

DO YOU HAVE AN IMMORTAL SOUL?

Immortality

How common is the teaching that we all have immortal souls? What does “immortal” mean? This belief or doctrine is probably believed by almost all Christian churches and is not uncommon in some of the non-Christian religions. The teaching of reincarnation is an example pertaining to the latter.

Let us first define the word *immortal*. It means a condition of life that is death-proof, or unable to die, and therefore exists forever. Someone who possesses immortality is not dependent on outside sources for life. He has life within himself. Note carefully the words of Jesus in John 5:26: “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has *given* the Son to have life in Himself.” This is telling us that God possesses immortality, but note that Jesus didn’t always have it for it was *given* to Him by His Father. Read also 1 Timothy 1:17 & Romans 1:23.

Let us now look at 1 Timothy 6:15-16: “Which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **who alone has immortality**, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.” If the “*King of kings and Lord of lords alone has immortality*,” how can it be said that all mankind were born with an immortal soul?

If everyone ever born possessed immortality, it would mean that anyone God created would be beyond His control or power to destroy even if there was a just cause for doing so. Why would an all-wise God put Himself in such a position? Logic alone tells us that He would not. One more Scripture which affirms that indeed God *is* able to destroy the soul is Matthew 10:28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him (God) *who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (gehenna- second death).*”

The doctrine or teaching of the immortality of the soul came from the mouth of the father of lies, Satan himself (John 8:44). We read that God said to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:17, “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it *you will surely die.*” But Satan tempted Eve not to believe God. We read in Genesis 3:2-4: “The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.”’ ‘You will **not** surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman.”

This lie is the basis for the teaching, among both Christian and heathen, that the soul of a person cannot ever die but must live on in some form or other. In essence Satan’s lie says that God Himself lied to our first parents when He said they would die. God did not say that only a part of them would die and that another part would not. No, God plainly stated, “You will surely die.” In time, that is just what happened.

The question is then before us, who is it that we believe -- God or Satan? Ponder the words of God found in Isaiah 55:11: “So is my Word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire, and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Unfortunately, many Christians have chosen to believe Satan, since they teach that the soul is immortal.

There is nothing in the Word of God that states man was created immortal. On the contrary, we find just the opposite. The Prophet stated, quite plainly, in Ezekiel 18:4, "For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son -- both alike belong to me. *The soul who sins is the one who will die.*" In Ezekiel 18:20 he says again, "*The soul who sins is the one who will die.*" The word *immortality* is not found in the Old Testament.

What do the words of Romans 2:7 tell us? "To those who by persistence in doing good **seek for** glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life." If we are all born with an immortal soul, why would the Apostle Paul tell us that it is one of the things we *must seek after*. If we have to seek for it, then it is obvious it is something we do not have. On the contrary, immortality is a reward that is held out to the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, something they do not possess at this time.

What does the Apostle Paul tell us in 2 Tim. 1:9-10? "...according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*" Life and immortality were unknown until Jesus came to earth and revealed them to us. The potential for eternal life and immortality did not exist before Jesus came and offered it to His followers as a reward for faithfully doing His Father's will in their lives, even unto death.

In 1 Corinthians 15:53 we read: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality*, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" If immortality is something that has to be **put on**, it stands to reason that it was not something that we already possessed.

The Soul

The Scriptures clearly teach that the soul is mortal, not immortal. We read in Gen. 2:7 of the creation of the first living soul. "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.*" Many of the more modern translations render "living soul" as a "*living being.*" When did Adam become a *living soul or being*? Not until God breathed into him the "*breath of life*" did he become a "living soul," or came alive.

If we reverse this procedure, i.e., take the "*breath of life*" from him, Adam would revert back to an *inanimate body without life* which is what it means to die. God affirms this again in Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; *for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.*" Since we were born into sin, this is the end for all souls that are born into this world. In James 4:14 we read about the brevity of life: "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what **is** your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and *then vanishes away.*" We see then that the Scriptures do not support any immortality of the soul but rather the opposite - that man is mortal and will die.

Psalms 22:29 tells us, "All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—those who cannot keep their souls alive." No, though man has tried everything possible to live forever, he has utterly failed in this quest. The book of Ecclesiastes has much to say about the condition of the dead. Eccl. 3:19-21 states, "Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. *All have the same breath*; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. *All go to the same place*; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the

earth?" In Eccl. 9:5 we read, "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten." Verse 10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, *for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.*" Yes, man and beast are mortal and as such they one day will all die.

Someone might say to you, the body returns to the grave at death, but the soul of that person goes either up to heaven or down to hell. The above paragraph and its Scriptures clearly refute this teaching. If you still are not convinced, then listen to the words of Jesus in John 3:13: "**No one** has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven -- the Son of Man." We read in Acts 2:29, "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day." Also in Acts 2:34, "For David did **not** ascend into the heavens..." All who have ever died are still in their graves awaiting the grand day when they shall experience the promise of Jesus in John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, when all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."

The Apostle Paul certainly taught that no one, other than Jesus, had gone into heaven and this included all the faithful followers of Jesus who had died. In 1 Thes. 4:13-18 it says, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. **According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words." The "first resurrection" in which the sleeping saints will be raised will happen when the Lord returns for His Bride, the Church.

