death **there is no remembrance of thee**: in the grave [“*sheol*”] who shall give thee thanks?”

Notice this additional statement in Psalm 115:17, “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.” These would be strange statements if it were true that souls of dead righteous people would keep on living a conscious life and go to heaven. Wouldn’t they give *God thanks upon their arrival in heaven*? And since when is heaven a place of

silence? But the Bible tells us that in death, they don't even *remember* God—or anything else, for that matter. [It is true, however, that each man has a spirit, and that spirit *does* go back to God in heaven when man dies.

However, the spirit in man does *not* remain conscious when man dies—and this spirit is *not* the soul, either. If you want to learn more about the amazing truth about the human spirit, request our free booklet, “*The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?*”]

Isaiah 38:18 reiterates that there is no activity in the grave—that to go in the grave is the same as to go into a “pit”—and that the grave and death are one and the same, “For the grave [*sheol*] can *not* praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.”

Ecclesiastes 9:10 tells us, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [*sheol*] wither thou goest.”

We are also told in Ecclesiastes 9:5 that, “...the dead know not any thing.”

Psalms 146:4 adds, “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

DID JESUS CHRIST HAVE AN IMMORTAL SOUL?

In spite of what we have learned so far, some will still insist that the

New Testament does teach that souls remain conscious after a person dies. Let's review, then, a few additional *New Testament* passages dealing with the death of Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus Christ came to die for our sins. If He had not died for us, we would not have a Savior. It was *His blood* that He willingly shed for us that paid for our sins. Knowing this, notice Matthew 20:27–28, “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his *life* a ransom for many.”

The word for “*life*” is “*psyche*” in the Greek—Christ gave His “*soul*” for us. He died for us *by shedding His blood*, and, as we already know, the blood *is* the soul (Deuteronomy 12:23). Christ did not give up an *immortal* soul for us. He gave His *physical life* for us. Take note of the fact that Isaiah prophesied that Christ would do just that. We read in Isaiah 53:12, “...he hath poured out his *soul* [Hebrew “*nephesh*”] unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors...”

Jesus Christ Gave His Life for Us

We read in several passages that Jesus said that He had come to die for us—to give *His life* for us. But what He really said has been obscured in most translations. For example:

John 10:11, “I am the good

shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his *life* for the sheep.” The word for “life” is “*psyche*” and literally means, “soul.”

John 10:15, “I lay down my *life* [“*psyche*” or “*soul*”] for the sheep.”

John 10:17–18, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my *life* [“*psyche*” or “*soul*”], that I might take it again. No man taketh it [Christ’s life or soul] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power [authority] to lay it down, and I have power [authority, right, entitlement] to take [receive] it again.” Christ was not talking here about an immortal soul that He would give up and later receive again.

Only Christ has Acquired Immortality Until Now

At this point, the *only* human being who has *acquired* immortality through a resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:3–4) is Jesus Christ, the “firstborn of many brethren.” Christ had been God eternally, but He *became* a Man in order to be able *to die* for man. Through the resurrection, He became God again, living today in a state of deathlessness, incapable of dying. (For more information, please request our free booklet, “*Is God a Trinity?*”).

We read in 1 Timothy 6:14–16, *Lamsa* rendering, “Obey this charge without spot and without stain until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be revealed in his

due time, blessed and almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, *who alone has immortality*, dwelling in the light that no man can approach, and whom no man has seen, nor can see [in His glorified state].”

Christ *died* and was *dead* in the grave. When here on earth as a human being, He did not *have* immortality. He *had given up* that immortality which He had had before. After His death, He *received life* from God the Father when He was resurrected (cp. Ephesians 1:19–20). See also John 3:13–15.

1 Peter 3:18–20

Some claim, however, that Christ was not really dead and in the grave, but that He—or His “immortal soul”—preached during the time of His “death” to the evil spirits in “hell.” They support this claim by referring to 1 Peter 3:18–20. Let’s notice, though, what this passage actually tells us:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to *death* in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: **By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.**”

Properly understood, this passage tells us that Christ, through His Spirit, preached to demons at the time of Noah. Demons are “imprisoned” spirits or spirit beings. It is their unrepentant and evil minds that hold them “captive.” They had become disobedient and rebellious, and they are *waiting now*, in spiritual “chains of darkness,” for their final judgment (cp. Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4; James 2:19).

