

The
Soul
according
to the
Bible

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ISBN: 978-0-9893482-6-3

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Part 1: What Happens When We Die?

How does the Bible characterize death?

1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

NOTE: According to the Bible, death is our enemy. Why an enemy? Mankind was created by God to live forever *with* physical bodies. Death, the opposite of life, was the result of sin and disobedience to God's law. Life is defined by consciousness, an active mind with thoughts. Death is unconsciousness, with no thoughts, no dreams.

Sadly, Christians accept man-made traditions and believe many doctrines that do not come from the Bible. According to the Bible, contrary to what most Christians believe, all our loved ones who have passed away in Christ are NOT in heaven right now.

It seems that most people aren't sure what to believe when it comes to what happens

when people die. Many take it for granted that we have an immortal soul that leaves the body at death. However, the term “immortal soul” does not appear anywhere in the Bible.

Does man have an immortal soul? Let’s let the word of God tell us. After all, shouldn’t He who created us know?

What does the Bible say about who is immortal?

1 Timothy 6:15-16

The King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality.

Does the Bible teach that man is immortal?

Job 4:17

Shall mortal man be more just than God?

Can a soul die?

Ezekiel 18:20

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

NOTE: These verses confirm that souls are

subject to death and are not immortal.

So what is death? Is it not the opposite of life? Let's look at what the Bible says about life.

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.

NOTE: A **soul** is the combination of the **dust of the ground** and the **breath of God**. The Hebrew word for *breath* (*ruwach*) is translated into English as *spirit* many times in the Old Testament. Its underlying meaning is the movement of air or wind: from which we get the English words “spirit” & “respiration.” In other words, “spirit,” or *breath of life*, is just that: breathing—that which makes one alive. The Hebrew word for “soul” (*nephesh*), means *a living being*.

Ground + Breath of Life = Living Being
or: **Dust + Spirit = Soul**

The Bible says we are mortal; *we do not have souls; we are souls*. The spirit within us is referring to the fact that we are alive because we are breathing. Our spirit, or breath, does not have consciousness apart from our brain and body.

At death, the process of life is reversed:

Genesis 3:19

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

NOTE: We already know from what we can observe that the body does return to the dust of the ground at death.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

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

We saw that the spirit is the breath of life. Let's look at another passage of Scripture

to confirm this:

Psalm 104:29

Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

NOTE: Here, the word “breath” is the Hebrew word *ruwach*. It is the same word translated many times in the Bible as “spirit.” The notion that the spirit/breath is a disembodied, conscious ghost is reading into the Bible that which it does not say.

Is there any consciousness at all in death?

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

Answer: “Under the sun” means the affairs of this life. It says that the dead do not know

anything. Forgotten is the memory of who they were. Not by we who are living, we remember our dead, but by those who have died. As if their minds are “switched off.”

Psalm 115:17

The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

NOTE: If people went straight to heaven upon death, wouldn't praising the Lord be the first thing they would do? But they do not because they cannot.

Psalm 6:5

For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

NOTE: The Bible uses language like “the dead know not anything,” the dead “go down into silence,” and the dead do not remember God, nor can they give Him thanks. Does any of this sound like the dead are conscious? Remember, consciousness is only the result of God combining the body (dust) and the breath (spirit).

Notice something from Psalm 146:3-4, first from the New International Version:

Psalm 146:3-4 (NIV)

Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their **spirit** departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.

Compare this same verse in the King James Version:

Psalm 146:3-4 (KJV)

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

NOTE: Not only does **Psalm 146** confirm that the thoughts and plans of the dead perish with them, but notice the interchangeable translation of the words “spirit” and “breath” from the original Hebrew word *ruwach*.

The Bible teaches that the dead are entirely unconscious. Scripture goes even further to make this point.

To what does the Bible compare death?

John 11:11-14

¹¹ 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.

¹² Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

¹³ Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

¹⁴ Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

Answer: Jesus teaches that death is like sleeping. Are people conscious when they are asleep? Of course not. If they were conscious, they would not be sleeping.

Do we find this concept of death as sleep in other parts of the Bible?

Psalms 13:3

Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Psalm 90:5

Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

Job 17:13

If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.

NOTE: Do you remember David, the boy who slew Goliath, and who was chosen by God to become king? The Bible mentions King David, a man that we know is going to be in heaven, as an example to clarify what happens in death.

