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**IMMORTALITY
IS
GOD'S GIFT**



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IMMORTALITY IS GOD'S GIFT

THE HUMAN SOUL

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From ancient times man has pondered his condition after death. Does a part of him live on after death? Is there consciousness of pain or bliss? Where does the teaching of "immortality of the human soul" come from, paganism or the Bible? When will man get eternal life, at death or the resurrection? What is the condition of godly people who have died in His service? Such questions deserve to be answered for the honest truth seeker.

ORTHODOX CONCEPT OF DEATH

We find, among the teachings of both pagan and Christian believers, the doctrine known as the "immortality of the soul." For example, the *Baltimore Catechism* (Revised Edition No. 3), page 396, poses this question, "How can we

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prove that the soul is immortal?" The answer given the reader is the official position of the Catholic Church. We quote:

"We can prove that the soul of man is immortal because man's acts of intelligence are spiritual; therefore, his soul must be a spiritual being, not dependent on matter, and hence not subject to decay or death." (No scripture texts are quoted).

The Catholic Church relies on human reasoning and the authority of the church instead of the Bible to teach this doctrine.

Protestantism for the most part has continued to teach that the soul is immortal, as borne out in *Weber's New World Dictionary*, which we will quote in part, "soul—an entity which is regarded as being the immortal."

It is of interest to those who want to research the origin of this doctrine to know that idol worshiping pagans, centuries before Christ, taught the "immortality of the soul." There is little question that Egypt is the mother of this doctrine. According to Herodotus, who was reputed to be the first historian, born about 484 B.C., "The Egyptians were the first to accept the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal." Herodotus said this nearly 500 years before Christ.

It is common knowledge that such Greek philosophers as Socrates and Plato believed that death was separation of the immortal soul from the body. (See *Five Great Dialogues Of Plato* by Walter Black, Inc., *Phaedo*. These men lived and taught philosophy between 400 and 500 B.C. By 343 B.C., Aristotle was teaching no less a distinguished person than fourteen year old Alexander, son of Philip of Macedon. This is the man history labels as Alexander the Great. Aristotle was a student of Plato and thus the doctrine was spread far and wide by the Greeks.

Both Protestants and Catholics pay tribute to Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Augustine had turned to Greek philosophy of Plato. After his conversion, he brought some of this philosophy into the Christian circle. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, under the heading of Augustinianism, says:

"Augustinianism as a philosophy, has been regarded by some as a Christianized Platonism, an attempt to bring Plato into the stream of Christian thought..."

Thus, the Egyptian philosophies found their way into the early Christian church after the death of the apostles. Paul had warned,

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8)

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29,30)

Having learned that this was a widespread doctrine of pagan philosophies, let's now turn our attention to what the Bible has to say about the human soul and life after death.

THE BIBLE VIEWPOINT

In the first two chapters of your Bible, the human soul is very well defined.

"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" (Genesis 2:7)

The Hebrew word translated *soul* here and elsewhere in the Old Testament is *nephesh*. Before man's creation, the birds of the air and the creatures of the waters were called *nephesh*.

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving CREATURE that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living CREATURE that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:20,21)

The word *creature*, used twice in this scripture reference, has been translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh*. The term *soul* or *creature* both come from the same Hebrew word as used by the Bible writer, Moses. Additionally, in Genesis 1:30, *nephesh* is translated *life*. If we are correct in assuming the soul is the person or animal, we should be able to find other texts of scripture to support this idea. Consider the following:

After Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, king of Salem, he and the king of Sodom were dividing the spoils of battle.

"And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the PERSONS, and take the goods to thyself" (Genesis 14:21)

The word *persons* here is *nephesh* in Hebrew and some Bibles footnote the word *souls* for *persons*.

When gathering manna in the wilderness, the Lord commanded them to gather according to the number of their SOULS.

"This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your PERSONS; take ye every man for them which are in his tents" (Exodus 16:16)

Again, the margin reference Bibles will show the word *persons* as *souls*.

Speaking of improperly eating a sacrifice, Leviticus 7:18 says in part, the SOUL that EATETH of it shall bear his iniquity. So, the soul can and does eat. Verse 27 is similar showing the soul eats. There are many such texts to prove this, but let's move on.