Note these remarks from *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, copyright 1970, “. . . it can be argued from such passages as 2 Pet. 2:4–10; Jude 6. . . that the spirits in prison are the fallen angels, and that this interpretation is more consistent with the usage of the word *pneumata*, *spirits*, in Scripture when it occurs without qualification. This would seem on the whole the best interpretation of a difficult passage. . .”

The passage in 1 Peter 3: 19–20 teaches us that the preincarnate Christ preached to these wicked spirits or demons (cp. Ephesians 6:12), who had *disobeyed long ago*. Christ preached to them, though, at the time of Noah, when God’s patience or longsuffering “waited.” Please realize that in the original Greek text, there is no punctuation. Note how the *Interlinear Literal Translation* renders this passage (Admittedly, it sounds strange in English, but it is a literal, word-for-

word-translation from the Greek):

“... but made alive by the Spirit in which also to the in prison spirits *having gone* he preached disobeyed sometime when once was waiting the of God longsuffering in days of Noe being prepared ark. . .”

The Greek word “*kerusso*,” translated as “preached,” might be better rendered as “proclaimed.” The *New American Standard Bible* translates “*kerusso*” as “proclamation.” Christ apparently revealed, at the time of Noah, to the demons at least a part of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind and the eventual fate of the evil and disobedient spirits. Consider that Peter had pointed out earlier (in 1 Peter 1:12) that even obedient angels “*desire to look into*” the things contained in the gospel. If even obedient angels did not fully understand the gospel, how much more would this be true for the demonic world? Please realize that demons are cut off from God’s Holy Spirit by which He reveals spiritual truth!

This passage in 1 Peter 3:19–20 does not teach us that the “Spirit of Christ”—or His “immortal soul”—preached to spirits in hell *while Christ was dead and in the grave*. As we have seen, the Bible clearly teaches that Christ, or His Spirit, could *not have done so*, since a person is without consciousness, when in the grave. Neither does the passage teach us

that the *spirits or souls of wicked people are right now suffering in hell.*

We will discuss the fact that evil persons are *not* suffering in “hell” in more detail later in this booklet.

HUMAN SOULS DIE AND MUST BE BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

When people die, they are dead. Death is the opposite of life! In order to live again, dead people must be **resurrected** from the dead to either *physical* life or to *eternal* life.

In Revelation 20:4, both types of **resurrections** to physical life *and* to eternal life are discussed, with special emphasis on a **resurrection** to eternal life, “...and I saw the *souls* [“*psyche*”] of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus... and they lived [as spirit beings] and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead *lived not again* until the thousand years were finished [but *they* will be resurrected afterwards to physical life]. This is the **first** resurrection.” [This phrase refers to those *souls* that were brought back to life to reign with Christ for a thousand years.]

Notice that the souls that had been killed lived again. So the souls were dead, but they were brought back to life in a **resurrection from the dead**. How clear it is that persons are souls and that souls die. Souls do not continue to live on after death.

MORE THAN ONE RESURRECTION

God’s Word clearly reveals more than one resurrection. There is a spiritual resurrection to eternal life of those who are in Christ at the time of Christ’s coming (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). Those who are in that “**first**” resurrection will rule with Christ for a thousand years here on earth (Revelation 20:4; Revelation 5:10).

Since there is a “first” resurrection, there must at least be a “second” resurrection. And so we read that the rest of the dead won’t live until those thousand years have expired (Revelation 20:5). At that time, the vast majority of mankind will be resurrected into—what has been termed indeed—a “**second resurrection**.” This second resurrection is one to *physical* life (cp. Ezekiel 37 regarding the *physical* resurrection of the house of Israel). This “second resurrection” is also commonly referred to as “The Great White Throne Judgment” period. (Revelation 20:11–12). Those in this second resurrection will be given their first opportunity to accept Christ and to live by His word—a chance they never had in their former life. They will live for perhaps one hundred years, until their judgment is pronounced (Isaiah 65:20; Hebrews 9:27).