What does the Bible say about David's death?

1 Kings 2:10

So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

Now jump to the New Testament. At Pentecost, the apostle Peter was addressing the crowd when he said to them:

Acts 2:29, 34 (NIV)

Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day... For David did not ascend to heaven.

NOTE: David died a thousand years before Peter said this about him. He confirms that David died, and after a thousand years in the tomb, he has not yet gone to heaven.

Since death is compared to unconscious sleep, when did David himself expect to see God?

Psalm 17:15

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Answer: David knew that death was like sleeping and that he would only see God after being resurrected from the dead. Here we are three thousand years later, and David is still sleeping in his grave.

So when does Jesus say souls will be awakened out of the sleep of death?

John 6:39

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 6:40

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Answer: Jesus said that He would raise the dead “at the last day” four times in John chapter 6. Any time the Lord mentions the same thing three or more times, it denotes a truth of supreme importance. “The last day” is a reference to the second coming of Christ.

How did the Old Testament prophet Daniel describe what will happen at the second coming of Jesus?

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

How did Jesus describe His second coming?

John 5:28-29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves 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 damnation.

NOTE: The Bible teaches there will be two resurrections. The time is coming when there will be a resurrection for the dead in Christ. They will awake from their sleep of death into life everlasting. **But according to the Bible, this has not happened yet.**

The apostle Paul put it best when he wrote of these resurrections. Not only does he mention the raising of the dead, but he also explains what will happen to those who are alive at the second coming of Christ:

1 Corinthians 15:51-54

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² 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.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

⁵⁴ 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.

NOTE: Remember, **1 Corinthians 15:26** says, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Jesus, by His resurrection, defeated death and the grave! But notice; If people went straight to heaven when they die, then

why will Jesus return at the second coming to take them where they already are? The truth is that only when Jesus returns for His people will they rise from their graves to be taken to heaven. And we will have physical bodies when God makes us immortal. No human being ever lived outside of the body—it is not possible.

Are there any human beings in heaven now?

Genesis 5:24

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

2 Kings 2:11

And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Matthew 27:52-53

And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Answer: Yes, the Bible confirms that there

are very few human beings in heaven right now; It says in Genesis that Enoch walked with God and was taken. Moses died and was resurrected by God immediately (**Jude 1:9**). Elijah was ‘translated’ without having died. And both Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration to strengthen Him before His crucifixion (**Matthew 17**). They are examples of what will take place at the second coming of Christ, referred to as “the last day” by Jesus. Moses represents the dead in Christ, who will rise from their graves. Elijah represents the living at Christ’s coming who will be “changed.” These men did not go to heaven as spirit beings. They received from God glorified physical bodies, as will the saved when Christ returns. We know that there is not a single case in Scripture where a human being has life apart from the body. Remember, we do not have souls; we *are souls*.

Besides Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, there are also those few resurrected at the same time as Jesus. They came out of their graves to be witnesses for the resurrection. **But these are the exceptions.**

Didn't Jesus tell the thief on the cross that he would be with Him in Paradise that same day?

Luke 23:43

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Answer: Jesus and the thief died on a Friday. Did Jesus promise the thief immediate access to heaven when he said this? Did Jesus Himself go to heaven on that day?

Notice what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene on the following Sunday when He came out of the grave:

John 20:17

Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.

NOTE: Jesus could not have been in heaven on Friday because He had not yet gone to heaven on the following Sunday. Is this a contradiction?

Did you know that the original Greek manuscripts had no punctuation? All the commas and periods were arranged into the text of Scripture by translators who inserted them where *they* thought they should be. The placement of a single comma can change the entire meaning of a sentence. The Lord's statement becomes consistent with what we have learned when the comma is placed *after* the word "today":

Luke 23:43

Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise.

NOTE: With the comma in the proper place, now Jesus' promise that the thief will be with Him in Paradise is in harmony with all that we have learned. We know that He meant the thief would be with Him in Paradise when Jesus returns "at the last day."

Part 2: Ghost Stories

Some believing in the immortal soul will cite the 28th chapter of **1 Samuel**. There we find the account of King Saul, who visited the witch of Endor. The Bible gives strict warning against consulting psychics as expressly forbidden. But Saul had fallen away from God. Desperate and in need of counsel, he sought the witch to conjure up the dead prophet Samuel.

Does the Bible confirm that the spirit conjured by the witch was Samuel?

