

Kingdom Bible Studies



ADULT LEVEL

LESSON 14

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 4

New Testament "Soul"

In lessons 11-13 we have analyzed the Old Testament use of the word **soul** (**nephesh**). We have also examined the Old Testament teaching concerning **death**. In both cases we found no evidence to support the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine which has become so foundational in Judeo-Christian theology. Instead, the evidence proves the error of this spurious doctrine.

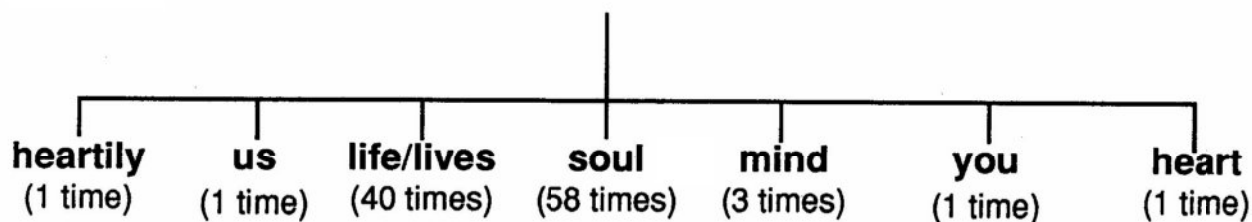
We are now ready to study the New Scripture's explanation of **soul** and **death**. As was the case with the Old Scriptures, we will find no evidence to support the pagan theory that man possesses a so-called "immortal soul" that separates from his body at death and continues living consciously in some other place or realm. Such a concept is foreign and contradictory to God's Word.

In the New Scriptures, the word **soul** is translated from the Greek word **psuche** (#5590 in Strong's Concordance). The chart below illustrates the variety of ways **psuche** was translated in the King James New Testament in its 105 occurrences. The number of times each particular rendering is used is also listed. From this information, we can see that the English word **soul** was the most common translation of the Greek word **psuche**. Thus, a study of this Greek word will help us understand more about the English word **soul**.

It is also important to note that the Greek word **psuche** is used to translate the Hebrew word **nephesh** into Greek where Old Scripture is quoted in the New.

KJV Translations of "psuche"

(Rendered into 8 different English words)



"Psuche" appears a total of 105 times in the Greek text.

psuche = nephesh

When quoting the Old Testament, the New Testament uses the Greek word **psuche** for the Hebrew word **nephesh**. This indicates that the two words have a common meaning.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Genesis 2:7 states, "...and man became a living _____."
2. The answer above is translated from which Hebrew word? _____
3. 1 Corinthians 15:45 says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made [became] a living _____ ..."
4. The above answer is translated from which Greek word? _____

From the above two verses, we can see that the Greek word **psuche** (soul) was used to express the meaning of the Hebrew word **nephesh** (soul). These verses do not say that a so-called "immortal soul" (an independent conscious entity) was placed inside the man Adam. Rather, they state that the man Adam became a living soul (a live person).

Soul (psuche) = Life

In the New Scriptures, the Greek word **psuche** is translated "**life**" or "**lives**" a total of 40 times. Like the Hebrew word **nephesh**, it is used to refer to a person's life.

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. In 1 Kings 19:10 Elijah says, "...and they seek my _____ [**nephesh**], to take it away."
6. Paul, quoting the above Old Scripture passage, states in Romans 11:3, "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my _____ [**psuche**]."

Again, we see that the Greek word **psuche** is used in quoting the Hebrew word **nephesh**. In both passages, these two words are translated into the same English word: **life**. The meaning is clear: Elijah's enemies (who were Israelites) were trying to kill him. Both **nephesh** and **psuche** refer to Elijah's "life." – something that could be destroyed (killed). They are not referring to a so-called "immortal soul" residing within him.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew, Chapter 2

1. According to verse 13, what did Herod intend to do with the infant Jesus?
A. give him gifts B. worship him C. imprison him D. destroy him
2. Verse 16 indicates that Herod _____ all the children up to two years of age that were in Bethlehem.
3. In verse 20 Joseph was told in a dream, "...for they are dead which sought the young child's _____."
4. The answer above is translated from what Greek word? _____

It is obvious from the passages above that Herod wanted to destroy (kill) Jesus – to put an end to His **life**. There is no indication that Herod sought to kill some "entity" living inside Jesus. Herod perceived that Jesus posed a threat to his kingship, so he attempted to eliminate Him. The Greek word **psuche** was used to refer to Jesus' mortal life – not some kind of immortal creature living inside Him. **Psuche**, here, refers to a person that could die – be killed (destroyed) – i.e. mortal.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Chapter 27 of Acts

5. According to verse 10, Paul perceived "that this voyage will be with _____ and much _____, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our **lives [psuche]**."
6. In verse 22 Paul states, "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no _____ of any man's **life [psuche]** among you, but of the ship."
7. As the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, Paul told the centurion in verse 31, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be _____."
8. Verse 37 states there were "two hundred threescore and sixteen _____ **[psuche]** in the ship."
9. According to verse 44, how many escaped to land safely? _____

In the above verses, the Greek word **psuche** is translated into three English words: "life," "lives" and "souls." Paul was concerned about saving the lives of those on board the ship – i.e. saving men from death. Here, **Psuche** refers to mortal persons, not some so-called "immortal beings." Immortal entities would not need saving from death, but mortal men would.