Following the “second resurrection,” there will be still another, or

“**third** resurrection” to physical life of all those who did know better, but sinned in total and deliberate defiance of God. They refused to repent and, instead, developed a malicious and hateful attitude towards God, making any repentance impossible. They are judged to have committed the “unpardonable sin” (more fully discussed below). It is they who are being thrown into a lake of fire, to be totally consumed by its flames (Revelation 20: 14–15).

Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16

The fact that God will resurrect everyone, but each in a certain order or time sequence (1 Corinthians 15:23, first sentence), including those who have committed the “unpardonable sin” (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28–29), is also clearly taught in the famous, albeit terribly misunderstood, parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–31). Some claim that this parable teaches that we have immortal souls that continue to live on after we die. However, in analyzing this parable carefully, we find that it teaches just the opposite.

Christ gave the parable to the Pharisees who were covetous (Luke 16:14). Luke 16:19–21 introduces us to a rich man who was covetous as well, and who did not care about others, including the hungry and sick

beggar Lazarus, who was laid at the gate of the rich man. Lazarus desired to at least eat the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table—but it appears that not even the crumbs were given to him by the rich man. Additionally, the rich man ignored the sickness of Lazarus—only the dogs would come to lick his sores.

Christ is picturing here a totally selfish person. This rich man reminds us somewhat of the selfish rich man of Luke 12:18–20 (discussed above), whom Christ introduced to us earlier. The rich man of Luke 16 committed the unpardonable sin and will eventually be thrown into the lake of fire to be burned with the wicked.

What is the Unpardonable Sin?

From other Scriptures we know that there are at least two ways in which the unpardonable sin can be committed.

Jesus warns us in Mark 3:28–29, not to “blaspheme” the Holy Spirit, regardless of whether we are converted or not. If we do, we reject the only power that can convert and change us. And if we continue with that course of action of resisting God and refusing to repent, then we might reach a point when it will become impossible for us to repent. We will then have made the final, irrevocable decision *never* to repent and to change. Such an attitude will lead to actual hate and resentment

for God and His way. You see, if we don't *want* to repent, God will not grant us repentance. And without repentance, there can be no forgiveness. That is why a sin which we refuse to repent of, will not be forgiven.

In addition, converted people who have received the gift of God's Holy Spirit, can commit the unpardonable sin, if and when they later fall away and irrevocably reject God's way of life (cp. Hebrews 6:4–6; Hebrews 10:26–29).

As long as we have the desire to go God's way and to change—as long as we hate the wrong things that we do—as long as we want God's Holy Spirit to enable us to overcome our sinful carnal nature, we have not committed the unpardonable sin. If, on the other hand, we have received understanding and then begin to reject that understanding and God's way of life, then we are walking on dangerous ground.

What is our attitude towards sin? Are we indifferent about it? Does it matter to us whether we sin or not? Do we try to justify sin, or to blame others for sin in our lives? This approach will never grant us favor with God—will never allow us to continue repenting of the wrong in our lives.

On the other hand, if we *love* God's way, if we *want* to go God's way, if we *want* God to help us to get rid of what's wrong with the way we are, then God

will help us—and we don't need to worry whether or not we have committed the unpardonable sin.

Christ, in his parable as recorded in Luke 16, portrays a rich man who is totally indifferent to sin and to the pain and suffering of others. Although Christ does not give us many details about the wicked life of the rich man (as He does not give us many details about the righteous life of Lazarus, either), it is clear from the context that the rich man has indeed committed the unpardonable sin—he has reached the final point of no return, as he has become unwilling to repent and to change.

Different Fates of Lazarus and the Rich Man

Luke 16:22 says that the beggar died and that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. It does not say that the beggar was "carried by the angels" into "Abraham's bosom" *immediately* at the time of his death. From other scriptures, we know that a considerable length of time passed between his death and the activity of the angels. In fact, Christ will send out His angels to gather the righteous at the time of His return and the resurrection of the just. Matthew 24:31 tells us, "And he [Christ] shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four

winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Why, then, does Christ say that the angels carried Lazarus “into Abraham’s bosom?” This term describes a close intimate relationship between two or more persons. Compare John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is *in the bosom of the Father*, he hath declared him.”