1 Chronicles 10:13

So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it.

Answer: the Bible says that Saul was talking to a “familiar spirit”—a demon masquerading as the prophet Samuel.

Have you ever met anyone who has a ghost story to tell? A story about someone whom they had known, who had died and yet appeared to them? What are these people really seeing?

Revelation 16:14

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles.

Why does Satan want us to believe that the spirits of the dead are alive?

Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Answer: The objective of demon spirits is to deceive the world and ensnare people into their delusion of the immortal soul. That is serious. Our Catholic brothers and sisters pray to saints, which they believe are spirits of the dead. Belief in the immortal soul, and praying to the dead is called *Spiritualism*. God

forbids Spiritualism because it is a demonic lie. The devil defiles all who engage in it.

What does God say to those who consult psychics and mediums?

Isaiah 8:19 (NIV)

When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

NOTE: Satan knows that many people will believe what they see with their eyes before they believe in the Bible. But those who visit psychics are consulting the losers and liars of the spirit realm. We should seek God alone.

Conclusion: The Word of God is clear. Only God is immortal. When people die, all of Scripture likens death to unconscious, dreamless sleep. It says that the dead know nothing and are not capable of contacting the living. They can't even praise God.

All the righteous dead will praise God eventually, together as one big human family. Then

we will have incorruptible bodies just like Jesus at His resurrection. And it will all happen when Jesus comes again at the last day.

Part 3: God Loves YOU!

How has God demonstrated His love for you?

Jeremiah 31:3

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

John 3:16

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.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NOTE: We are under condemnation for breaking the Ten Commandments. God's justice is absolute. He cannot change His holy law. Every one of us has earned the wages of sin, which is death.

But God is equally merciful. Because He loves us so deeply, He was willing to allow His beloved Son to suffer and die in our place to prevent separation from us for eternity. God knows that our sins can lead only to misery and death. He wants to save us from our sins. That's why Christ died.

What does Christ's death do for you?

1 John 3:1

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

John 1:12

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

NOTE: Christ died to serve the death penalty we have earned. He offers to give us credit for what He did. His sinless life is credited to our account so we can be counted as righteous in judgment. God accepted His death as full payment for all our past wrongs. By accepting what Jesus did as a free gift, we are taken into God's own family as His adopted children.

How can you receive Christ's gift and pass from death to life?

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

First, admit you are a sinner.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Second, understand that by breaking God's law, you are under an eternal death penalty.

John 15:5

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Third, know that you cannot save yourself. You need the Saviour!

Hebrews 2:9

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Believe Jesus died for your sins.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Believe God forgives your sins when you confess them to Him.

John 6:47

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Believe He saves you. You will live forever when Jesus comes to take you home at the last day!

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Romans 3:24

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Romans 3:28

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

NOTE: Accept salvation as a free gift by faith. Our good works will not get us into heaven. All who ask for salvation in faith will receive it. God loves everyone alike, and forgiveness is available for all who genuinely ask for it.

When you join God’s family through faith, what change does Jesus make in you?

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Answer: Christ is received into your heart. He destroys the old sinful self and changes you into a new spiritual creation. The old life of sin now becomes repulsive and undesirable. You will begin to see how empty life has been without Christ.

What does Jesus call this transformation?

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Being “born again,” how does Jesus help you obey God’s holy law?

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; 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 gave himself for me.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Psalms 40:8

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

What motivates a Christian to keep the Ten Commandments?

John 14:15

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

1 John 2:5

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

How does God identify His true followers?

Revelation 14:12

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

What act seals your love relationship with Christ?

Romans 6:6

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

How can you be sure that your faith and love relationship with Jesus Christ will continue to increase?

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

John 5:39

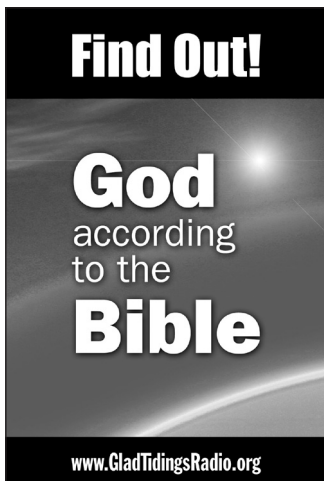
Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Colossians 2:6

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

Matthew 28:20

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.



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John 17:3

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

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