When Joshua recorded how the wicked city of Hazor was destroyed, he said the souls of that city were: (1) smote with the sword, (2) destroyed, and (3) not left to breathe.

"And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire" (Joshua 11:11)

Obviously, Joshua was speaking of the PERSONS living in the city when he called them

souls. There are numerous places in your Bible where dead bodies are called *souls*.

"Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the DEAD" (Numbers 5:2)

The word *dead* here comes from the Hebrew word *nephesh* and is referring to a dead soul. Likewise, Numbers 6:6, 11 and Numbers 9:6, 7, 10 are only a few places where the soul refers to a *dead body* and *nephesh* is so translated in the King James Version. It should be no surprise to the Bible student to read,

"the soul that sinneth, it shall DIE..." (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

No person who carefully reads and studies the Bible can prove the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; conversely, they will prove to themselves that the soul in fact is subject to death and not immortal.

Not only does the Bible omit saying the soul is immortal—it denies it. How can ministers go on contradicting such a clear truth?

After proving that the Bible says the soul can and indeed does die, some argue that it must be the Spirit then that is immortal. The scripture

most often turned to for such proof is Ecclesiastes 12:7,

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”

A careful reading, of course, will show that the text does not say the spirit is a conscious being. In fact, the word *spirit* is from the Hebrew word *ruwach* and means breath. In other words, God gives the breath of life at birth and receives it back at death.

Another text that uses the word *ruwach* is Psalms 146:3,4, where the Psalmist is speaking of the death of a person.

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath [ruwach] goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

This text proves that when a man dies he no longer has any conscious existence.

Another Psalm that speaks of the dead is 115:17,

“The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.”

King Solomon agrees when he writes under

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the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing...” (Ecclesiastes 9:5)

There are so many scriptures that show how man is in an unconscious state at death, it would seem that sincere Christians would investigate the “immortal soul” doctrine for themselves, but few care enough to challenge the orthodox thinking and, therefore, are continuing to be deceived.

As E. E. Franke said in his book, *Future Of Death*,

“The terms ‘immortality of the soul’ and ‘never-dying soul’ and ‘deathless spirit’ are used so frequently in pulpits, and in Christian hymnology, that we are to inquire if such terms are Biblical. The word soul is used in the Bible 873 times; 768 times in the Old Testament, and 105 times in the New Testament. IT IS NOT CALLED AN ‘IMMORTAL’ SOUL EVEN ONCE IN ALL THE 873 TIMES THAT IT IS USED. The word ‘spirit’ is used in the Bible 827 times; in the Old Testament 442 times, and in the New Testament 385 times; yet in all the 827 times that we find the word ‘spirit’ used in the Bible, IT IS NEVER ONCE SPOKEN OF AS A ‘DEATHLESS SPIRIT’ OR A ‘NEVER-DYING SPIRIT.’”

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MEN IN THE BIBLE

Let's now take a few specific Bible characters and see how they are spoken of in death. We will start with an event that took place while Jesus was on earth in John 11:11-14,

"These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus SLEEPETH; but I go, that I may awake him out of SLEEP. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit JESUS SPAKE OF HIS DEATH; but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead"

Jesus spoke of death and sleep in synonymous terms. Just as we sometimes wake from a deep sleep not knowing what has transpired while we slept, so it is with death.

Lazarus said nothing of any conscious existence anywhere while he was dead. So we ask the question: if he was in a place of constant torment, as some preachers might suggest, why did Jesus bring an end to divine justice? If he was in heaven with the angels, as some might argue, why would Jesus bring him back from his reward of bliss to again suffer and die a second

time? It seems more reasonable to assume that he was in an unconscious state, as we've already shown the dead to be, and that Jesus was showing His power over death by bringing Lazarus back to life.

Where is David? Peter said,

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (Acts 2:29)

Had Peter said no more, we might think the pagans were right, that the immortal soul had separated from the body and gone on to heaven as most Christians believe. But, Peter plainly says,

"For David is NOT ASCENDED into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand" (Acts 2:34)

Where is the patriarch Job? By his own words, Job looked forward to remaining in the grave until brought back to life upon the earth in the latter day.

"O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he

live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (Job 14:13-15)

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25,26)

Job's hope was to see God, not as a disembodied spirit as some teach, but while in the flesh at the resurrection.