The Jews at the time of Jesus were familiar with this term, as it was used several times in the Old Testament to describe such a close personal relationship [cp. 2 Samuel 12:1–3; Isaiah 40:11; Numbers 11:12].

Luke 16:22 also tells us that the rich man died and was buried—presumably with great pomp and ceremony. Luke 16:23 explains that the rich man lifted up his eyes in “hell,” “being in torments,” and seeing Abraham “afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” Verse 24 goes on to tell us that the rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus “that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool” the tongue of the rich man, as he is “tormented in this flame.”

What Does Luke 16 Really Teach Us?

First of all, let’s notice that we are not told how much time passed between the death of the rich man and his lifting up of his eyes in “hell.”

The word “hell” is a translation of the Greek word “*hades*.” “*Hades*” is never associated in Scripture with “fire”—as we have already seen, it just describes the grave or death. What Christ is saying here is that the rich man lifted up his eyes, while in the grave—in other words, he is being resurrected from the dead. And when he opens his eyes from his “sleep” of death, he sees Abraham and Lazarus “afar off,” and he notices that flames are awaiting him. He is actually seeing the flames of the “lake of fire,” referred to in Revelation 20:14. He is close enough to experience some physical pain from the flames—but his real anguish and torment is one of a psychological nature. That is, he *knows* that he had committed the unpardonable sin and that he will now have to face the eternal consequences—a death from which there will be no resurrection.

What is being described here is the third resurrection. We read in Revelation 20:13–14 that “death and hell [*“hades”* in the Greek] delivered up the dead” (which would include the rich man), and that “death and hell [*“hades”* in the Greek] were cast into the lake of fire.” The rich man was resurrected to physical life to be cast into the lake of fire. And those who are to be cast into the lake of fire will suffer psychological torment when they face that moment. They will face “everlasting punishment”—

that is, a punishment with everlasting consequences for all eternity—their existence will end forever. (The fact that they will not suffer forever in a fiery hell is discussed in greater detail below.) Their *psychological* torment is described in Matthew 13:42, “They will be “cast...into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Luke 13:28 adds, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye [we might include here, “the rich man”] shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets [we might include here, the “beggar,” see below], in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.”

The parable of Luke 16 continues that Abraham does not honor the request of the rich man to send Lazarus to him. Instead, Abraham points out that “there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” (vv. 25–26).

This great gulf that is “fixed” is the difference between mortality and immortality. Those who are with Abraham at that time are immortal spirit beings in the Kingdom of God. (If you want to learn more about your potential to become an immortal spirit being in the Kingdom of God, write for our free booklet, “**The Gospel of the Kingdom of God**.”) Those who are like the rich man are

mortal, destined to die the eternal death. Their fate is sealed. Nothing can change or reverse that *final* decision. The immortal spirit being cannot become mortal again, and the mortal physical being cannot become immortal.

In Luke 16:27–28, the rich man asks that Lazarus be sent to his brothers to warn them about what would await them if they ended up like he. Abraham denies that request (v. 29) because by that time it is *too late*. The third resurrection occurs *after* everyone, including the rich man’s brothers, have had their chance.

Realize here that the rich man has had no consciousness while dead in the grave. He did not know how much time had gone by. He died, and insofar as his consciousness is concerned, he woke up within the next second. So he insists again that Abraham send Lazarus to warn his relatives (v. 30). And Abraham responds, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, *though one rose from the dead*.” (v. 31).

We see, then, that this parable is about people who die and about the resurrection from the dead. It does not talk about people’s souls that are conscious and alive, while the persons are dead. Quite to the contrary, it addresses *resurrections from the dead*.

A FIERY ETERNAL HELL?

But, you might ask, don't the wicked go to hell? Did not Christ say very clearly, in Matthew 10:28, that we can be cast into *hell*? And doesn't this mean, then, that the rich man is going to suffer for all eternity in the flames of the lake of fire?

Matthew 10:28

Let's notice what Matthew 10:28 does say: "And fear not them which kill [*apokteino*] the body [*soma*], but are not able to kill [*apokteino*] the *soul* [*psyche*]: but rather fear him which is able to destroy [*apollumi*] both *soul* [*psyche*] and body [*soma*] in hell [*gehenna*]."