There are two Scriptures that are used to teach that as soon as a Christian dies, he is immediately in the presence of the Lord. These are found in 2 Cor. 5:8 and Phil. 1:23. To take any scripture and apply an interpretation to it while disregarding many others that teach differently is an ever-present danger and can only lead to misunderstanding God's Word because all things have not been proven and harmonized according to the instructions given to us in 1 Thes. 5:21.

2 Cor. 5:8: "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord (NIV)." This text is open for interpretation, but in doing so it must also agree with all other Scriptures on this subject. One interpretation we mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Another is that Paul's desire is true, but that he would not expect to be with the Lord until Jesus returned as Paul taught in 1 Thes. 4:13-18.

Phil.1:21-24: "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain(two options). If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to *depart* and be with Christ (a third option, as in 2 Cor. 5:8) which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body (NIV)." It is quite interesting to find that the Greek word *analuo* can mean the exact *opposite* of each other which is the case with many English words. Strong's # 360 *analuo* {an-al-oo'-o} used twice in the New Testament and rendered:1) to **unloose**, undo

again, 2) **to depart**, break up, to depart from life, **to return**. There is one translation that harmonizes with all the other Scriptures and that is Wilson's Diaglott Trans.: Phil. 1:23 - "I am, indeed, hard pressed by the **two** things; I have an earnest desire **for the returning**, and being with Christ, since this is very much to be preferred." Most translators chose to use the word *depart* which would seem a reasonable interpretation but it implies being immediately with the Lord, in so doing it conflicts with many other Scriptures listed below:

1 Thes. 4:16-17 - "For **the Lord himself will come down** from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the arch-angel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so we will be with the Lord forever." (NIV)

1 Cor. 15:51-53 - "Listen, I tell you a mystery: **We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.** For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." (NIV)

*Also one of the promises made by Jesus in John's Gospel supports these last statements of the Apostle Paul: John 14:3 - "And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you** to be with me that you also may be where I am." (NIV)*

NOTE: The "resurrection" and the "change" *do not* occur at the time of the individual's death **but at the time that the Lord returns for His Bride**, as the two citations of the Apostle Paul and the one by Jesus clearly stated!

Some other Scriptures that challenge the teaching that upon his death, the Christian is immediately with the Lord:

1 Cor. 4:5 - "Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; **wait till the Lord comes**. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. **At that time each will receive his praise from God.** "

1 Cor. 15:22-23 - "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ **all will be made alive.** But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; **then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**" (NIV)

1 Thes. 2:19 - "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus **when he comes**? Is it not you?"

2 Thes. 2:1-3 - "Concerning **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him**, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction." (NIV)

Col. 3:4 - "**When Christ**, who is your life, **appears**, **then you also will appear with him in glory.**" (NIV)

2 Tim. 4:8 - "Now **there is in store for me** the **crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, **will award to me on that day** -- and **not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.**" (NIV)

Phil. 3:20-21 - "But our citizenship is in heaven. And **we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ**, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, **will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**" (NIV)

1 Pet. 5:4 - "And **when the Chief Shepherd appears**, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." NIV

1 John 2:28 - "And now, dear children, **continue in him**, so that **when he appears** we may be confident and unashamed **before him at his coming.**" (NIV)

2 John 3:2 - "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But **we know that when he appears**, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (NIV)

God's Plan For Mortal Man

Our God is loving and merciful, extending His grace towards undeserving mankind. In His plan He provided for the recovery of sinful man. John 3:16-17 tells us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." Because of Jesus' sacrifice and He being the first to be resurrected from the dead, a way was opened up for the raising of the Church in the "first resurrection" (see Rev. 20:6 & 1 Thes. 4:13-18) and later a resurrection of all mankind (see John 5:28-29).

God's plan includes a resurrection of mankind from the dead to a mortal state, a restoring of the earth to its original perfection, as it was before it was cursed, and to conditions in it that will be void of evil. It will be a time when all the families of the earth will be blessed as God promised Abraham, under the rulership of Jesus Christ and His glorified Bride. Read John 5:28-29; Acts 3:20-21; Rev. 20:1-2; Isa. 65:25; Gen. 12:3; Isa. 9:6-7; Rev. 3:26-27.

Summary: Immortality **is not** something that is possessed at birth but is a reward to the faithful followers of Jesus at their resurrection. Mortality **is** something we possess at birth, inherited through being part of Adam's race, and thus because of his sin we will die. However, according to God's plan, He will raise up mankind from the grave and provide him an opportunity to live eternally as a mortal being upon earth under righteous conditions. Heart obedience to the laws of righteousness will be the requirements to receive this life.

RESURRECTION MORN

Many sleep, but not forever;
There will be a glorious dawn;
We shall meet to part, no, never!
On the resurrection morn.

From the deepest caves and ocean,
From the desert and the plain,
From the valley and the mountain,
Countless throngs shall rise again.

Yes, they sleep, but not forever,
In the lone and silent grave;
Blessed promise! They shall waken;
Jesus died the lost to save.
In the dawning of the morning,
When this troubled night is o'er,
All the dead to life returning,
We'll rejoice to see once more.

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