A long list of faithful and godly people are given us in Hebrews 11 naming such greats as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Speaking of these men, the writer to the Hebrews says,

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, RECEIVED NOT THE PROMISE" (Hebrews 11:39)

WHO HAS IMMORTALITY?

If the Bible does not teach *immortal* human souls, what does it have to say about immortality? The scriptures are very specific on this subject and the words *immortal* or *immortality* only occur six times in the entire Bible. Paul writes,

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever..." (I Timothy 1:17)

This text proves God alone is immortal. Later in this letter, Paul said,

"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (I Timothy 6:16)

Clearly, God is the *only* one presently immortal. These scriptures are certainly plain enough that a child could see God is the only one with immortality, but try mixing in man's pagan philosophy and traditions and we are apt to be deceived as so many Christians are.

THE GOAL OF MAN AND GOD'S GIFT TO BELIEVERS

Immortality is something man is to seek after, not something he has already been given. The Word of God makes the attainment of immortality *conditional* upon how we respond to the will of God. Some will resist His will and be lost to God's wrath, while those who are obedient will receive eternal life and glory.

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing SEEK FOR glory and honour and IMMORTALITY, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (Romans 2:5-8)

The most convincing scripture in showing man's present mortality and the conditional gift of a future immortality when Christ returns is in the so-called resurrection chapter of your Bible.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY, SO WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE SHALL HAVE PUT ON INCORRUPTION AND THIS MORTAL SHALL HAVE PUT ON IMMORTALITY, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:51-54)

The time for this event is "at the last trump",

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Christ's coming.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's AT HIS COMING" (I Corinthians 15:23)

Realizing this may sound like a new idea to many people today, it is fitting to draw to the reader's attention that the second century Christians agreed with the Bible and taught that immortality was not naturally inherent in man, but was to be a future GIFT from God. While these writings are not a part of the inspired Word of God, they do show how believers of the generation, following the death of the apostles felt about our subject.

Clement of Rome, a companion of Paul, believed immortality to be a gift to believers. He wrote:

"How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the GIFTS of God! Life in IMMORTALITY, splendour in righteousness, truth in perfect confidence, faith in assurance, self-control in holiness!..Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him, in order that we may share in His promised GIFTS." (The First Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians. Chapter XXXV. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. New York: Scribners, 1899. Vol. I, p. 14)

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Ignatius, a friend of Polycarp, a disciple of John died a martyr in 107 A.D. Before his death he wrote:

"Be sober as an athlete of God: the PRIZE set before thee is IMMORTALITY and eternal life, of which thou art also persuaded." (Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp, Chapter II. The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. I, p. 94)

Similar quotations may be found from Theophilus of Antioch who died about 181 A.D., Justin Martyr who was beheaded about 166 A.D., and Irenaeus who looked forward to the premillennial return of Christ and taught immortality was conditional upon accepting Christ. (See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I & II.)

By the beginning of the fourth century, there is evidence of a controversy over the state of the dead in the writings of Arnobius. He wrote,

"Will you lay aside your habitual arrogance, O men, who claim God as your Father, and maintain that you are immortal, just as He is? Will you inquire, examine, search what you are yourselves, whose you are, of what parentage you are supposed to be, what you do in the world, in what way you are born, how you leap to life? Will you, laying aside all partiality, consider in the silence of your thoughts that we are creatures quite like the rest, or separated by no great difference? But if men either knew themselves

thoroughly, or had the slightest knowledge of God, THEY WOULD NEVER CLAIM AS THEIR OWN A DIVINE AND IMMORTAL NATURE. But, say my opponents, if souls are mortal and of neutral character, how can they from their neutral properties become immortal? If we should say that we do not know this, and only believe it because said by One mightier than we, when will our readiness of belief seem mistaken if we believe that to the almighty King nothing is hard, nothing difficult, and that what is impossible to us is possible to Him and at His command?"

Other writings could be quoted, but space forbids. Our purpose in pointing out the beliefs of these early Christian writings is to show that it was later than the second or third century when the Egyptian philosophy of the immortal soul was accepted into the Christian circles. Before that time, it was discredited by many ancient writers who are openly acknowledged as Christians.