Some have used this passage as support for their idea that "immortal souls" of the wicked will be tortured for all eternity in hell. But let's notice what the passage actually does teach us. First, Christ tells us not to *fear* those who can "kill" [in Greek, *apokteino*] the body, but not the "soul."

Meaning of the Greek Word "Apokteino"

The Greek word for "kill" (*apokteino*) is translated in the Authorized Version 55 times with "kill," 14 times with "slay," and six times with "put to death." In every case, it refers to the "killing" of a mortal human being, mostly by humans. It never refers to the extermination of a human being for

all eternity without the possibility of a resurrection. This becomes very clear in the parallel passage in Luke 12:4–5, where we read, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill [*apokteino*] the body [*soma*], and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed [*apokteino*] hath power to cast into hell [*gehenna*]; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

Luke 12:5 is one of the very few places where the word for "kill" or *apokteino* is used in connection with God. As we mentioned, normally it refers to killing by and through man. But we clearly see that something more happens after the "killing" of the physical body. Luke 12:5 says that God has power to "cast into hell." Matthew 10:28 says that God has power to "destroy [in the Greek, *apollumi*] both soul and body in hell."

Meaning of the Greek Word "Appollumi"

The Greek word for "destroy," *apollumi*, is rendered in the Authorized Version with, "destroy" [23 times] or "be destroyed" [three times]; with "lose" [28 times] or "be lost" [three times]; with "be marred" [one time]; with "perish" [33 times]; and with "die" [one time]. Although this word has a wide variety of

meanings, including certainly the “killing” of a physical human, it also *includes* the *final judgment* of men, and even demons. The following examples show that the word “*apollumi*” can refer to the final extermination of humans from which there is no further resurrection back to life.

In Romans 14:15, Paul warns us not to “destroy” [*apollumi*] in the Greek] our brother spiritually. Since judgment has *begun* at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), if we who have been enlightened with the truth fall away, we can only look forward to the final condemnation of God that will “devour” us (Hebrews 10:26–27). The word for “devour” is “*esthio*” in the Greek and means, lit., to “eat” or to “eat up.” It is used many times to describe people eating food. Once the food is eaten, it’s gone. It does not continue to exist forever and ever in the stomach of the person who has eaten it. That is why the “destruction” Paul is talking about in Romans 14:15, is one with *final* spiritual consequences.

In addition, James 4:12 tells us that God is the one who “is able to save and to *destroy* [Greek, “*apollumi*].” God can save our physical lives and even give us *eternal* life, or He can *destroy* our lives in a final judgment and give us *eternal* death.

Notice, too, this interesting passage in Matthew 5:29, “And if thy

right eye offend thee [tempts you to sin], pluck it out, and cast it from thee [don’t use it to look at tempting things]: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should *perish* [Greek “*apollumi*”], and not that thy whole body [“*soma*”] should be cast into hell [“*gehenna*].”

We must “destroy” our eye once and for all—that is, we must stop using it for sinful purposes. This is, of course, not talking about literally “plucking out” our eyes—it is a *figurative* way of saying that we must stop using our eyes or other members of our bodies for sinful purposes. Romans 6:19 (NKJB) tells us: “For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” We could, of course, not present our members as “slaves of righteousness,” if we pluck them out and cut them off our bodies.

Notice, too, that the *Lamsa* translation explains that the terms “plucking out your eye” and “cutting off your right hand” are *Aramaic idioms, meaning “stop envying” and “stop stealing.”*

Christ alludes, in Matthew 5:29, to our final commitment that we make at the time of our baptism. Otherwise, if we don’t overcome sin, God will cast “our whole body” into “hell.” But isn’t that strange—have

you not been told that only your “soul” would be cast into hell, when you die, while your body is dead and in the grave? The truth is, God is addressing here the *final* fate of *both* “body and soul”—that is—of the *entire being or person*.

When God *gives* us eternal life, we will *not perish* or be destroyed. Note this in John 10:28, “And I give unto them eternal life [we don’t have it yet—we do not have an immortal soul within us]; and they shall never *perish* [Greek, “*apollumi*].”