"Psuche" Can Be Killed (Destroyed)

As was the case with the Hebrew "nephesh," the Greek **psuche** can also be destroyed.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Luke 6:9 Jesus asks, "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life [**psuche**], or to _____ it?"

In the above verse Jesus specifically refers to the killing of **psuche**. If **psuche** is a so-called "immortal soul" that cannot die, then Jesus spoke nonsense.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Acts 3:23 states, "And it shall come to pass, that every soul [**psuche**], which will not hear that prophet, shall be _____ from among the people."

Acts 3:22-23 is a quote from Deuteronomy 18:18-19. The phrases "require it of him" and "shall be destroyed from among the people" both refer to the death of a person. If **psuche** (soul) represented something "immortal," then how could Peter say it could be destroyed (Acts 3:23)? Obviously, in this case, **psuche** (soul) refers to a mortal person – one that can die.

Soul Can Die

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. According to James 5:20, a soul [**psuche**] can be saved from _____.
4. Revelation 16:3 states, "...and every living soul [**psuche**] _____ in the sea."

In order for a **soul** to be saved from death, it must be able to die – i.e. be mortal. If a soul was immortal (not able to die), how could it logically be saved from death? It couldn't. However, James 5:20 clearly indicates that a soul can die. This verse is talking about sinners – mortal people (souls).

Souls are plainly mortal according to Revelation 16:3. The idea that people and animals possess souls that are immortal simply contradicts and denies Scripture.

Mortal: Subject to death; destined to die.

Immortal: Exempt from death; having unending life.

The "Laying Down of Life" (Soul)

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 10:1-18

1. Jesus states in verse 11, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd _____ his **life [soul]** for the sheep."
2. In verse 15 Jesus says. "...I _____ down my **life [soul]** for the sheep."
3. Jesus continues in verse 17, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my _____ ..."

In the three examples above, the word **life** is translated each time from the Greek word **psuche** – i.e. **soul**. The phrases "lay down my life (soul)" and "giveth his life (soul)" are usually thought of as referring to death. However, Jesus is speaking of more than dying. Rather, Jesus is talking about the dedication of His life – His whole being – for the good and well being of His sheep. In essence, He sacrificed or gave up His own personal desires and pleasures to help the sheep – i.e. He "laid down His soul" for them. He even died for them.

Verses 7-16 use the illustration of a literal shepherd who "lays down his soul" for his sheep. This shepherd is not dying in order to protect the sheep from the wolves. A normal shepherd doesn't provide much protection when he is dead. He was no doubt risking his life for their sakes, but "laying down his soul" indicates he lived to protect them and was even willing to risk death. He was dedicating his life (his soul) to protecting his sheep from the wolves. The welfare of his sheep was of greater importance than other personal pursuits or desires he may have had.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 15:9-14

4. Jesus states in verse 12, "This is my commandment, That ye _____ one another, as I have _____ you."
5. In verse 13 Jesus says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his **life [soul]** for his _____."
6. **Read 1 John 3:11-24**
Verse 16 states, "Hereby perceive we love ["of God" is not in the Greek text], because he [Jesus] laid down his **life [soul]** for _____ : and we ought to lay down our **lives [souls]** for the _____."

How did Jesus love His sheep – His friends? He did so by dedicating Himself (His life – His soul) for their good and well being. He rescued them from sin and death. He gave them **life** – New Covenant life. Jesus explained that the highest level of love that a person can show is to dedicate their life (soul) for the benefit of others. It involves a laying aside (a denial) of personal pursuits and gains in exchange for the betterment of others. Jesus is the perfect example of such love.

The Losing and Gaining of Soul

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 16:24-27

1. Jesus states in verse 24, "If any man will come after me, let him _____ himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
2. In verse 25, what Greek word is twice translated into the English word **life**? _____
3. In verse 26, this same Greek word is translated twice into the English word _____.

To follow Jesus requires a denying of self – i.e. a losing of soul. What is described here is the process of regeneration (rebirth) and spiritual growth through the implementation of the New Covenant. It is the "passing from death unto life" spoken of in 1 John 3:14. It is what the Apostle Paul described as the crucifying and putting off of the "old man" versus the putting on of the "new man" and the "renewing of the mind."