LATER CHURCH WRITERS

An Episcopalian minister, Dr. S. D. McConnell, Rector of All Souls Church in New York City admitted in his writings, *The Evolution Of Immortality* (New York, 1901), the following statement:

"Of the early Christians, those who were Greeks brought to the new religion the Platonic idea that the soul was indestructible, and the Greek influence gained the domination in the early church. The Platonic doctrine of natural immortality came to be accepted. THE NOTION WAS WITHSTOOD FROM THE VERY BEGINNING AS BEING SUBVERSIVE OF THE VERY EXISTENCE OF CHRISTIANITY."

When doing research for this publication, it was surprising to find that over 90 Protestant writers from the 16th century down to the modern day have written and preached that immortality is the future hope only for those with whom God is well pleased. These writers include Lutherans, Anabaptists, Church of England, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, Plymouth Brethren, etc.

The variety of backgrounds is apparent in that some were from Germany, Switzerland, England, America, etc. Some were great Hebrew and/or Greek scholars, such as William Whiston, translator of *The Works Of Josephus*; Charles Fred Hudson, compiler of *Hudson's Greek-English Concordance*; Ethelbert W. Bullinger, producer of a Greek Lexicon and *The Companion Bible*; Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth, New Testament translator. This has been one of the best kept secrets from the average churchgoer.

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MAN'S REAL HOPE

The true hope of man is in salvation through Jesus Christ and His promise of a resurrection from the dead. Those who are asleep in death will be raised when Christ returns and not before that time.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

Those living at the time of His return to this earth will be instantly changed from mortal to immortal if they belong to Him. They will be much busier than most Christians suppose, having more to do than sit around on a cloud playing a harp.

John points out how they will be ruling with

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Christ upon the earth during the one-thousand years that Satan is bound in the bottomless pit.

“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”
(Revelation 5:10)

“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:2-4)

When we find the Bible disagrees with our denominational teachings, true Christians have but one course to follow. Let God be true, even if it proves every man on earth to be a liar. If these words sound harsh to you, note that the original was the apostle Paul:

“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (Romans 3:3,4)

Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ to those who believe in Him. This gift is not bestowed upon those who refuse Him and prefer to continue in sin. Sin pays wages—death! True Christians receive a gift, eternal life, just the opposite of death.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23)

Earlier in this writing, it was implied that this doctrine seemed to have begun in Egypt according to historians. However, the idea of disobedient man continuing to live as a god, instead of dying as God has said he would, comes directly from Satan himself.

We find the first couple in the garden of Eden at peace with their Creator, when upon the scene came the serpent. What was his reply when Eve told him they should not eat from the tree of good and evil lest they die?

“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye DIE. And

the SERPENT SAID unto the woman, YESHALL NOT SURELY DIE" (Genesis 3:3,4)

Here is the only place in the Bible where intentionally rebellious men and women are promised they won't die. It is a lie of Satan that he has been promoting in nearly every pagan religion and too many Christian denominations throughout history. Satan is the father of the lie, just as Jesus said when speaking to the false teachers of His day.

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44)

Today, we must learn to trust the words of Jesus where He said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth sets us free from Satan's lies and frees us from believing that God keeps alive His enemies to be tortured for eternity.

MAN'S CHOICE TODAY

God forces no man to serve Him against his will. He lovingly leaves the choice up to you just

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as He did His servants of old. When the people of Israel went to their aging leader, Joshua, just before his death in the promised land, He gave them some inspired advice:

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, CHOOSE YOU this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that YE HAVE CHOSEN you the Lord, to serve Him.. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem" (Joshua 24:15-25)

You, too, can make a covenant with the Lord. In fact, it has already been made for you. But you must CHOOSE to accept the terms of the new covenant to gain immortality. If you haven't already done so, accept Jesus Christ as your Lord as well as your Savior. That means you will accept His teachings where they disagree with men no matter whether it is popular or not.

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"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)

God wants men to serve Him because of gratitude for their salvation and because they truly love Him, not because they are afraid of deathless agony of torment of their so-called immortal soul. His Word declares that we either accept His grace of salvation or perish. Jesus said:

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

God wants His people to know the truth. This is how He sanctifies (separates) us. We are not to be separated from the world physically such as living in a monastery, but we are to believe differently than the pagan philosophies. May God continue to help you in your search for further truth that you may walk in His way.

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6)

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