Returning to Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4–5, we can understand what God is telling us. We need not fear man who can only kill us, taking away our physical lives. That is all man can do—man cannot prevent God from resurrecting us from death to give us life again. Instead, we must fear God, who not only can take away our physical lives, but who can also throw us—both “body *and* soul”—into “hell,” taking away our opportunity for eternal life.

Notice, too, that in Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4–5, as well as in Matthew 5:29 (discussed above), the Greek word for “hell” is “*gehenna*,” not “*hades*.”

Meaning of the Greek Word “Gehenna”

The word “*gehenna*” and the very concept of it are derived from the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem

in which the corpses of dead people, mainly criminals, would be burned up. It is another expression for the “lake of fire” in Revelation 20:15, in which all who have acted wickedly, and who have refused to repent, will be thrown into, to be burned up or “devoured.” (Remember that Hebrews 10:27, discussed above, tells us that the wicked wait for God’s *fiery* indignation that will “devour” them.). That is the “hell” or the “*gehenna*” fire that Christ is talking about here—“the second death” from which there will be no resurrection.

Those who sin deliberately, willfully and maliciously, God will resurrect to physical life to throw them—their physical *body* and their *soul* or their “*life*”—into “*gehenna*” or the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13–15; 21:8). They won’t burn there forever—rather, they will be burned up. They are the “chaff,” that will be “burned up” with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12)—that is, no human can quench it. Notice that this fire will ultimately even burn up or bring to dissolution “heaven and earth,” so that a “new heaven and a new earth” can be created by God (2 Peter 3:10–13).

The wicked, such as the rich man in Christ’s parable in Luke 16, will not burn forever and ever, for all eternity, in an everlasting hell fire, but they will be “*burned up*” (cp. again Matthew 3:12). The Greek word for “burned up” is “*katakaio*”—

conveying the meaning that nothing of what is burned up will remain. We read in Revelation 18:8 that modern Babylon “shall be *utterly burned* with fire.” The word for “utterly burned” is, again, “*katakaio*” in the Greek. And we are told that “that great city Babylon [will] be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” (Revelation 18:21). In the same way, the wicked, such as the rich man in Luke 16, that are thrown into “*gehenna*” or the lake of fire, will be “burnt up”—they “shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall *burn them up*... that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” (Malachi 4:1). They will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Malachi 4:3); it will be as if they had never existed (Obadiah 16).

THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR

It is true that Revelation 6:9–11 talks about “souls” of dead martyrs that “speak” to God and ask for speedy intervention. But Revelation 6:9–11 is clearly a vision. The “souls” are figuratively pictured as if they were speaking, in the same way the blood of Abel is pictured, as if it spoke and still speaks to God (Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 12:24).

When a soul dies, it is “sleeping.” It does not continue to live a conscious life. That Revelation 6:9–11 cannot be taken literally is also

clearly seen by the fact that the souls are laying “under the altar” of God, and that they are told to “rest” and lay there “yet for a little season.” This altar of God is in heaven (Revelation 8:1–5). We already know from Scripture, however, that the souls go to the grave, here on earth, when they die—not to the altar of God in heaven. Peter stated that David is still dead and buried (Acts 2:29), and that he did not ascend to heaven when he died (Acts 2:34). But David *will* be alive again—when he is raised from the dead *at the time of the resurrection of the just* (cp. Jeremiah 30:9). Also, Jesus told Nicodemus that no one has ascended to heaven (John 3:13).

The souls are pictured as lying under the heavenly altar, just as the physical altar in Israel protected life. While one touched the horns of the physical altar, he could not be killed. The dead in Christ, who have been martyred for Him, sleep, or are dead, with the assurance that they will be resurrected to *eternal* life. As Christ said earlier, they will inherit eternal life, and no man can pluck them out of His hand (John 10:28).

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE DEAD?