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Paul states in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our _____ man is **crucified** with him, that the body of _____ might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Read Ephesians 4:22-24

5. In verse 22 Paul writes, "That ye _____ off concerning the former conversation [manner of life] the **old man** which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."
6. Paul continues in verse 23, "And be _____ in the spirit of your mind."
7. In verse 24 Paul says, "And that ye _____ on the **new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

8. In verse 5 Paul says to "... _____ therefore your members ..."
9. In verse 8 he says to "... _____ off all these ..."
10. Verses 8 and 9 state, "... seeing that ye have put off the _____ man with his deeds; and have put on the _____ man, which is _____ in knowledge after the image of him that created him ..."

"Crucifying the old man" and "putting off the old man" are equivalent to "denying self" and "losing your soul (life)," while "putting on the new man" and "renewing your mind" correspond to "finding your soul (life)." These phrases are describing the operation of the New Covenant.

In an earlier lesson (#5), we saw where Paul used the terms "walking after the flesh" versus "walking in the spirit" and "children of flesh" versus "children of promise." Paul also explains this as being "dead to sin" "walking in newness of life" and being "alive unto God through Jesus."

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 6:1-13

1. In verse 2 Paul asks, "How shall we, that are _____ to sin, live any longer therein?"
2. Paul states in verse 4, "Therefore are we **buried** with him [Jesus] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in _____ of life."
3. In verse 11 Paul writes, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be _____ indeed unto sin, but _____ unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

These verses describe a type of exchange: our worthless, sinful souls for a new soul patterned after that of Jesus. Essentially, our old identities (souls) are replaced with new ones. We become "new creatures" in Christ.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a _____ creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become **new**."

The "new creation" refers to the new soul (life) that Jesus gives to us after the old soul (life) is crucified. We then have new life. Thus, we share in the life and spirit of Jesus. This is what Paul talks about in Galatians 2.

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. Paul states in Galatians 2:20, "I am **crucified** with Christ: nevertheless I _____; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who **loved** me, and _____ himself for me."

These verses are not talking about some kind of immortal spirit beings or entities that exist inside of people. Rather, they refer to the people themselves – to their identities or how they are known. This includes the whole composite of traits, characteristics and form which define them as unique personalities. People's "souls" are the essential identities which distinguish one person from another.

Through the process of the New Covenant, Jesus is re-creating souls. He is giving His sheep new identities. He is giving them new lives. They are given new priorities in life. The old ways of living are replaced by new behaviors. The former ways of thinking are regenerated into a new mind – the mind of Christ. This is described in the New Scriptures as "putting on Christ."

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 13:11-14

1. What does Paul say to "put on" in verse 14? _____

The phrases "awake out of sleep," "cast off the works of darkness," "put on the armor of light" and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" are all referring to the workings of the New Covenant within mortal people. They are describing the giving of **life** to spiritually dead souls: the replacement of "souls" (identities).

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Galatians 3:27 states, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **put on** _____."
3. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says, "But we [spiritually regenerated (reborn) Israelites] have the _____ of Christ."
4. Philippians 2:5 states, "Let this _____ be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Jesus Gives Life

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. In John 10:10 Jesus says, "I am come that they [His sheep] might have _____, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Read John 6:33-35

6. Verse 33 states that the bread of God "giveth _____ unto the world."
7. In verse 35 Jesus says, "I am the _____ of life."

The preceding verses clearly show that Jesus gives **life** to His sheep. This giving of life is further described by Jesus in John 10:28.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 10:27-28

1. Speaking of His sheep, Jesus says in verse 28, "... And I _____ unto them **eonian** life ..."

Jesus calls this life that He gives "**eonian**" life. The king James version, like most others, mistakenly uses the word "eternal" rather than "eonian." The Greek word is **aiōnion** (#166 in Strong's Concordance) which is the adjective form of the Greek word **aiōn** (#165), meaning "an age" – i.e. a time period. The "age" in this case refers to the New Covenant era (age). This verse, then, is talking about the giving of "New Covenant" life – i.e. the life that Christ gives us under the New Covenant.

The improper use of the words "eternal" and "everlasting" for the Greek word **aiōnion** has been a major stumbling block in the understanding of key verses of Scripture. "Eonian" life should not be confused with "immortal" life. This will be discussed in detail in future lessons.

New Testament Teaching On Death

We have seen how Old Testament teaching concerning death disproves the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine. Nowhere does the New Testament change or contradict that teaching. In fact, it reaffirms it.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Peter says in Acts 2:29, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both _____ and _____, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day."

Note that the above verse refutes the idea that David is alive somewhere. It in no way suggests that his body is dead and buried while some other part of him remains conscious somewhere. Scripture is clear: David is **dead** and in the ground – not alive in some place called "heaven." This is consistent with Old Scripture teaching.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. Paul states in Acts 13:36, "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on _____, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw _____ ..."