Some say that dead people must still be alive after death, and therefore must have an immortal soul, because the gospel was preached to

the dead. To support their claim, they quote 1 Peter 4:6, which reads, “For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

Note that the Scripture says that the gospel WAS preached to them that ARE dead. They are dead NOW, but they were alive when the gospel WAS preached to them.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEAD

Many feel, though, that the appearances of the “spirits” or “ghosts” of those that have died prove the immortality of the soul and a conscious life after death. In fact, as we learned in the beginning of this booklet, this “fact” is one of the proofs given by the Catholic Church that man has an immortal soul. Many have been *confused* about this subject and feel that communication with the dead *does* happen. They state that Scripture supports the possibility of communication with departed spirits or souls. But does it?

The attempts to communicate with the dead seem to be as old as mankind. Ancient Israel was specifically warned not to try to engage in such practices. We read in Leviticus 19:31, “Regard not them that have *familiar spirits*, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by

them...” So it is *possible*, although prohibited by God, to seek after “familiar spirits.” But are those “familiar spirits” the departed spirits or souls of dead people, as some claim?

Let’s continue to read more about “familiar spirits.” Leviticus 20:6 and 27 tell us, “And the person who turns to mediums and *familiar spirits*, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person...A man or a woman who is a medium, or who *has familiar spirits*, shall surely be put to death.” (NKJB).

The Bible tells us that Baal worship included the practice of witchcraft and sorcery, as well as the consultation of mediums and spiritists or wizards (cp. 2 Chronicles 33:3, 6). Psalm 106:28 indicates that ancient Israel might have engaged in those pagan practices while wandering through the wilderness.

Acts 16:16–19 gives us a clue who or what those familiar spirits are: “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl *possessed with a spirit of divination* met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to *the spirit*, ‘I command you in the

name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour.” (NKJB). This spirit of divination was a familiar spirit—a demon. It was not a departed soul.

We also learn that the demon told the truth—Paul and his companions were *in fact* servants of God, preaching the way of salvation. Likewise, demons proclaimed that Christ was the Son of God. Demons don’t always lie, but they *always* want to thwart God’s plans and purposes.

Saul Consults a Medium

We read in 1 Samuel 28, in the New King James Bible, that Saul consulted a woman who was a *medium*. The Authorized Version describes her as a woman “*with a familiar spirit.*” In other words, Saul consulted a **witch possessed with a demon**. This witch was asked by Saul to bring up Samuel. We read in Verse 12, “When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice.” (NKJB). The following passage tells us that Saul saw nothing. He asked the woman, “What did you see?” Notice her answer, “I saw *a spirit* ascending out of the earth.” (Verse 13—NKJB). When she described the form of that *spirit* as one of an old man, we are told that “Saul perceived that it [was] Samuel.” (Verse 14). The word “was” is not in the original. So one could add “pretended to be,” “appeared to be,”

“claimed to be,” etc.

Some claim the witch actually brought back Samuel—or his spirit—from the grave. The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments, “On this occasion God miraculously permitted the actual spirit of Samuel to speak and announce Saul’s imminent death.” But is this true?

Notice that Saul did not see the “spirit” or “ghost” or “soul” of Samuel at all. Samuel had died and had been dead for a while (cp. 1 Samuel 25:1; 1 Samuel 27:7–8; 1 Samuel 31:6; 2 Samuel 1:1–2). *God did not answer Saul in dreams or by the prophets* (1 Samuel 28:6)—*and Samuel was a prophet* (Acts 13:20; 1 Samuel 3:20). When the “old man” appeared and answered Saul, that could not have been Samuel or his spirit or departed soul—otherwise, Samuel *would have* answered Saul *in the capacity of a prophet of God*. We also read in 1 *Chronicles 10:13–14*, that *this seance was not of God—rather, Saul was killed by God because of conducting it*. Saul died “for asking counsel of one that had *a familiar spirit*, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him.”

We read that “Samuel” answered Saul and told him that Saul would die the next day. The real Samuel, dead and in the grave, could not have known that. Earlier in this booklet, we learned that the dead “know not any thing.” (Ecclesiastes

9:5). But Satan and demons *do* sometimes know God's plan and purpose (cp. 1 Kings 22:19–23; Revelation 12:12; James 2:19). So it is clear that the demon, the *familiar spirit*, pretended to be Samuel, and spoke *as Samuel* to the witch. Note in 1 Samuel 28:7, in the NKJB, that the woman was a “*medium*.” The Authorized Version renders it, “a woman *with a familiar spirit*.” In the Hebrew it says literally that she was “*the possessor of a spirit*,” in other words, of a *demon*.

We see, then, that, apparently, the very demon that had possessed the witch, appeared to her—not to Saul!—*in the form of Samuel*, convincing the witch, and through the witch, Saul, that he was in fact Samuel. The true Samuel, however, as a prophet and servant of God, would have *never* spoken to Saul *through a witch*, especially after God had refused to talk to Saul. And God would not have supernaturally brought Samuel—or his soul or his spirit—back to life, to allow him to speak to Saul *through a witch*—after God had refused to speak to Saul directly.

The concept that the souls or spirits of dead people can be contacted is demonic. Isaiah 8:19 tells us, “And when they say to you, ‘Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people seek their God? Should they

seek the dead on behalf of the living?’” (NKJB). To consult mediums (those possessed with demons or *familiar spirits*) and God is incompatible. Also, Isaiah is not saying here that the spirits of the dead *can* be consulted. He is asking, “Should anyone try to seek the dead?”

Notice, too, Isaiah 29:4, “...thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground.” This is a reference to the voice of a demon, a familiar spirit that has possessed the medium. It may appear as if the medium speaks, but it is, in fact, the demon within the medium that does the speaking. That is why Paul, in Acts 16:16–19, spoke to the familiar spirit or *demon* of the possessed slave girl—and not to the slave girl herself.

Notice Deuteronomy 18:10–11, “There shall not be found among you any one that... useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter *with familiar spirits*, or a wizard, or a necromancer.” A “necromancer” is somebody who “consults with the dead, *or with a spirit* to answer questions.” Note, how the *New American Bible* brings this phrase, “...one who consults ghosts and spirits or *seeks* oracles from the dead.” This phrase does not say that communication with the dead is possible—it tells us, though, not to try it, as this will bring us in

contact with demons.

The very concept of communication with the dead is demonic—it does not prove that we have immortal souls that continue to live after we die. Satan started the lie that we have an immortal soul in the garden of Eden. And to “prove” the accuracy of that lie, he convinces people through the powers of darkness that communication with the spirits or immortal souls of dead people is possible. As we saw at the beginning of this booklet, many, even within orthodox Christianity, have accepted not only the lie, but also this erroneous “proof” for the lie.

THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMORTALITY

Ultimately and inescapably, God’s Word proves that eternal life is a gift of God, and that physical mankind does not possess an immortal soul. The deceptive and false doctrine of inherent “immortality” has held countless millions in a state of confusion, false hopes, and tormented fear.

The Bible reveals that Satan is “the god of this age.” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NKJB). He is also referred to as the “ruler of this world.” (John 12:31, NKJB). Paul was inspired to

say of Satan and those who serve him, “For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” (2 Corinthians 11:14–15, NKJB).

In the eleventh chapter of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul gives us a glimpse of God’s great masterplan. It includes the “reconciling of the world” and “life from the dead.” (v. 15, NKJB). Verse 26 gives us the promise that “all Israel will be saved.” (NKJB). But God’s plan of salvation is not limited to Israel—it includes *all* mankind—all who have ever drawn breath or ever will. It is appointed by God for man to *die* (Hebrews 9:27), but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, *all* who repent of their sins and accept Christ’s sacrifice can *live again*—they *can* become immortal members in the Family of God. Our hope rests in God, and in Him alone, to give us eternal life in the future. Let’s make sure that we are willing to **believe the truth**, and that we, too, will be found worthy to be given God’s gift of immortality in due time (1 Thessalonians 2:10–12; Luke 20:35–36).

.....
The following booklets are available, upon request:

Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events

The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Don't Keep Christmas

Is God a Trinity?

.....

United States

Church of the Eternal God
PO Box 270519
San Diego, CA 92198

Canada

Church of God, ACF
Box 1480
Summerland B.C. V0H1Z0

United Kingdom

Global Church of God
PO Box 2111
Derby DE1 1ZR

Belgium

Le Siecle A Venir
Allee du Grand Cheniat, 30
B-6280 Loverval