Paul, like Peter, states that David died and was buried. Notice there is no mention that it was only David's body that fell asleep (died) while he – or some part of him – remained awake (alive). Also note that this verse says David (all of him) saw corruption (decay), not just his body. Those who support the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine believe that David is presently alive in a place called "heaven." However, careful study of the Scriptures does not support that idea.

The phrase "fell on sleep" is an idiomatic expression meaning "died." This is consistent with the Old Testament use of the word "sleep" in referring to "death" (see lesson 13). It is important that this type of sleep (meaning "death") is not confused with literal sleep (slumber – a lying down to rest). In literal sleep (slumber), a person is still alive. This is also true of a person in a coma or under a hypnotic state – they are still alive. However, when the Scriptures use the word "sleep" in reference to someone dying, it refers to the cessation of life – the ending of life.

The erroneous doctrine of "soul sleep" suggests that a person doesn't really die, but is only in a state of "sleep." Like the "immortal soul" doctrine, the "soul sleep" teaching destroys the meaning of "death." Both positions attempt to make "death" just another form of life.

Death Is Not Life

"Death" and "life" are opposite in meaning – they are mutually exclusive terms. In fact, death is the absence of life. Logic demands that a person is either dead or alive – not both at the same time. If a person is alive, then he cannot be dead. Both the "immortal soul" and "soul sleep" doctrines are illogical; both destroy the meaning of death; both contradict what Scripture says about death.

No Death = No Resurrection

Another important point to keep in mind is that without death, raising from the dead is impossible. An immortal soul would have no need to be raised from death. An immortal soul would have no need for Jesus. If Jesus' mission was to give life, and if everyone already possesses an immortal soul (unending life), then of what value is Jesus? The "immortal soul" doctrine not only destroys the need for resurrection, but it also eliminates the need for Jesus. Scripture teaches that man is mortal – i.e. he dies. Scripture also teaches that a man without Christ is spiritually dead. Man needs life – life that can only be obtained through Christ.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we have seen how the Greek word **psuche**, like the Hebrew word **nephesh**, was used to refer to mortal people. It was not used to refer to some type of immortal entities residing inside of people. Rather, it was used in reference to the **lives** of people.

Jesus came to bring His sheep **life**: New Covenant life – during their mortal lifetimes. He has been doing that for some two thousand years now. He has been building His ecclesia (see lesson 10) and is doing so today. He showed us how to "lose our souls" (i.e. die) in exchange for a new life (soul). However, so-called "immortal souls," if we had them, could not die. In fact, the immortal soul doctrine completely contradicts and denies the tremendous truth of the New Covenant. Without death, there can be no new life – i.e. no resurrection (spiritually or physically). We must not deny the miraculous working of the New Covenant by believing and supporting the pagan immortal soul doctrine.

A number of New Testament passages are often incorrectly used to support the concept of the immortal soul concept. Because of faulty translation and misunderstanding of Scripture, these passages seem to prove the idea that people have immortal souls – i.e. that they really don't die, but that they continue living after their body dies. However, correct translation and proper understanding of these Scriptures reveal the truth of God's Word: man is indeed mortal and dies completely. We shall examine these passages in the next lesson.



ANSWER KEY

LESSON 14

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 4

Page 132

1. soul
2. nephesh (#5315 in Strong's)
3. soul
4. psuche (#5590 in Strong's)
5. life
6. life

Page 133

1. D (destroy him)
2. slew
3. life
4. psuche (#5590)
5. hurt; damage
6. loss
7. saved
8. souls
9. all of them

Page 134

1. destroy (#622 in Strong's, meaning "to destroy fully; perish or lose")
2. destroyed (#1842 in Strong's, meaning "to extirpate," i.e. destroy totally)
3. death
4. died

Page 135

1. giveth
2. lay
3. life ("soul" is the proper translation)

Page 135 cont'd

4. love; loved
5. friends
6. us; brethren

Page 136

1. deny (#533 in Strong's, meaning "to deny utterly, i.e. disown, abstain.")
2. psuche (#5590)
3. soul
4. old; sin
5. put
6. renewed (#365 in Strong's, meaning "to renovate, i.e. reform")
7. put
8. mortify (meaning to deaden)
9. put
10. old; new; renewed

Page 137

1. dead
2. newness (indicating renewal)
3. dead; alive (indicating two opposites)
4. new
5. live; gave

Page 138

1. the Lord Jesus Christ
2. Christ
3. mind
4. mind

Page 138 cont'd

5. life
6. life
7. bread

Page 139

1. give
2. dead; buried
3. sleep; corruption

We suggest the following books for additional study:

Spirits On Trial - by Ben Williams
Doctrine Of Salvation - by Ben Williams

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Notes: