

CHURCH OF GOD BIBLE CORESSPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON NO. 5

JUST WHAT IS MAN?

Is man an immortal soul in a material body? Is death the separation of body and soul? What REALLY happens to a person at death? These questions have puzzled mankind for thousands of years.

Study the surprising ANSWERS in this revealing lesson!

DEATH is a *reality!* Though many like to shove it from their minds to escape having to think about it, death is *real!* It is the inevitable consequence of being alive!

Religious people often picture death as the inescapable final plunge into the unknown-into the "next world" with its heaven, hell or purgatory.

What is this thing called life, and DEATH? Isn't it about time we finally learned what man really IS, and what hope there is of life after death?

DO YOU HAVE AN IMMORTAL SOUL?

The ancient philosophers taught that man is essentially an immortal spiritual "soul" housed in a temporary body of flesh-that the *real* man is not the body, but an invisible, immaterial "immortal soul" that thinks, hears, sees and will consciously live on forever.

At death, according to the speculation of the ancients, the soul leaves the body and journeys to a nebulous realm, possibly paradise or a place of punishment. The body, they observed, goes to the grave.

Some Oriental philosophers speculated that the souls of the departed go into other bodies after death and live as animals, birds, snakes, even trees or gnats-or perhaps as human beings. This doctrine, called "transmigration of souls" or "reincarnation," has even gained some acceptance in the Western world.

But what is the authority for these beliefs? Is there any biblical basis for such doctrines? Where did they come from? Where did the Christian-professing churches acquire their present teachings about the immortality of the soul?

Consider this revealing statement from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*: "The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body"-after death-"is a matter of philosophical or theological *speculation* rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly *nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture*" (from article, "Immortality of the Soul," vol. VI, p. 564 emphasis ours throughout lesson).

INHERITED FROM PRE-CHRISTIAN WORLD

This same article continues: "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 Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended" (pp. 564, 566).

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, according to this respected encyclopedia, came from pre-Christian Greek philosophers who acquired it from pagan Egypt and Babylon!

Notice what Herodotus, the famous Greek historian who lived in the fifth century before Jesus, admitted: "The Egyptians also were *the first who asserted the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal* Some of the Greeks have adopted this opinion, some earlier, others later, as if it were their own" (*Euterpe*, Chapter 123, translated by Carey).

It was the Greek Socrates who traveled to Egypt and consulted the Egyptians on this very teaching. After his return to Greece, he imparted the concept to Plato, his most famous pupil. Compare the present-day doctrine of most churches with what Plato wrote in his book, *Phaedo*:

"The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit of life's opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, and since immortal, indestructible Do we believe there is such a thing as death? To be sure. And is this anything but the separation of the soul and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation, when the soul exists in herself and separate from the body, and the body is parted from the soul. That is death Death is merely the separation of soul and body" (see Loeb Classical Library edition - 1977; pp. 223, 235, 363-367).

Sounds a lot like the teaching of many modern churches, doesn't it?

You were probably taught that this same doctrine was totally Christian. You undoubtedly assumed it came straight from the Bible-but it did not, as you will see for yourself.

After Plato came Aristotle, who perpetuated the theory. Then the poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.) popularized it throughout the Roman world.

But how did this concept become a fundamental doctrine of the vast majority of professing Christians?

LATER LABELED "CHRISTIAN"

The introduction of this superstition into the churches was a gradual process that took centuries. The early "church fathers" disagreed on this subject. As late as A.D. 160, Justin, the philosopher-turned-professing-Christian, wrote:

"But our Jesus Christ, being crucified and dead, rose again, and having ascended to heaven, reigned; and by those things which were published in His name among all nations by the apostles, there is joy afforded to those who *expect* the immortality *promised* by Him" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, p. 177). Many of these men indeed knew they did not have immortality within themselves.

Origen, an early Catholic teacher in Alexandria, Egypt, joined the speculations of Plato with certain parts of the Bible and called his philosophy *neo* (new)-Platonism. Rufinus, paraphrasing Origen's writings, said: "God deals with souls that are immortal, even as He Himself is eternal and immortal"! Origen professed to be a Platonist, "who believes in the immortality of the soul" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. IV, pp. 314, 402).

Another influential teacher at the close of the second century was Tertullian of Phoenician North Africa. He wrote: "For some things are known even by nature; the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many I may use, therefore, the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, 'EVERY SOUL IS IMMORTAL'" (*ibid.*, vol. III, p. 547).

And so the personal ideas of these influential men helped mold the thinking of the entire Christian professing world.

But a few Catholic writers and teachers as late as the time of Constantine (A.D. 280-337) condemned the change in doctrine from Christ's teachings to those of Plato. Here is the remonstrance of Arnobius against those who were being "carried away by an extravagant opinion of themselves, that souls are immortal 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?" (*ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 440)

After the time of Emperor Constantine-who forced the Roman Empire to accept one universal faith-Augustine, another writer of North African extraction, "sanctified" the doctrine of the immortality of the soul in his book, *The City of God*.

Along came other writers-all influenced by the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Virgil-who dominated the philosophy of Western "Christian" theology during the early Middle Ages.

Finally, Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274), Italian scholastic teacher and theologian, stamped the doctrine of the immortality of the soul permanently on the Christian-professing world.

But not only did this doctrine become religious dogma in the medieval world, those who rejected it became branded as heretics!

FINALLY IMPOSED BY FORCE

Just before the Protestant Reformation, the Lateran Council of 1513 issued this decree:

"Whereas some have dared to assert concerning the nature of the reasonable soul that it is mortal, we, with the approbation of the sacred council, do condemn and reprobate all those who assert that the intellectual soul is mortal, seeing, according to the canon of Pope Clement V, that the soul is immortal and we decree that all who adhere to like erroneous assertions shall be shunned and *punished as heretics*."

That meant that any who taught the truth were to be turned over to the civil authorities for punishment. And the punishment was usually severe!

THE ORIGINAL PROTESTANT VIEW

During the Reformation, some early Protestants tried to cast off the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Martin Luther declared that the Bible did not teach the immortality of the soul (*An Argument in Defense of Articles....*, Article 27). "Luther held that the soul died with the body, and that God would hereafter raise both the one and the other" (*Historical View*, p. 344).

How different were Luther's first teachings from Protestant doctrine today! Here are Luther's own words, expressed about the year 1522.

"it is probable, in my opinion, that, with very few exceptions, 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?" (From *Michelet's Life of Luther*, Bohn's edition, p. 133.)

Luther's original teachings have never ceased to embarrass Protestant theologians who have since readopted the teachings of ancient Egypt and Greece.

William Tyndale, the printer of the first New Testament in English and another of the Reformers, wrote the following: "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?"

That's a very good question!

The Protestant reformers found the people unwilling to change their belief. Gradually, the reformers themselves gave in to popular tradition-tradition rooted in pagan philosophy and speculation! And so most churchgoers today believe the doctrine of the immortality of the soul simply because they have unquestioningly embraced the speculations that have been passed down from ancient pagan philosophers!

The Apostle Paul wrote about this very kind of speculation: "*Beware* lest any man spoil you through *philosophy* and vain deceit, after the *tradition of men*, after the rudiments"-fundamental concepts-"of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

The Bible, as we shall soon see, is NOT the source of the widely-accepted belief in the immortality of the soul. Surprising as it may seem to some, the Bible plainly teaches that man is mortal-physical-fleshly-of the dust. And when he dies, he returns to dust. Let's look into the Bible and PROVE what it really says!

DOES SCIENCE HAVE THE ANSWER?

Is man an immortal soul in a material body? What does science have to say about it?

Absolutely *nothing!*

Science simply has *no evidence* either for or against the existence of an immortal soul. Science deals only with *physical*, material substances and phenomena-physical matter and energy. Modern science is *limited* entirely to the MATERIAL world that can be weighed and measured-to that which can be perceived by the five senses.

The spiritual is completely outside the realm of physical science and is therefore not subject to the "scientific method." Science cannot measure-hence cannot reveal-any life apart from matter. And so all that man can know (apart from divine revelation) is material. But what science has learned can nevertheless help immensely in understanding the *composition* of man.

Science has discovered that all living matter, in its simplest form, is protoplasm-a fluid substance that composes the "living stuff" of the cells of both plants and animals, as well as man.

This much also is definitely known: Individuals who "died" on the operating table and then were revived through heart massage or other means, usually remember absolutely nothing about the intervening time! They "went" nowhere! They were simply *unconscious*. However, some who were declared "clinically dead" have described sights and/or sounds that caused them to conclude that they had glimpsed something of the "afterlife". Just as some dreaming is compressed into a very brief time, so also these people were merely dreaming or hallucinating in this twilight state at the brink of death.

Science simply has no evidence of an "immortal soul" in man. Even the experiences of people on the operating table who "died" temporarily provide no conclusive evidence of an immortal soul that leaves the body.

Where, then, can we find reliable evidence one way or the other?

WHAT IS MAN?

The Bible is the FOUNDATION of knowledge. In it the Creator God has revealed much knowledge that is totally beyond man's ability to discover for himself-including the knowledge and understanding of what man *is*, as well as what he is to *become*.

Let's not assume. Let's look into the Bible to see what man really is.

1. Of what did Jesus Christ say man is composed? John 3:6, first part. And is that which is "born of *spirit*" of a totally *different* composition? Same verse.

COMMENTS: Man is composed of flesh. Jesus plainly says that if one is born of (and therefore composed of) flesh, he cannot also at the same time be born of (composed of) spirit. He must be one or the other! So this verse alone is strong evidence that man is not an immortal spiritual "soul" that lives in a body of mortal flesh and blood. But let's continue.

2. Was the Apostle Paul an immortal soul clothed with a body of flesh-or did he speak of himself and *his flesh* as being synonymous? Rom. 7:18.

COMMENT: Paul did not distinguish between himself and his flesh in this verse. He indicated they were one and the same. (We will study some of Paul's other statements later.)

In order to understand whether man has an immortal soul, let's go back to the creation of the first man to see exactly what happened.

THE CREATION OF MAN

God created the first man. And He tells us what He made him from so there would be no doubt as to what we really are. Here is that account as revealed in the Bible:

1. Out of what did God form man? Gen. 2:7. Notice that it was the man-not just the body that was formed.
2. Was it the *whole* man-"thou"-that was composed of dust? Gen. 3:19.

COMMENT: Adam was made from, and therefore composed of, *earth!*

3. What would eventually happen to the conscious man? Same verse, last part.
4. After God had formed the man and made every cell in his body, what did He do to give him *life*? Gen. 2:7.

COMMENT: God blew air-"the breath of life" containing oxygen-into the man's lungs through his nostrils, and the man began to *live!* The verse does not say that God breathed an immortal soul into the man.

5. Does the same "breath of life" also pass through the nostrils of animals? Gen. 7:21-22. Is it the breath of life that is *cut off* when a human being or an animal drowns? Verse 23. Then the source of life in man and animals is the same, isn't it?

COMMENT: If the "breath of life" even remotely referred to an immortal soul, then animals, birds and even insects-gnats, fleas, mosquitoes, etc.-would all have immortal souls!

WHAT KIND OF "SOUL"?

1. When God had breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, what did the man become? Gen. 2:7, last part.

COMMENT: Man does not have a soul-man IS a "soul"! The Hebrew word for "soul" is *nephesh*. *Bagster's Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* defines it as "breath," and "anything that breathes, *an animal*." It can also refer to a "person," or even "one dead, a dead body." In Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16. and Leviticus 11:46, the same word *nephesh* is translated "creature" when referring to *animals*.

And so man is a SOUL. Notice that the word *nephesh* is translated as "dead body" or "the dead" in Leviticus 19:28; 21:1; 22:4; Numbers 5:2; 6:11 and 9:6, 7, 10. The "soul," then is merely an air-breathing entity that is subject to death and decay. It is *not* immortal!

The soul is composed of the "dust of the ground"-it is material, not spiritual. It is matter. When man breathes, he is a "living soul." When man ceases to breathe, he becomes a nonliving or *dead* soul. That's what the Bible reveals.

2. Can the "soul" die? Ezek. 18:4, 20. If the soul were immortal-eternal-could it die? Is man plainly said to be "mortal"? Job 4:17.

COMMENT: Since man is a soul, and the soul is mortal-then man is mortal, subject to death. That is why the Scriptures refer to human beings as "mortal man."

3. Was Adam subject to death? Gen. 2:17, last part. Was it the body only that would die, or was it the whole conscious man-Adam-"thou"-that would die? Same verse.

4. What one thing befalls *both* man and beast? Eccl. 3:19. Is this because both have the *same temporary* source of life-the air we breathe? Same verse.

5. Do all men and animals alike go to the same place at death? Eccl. 3:20.

COMMENT: When an animal dies, it is dead. When man does, he is completely dead, too. And all men and animals become dust once again.

6. Now what does Ecclesiastes 3:21 ask?

COMMENT: The Hebrew word *ruach*, translated "spirit" in this verse, also mean air, wind, breath. It is translated 27 times as "breath" in the *Authorized or King James Version*. Three examples are Genesis 6:17; 7:15 and Lamentations 4:20. It is also translated 83 times as "wind." Thus we can see that *ruach* has a very broad meaning, and may be applied to a wide variety of things whose common denominator is *invisibility*. It may mean "attitude" as well as "spirit", and with the word "holy" preceding, it means the Holy Spirit of God.

Solomon asks, therefore, since the same event-death-occurs to both man and beast, "Who knows whether a man's *ruach* goes up or whether a beast's goes downward?"

Although the same death befalls both, the Bible reveals there is a vast difference between man and beast, as we will shortly see-and that difference does *not* have to do with any "immortal soul."

WHAT IS THE LIFE OF MAN?

Man IS a living, breathing MORTAL creatures *nephesh*, or living soul in whose nostrils is *air*. Have you ever wondered what happens to the breath of air that goes into your lungs?

When you take a breath of air, it passes through your trachea, into the lungs and into little pockets or sacs called alveoli. There oxygen is absorbed from the air and goes into the bloodstream. As the blood flows through the blood vessels from the lungs on the way back to the heart, and then is pumped again throughout the body, the oxygen is carried by the red blood cells throughout the body to the individual cells. Each of your more than 75 trillion cells uses oxygen to "burn" the food you eat to create the energy needed to power your organs and muscles and to maintain body heat. The life of man clearly depends on the *blood*, and the blood needs the *breath of life* to keep the body alive.

1. According to the Bible, is the life of man and animals found in the bloodstream-or in an immortal soul? Lev. 17:11, 14. Does Deuteronomy 12:23 corroborate this?

COMMENT: In these verses, the Hebrew word *nephesh* is translated "life." Thus *nephesh* (or soul) can refer either to the fleshly *man*, or the *life* of man, which depends on his *blood*.

2. Did Christ make His "soul" an offering for sin? Isa. 53:10. How did He accomplish this? Verse 12.

COMMENT: Christ voluntarily offered up His body to be crucified and allowed His life's blood ("soul") to be poured out!

How clear that when a man ceases to breathe the breath of life, his heart stops beating and circulating his life's blood, and he dies. But then what happens?

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

1. After a person dies-becomes lifeless-does he still have a conscious existence because of an immortal soul? Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 146:4.

COMMENT: Since the Bible plainly states that the dead are *not conscious* of anything, we can logically conclude that man does not have an immortal soul that is conscious and aware of things happening around it after death!

2. Are the dead able to praise God? Ps. 115:17.

COMMENT: If dead Christians had immortal souls, wouldn't they be praising God after they died, thankful to be with Him in paradise? Here, then, is more concrete evidence that human beings do not have immortal souls.

3. Is there any remembrance of God in death? Ps. 6:5.

COMMENT: Death is the *opposite* of life. Death is the CESSATION of all activity-the end of *life!* That is the reason dead people do not remember or do *anything*. How clear!

4. Is the "soul" something that can be *destroyed*? Matt. 10:28. Then didn't Jesus plainly show that the soul of man is not immortal? Let's understand exactly what Jesus was talking about. COMMENT: There are those who use this scripture to support the widespread belief of the immortality of the soul. Yet this verse plainly says the soul is something that can be *destroyed in hell!* Thus, whatever this "soul" is, it could NOT be immortal!

The New Testament Greek word here translated "soul" is *psuche*. The Greek *psuche* simply means "life", "*existence*", just as does the Old Testament Hebrew word *nephesh*.

In Matthew 10:28, the word soul refers to life that man cannot permanently destroy-but that God can. What kind of life could this be? Obviously life that God RESTORES by a resurrection!

Man cannot permanently destroy a life that God renews by a resurrection. Although men may kill their physical bodies, said Jesus, true Christians know that men cannot take from them eternal life, which God has promised to give them at the resurrection. But GOD can *permanently* destroy all possibility of eternal life. How? By casting a *physically* resurrected

person into the "lake of fire" to be utterly consumed-never to be resurrected again. This is the ultimate penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23)- *eternal death!*

The book of Luke makes the meaning plainer: "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which AFTER he hath killed hath power to cast into hell.. ' " (Luke 12:5). God not only has the power to take our present physical life, but also has the power to resurrect us and-if we have proven to be disobedient and incorrigible-to cast us into the lake of fire, from which there will be NO future resurrection! (Rev. 20:13-15; 21:8).

IS MAN MERELY AN ANIMAL?

Since man does not have an immortal soul, does this mean he is just an animal-here today and gone tomorrow? Not at all. What is it that makes man different from the animals? Let's understand the amazing truth!

1. Were animals created in God's image-or were they created each after its *own* kind? Gen. 1:21, 24-25. But was man created in the "image" and "likeness" of GOD? Verses 26-27. Was man to rule over all other creatures? Verse 26.

COMMENT: The Hebrew words of Genesis 1:26-27 reveal God's great plan and ultimate purpose for mankind! When God molded Adam of the dust, he was shaped in the "likeness" the outward form and shape-of God Himself. God didn't form any of the other creatures to be clay replicas of Himself. This unique form and shape was *given to humans alone!*

Notice again that God said, "Let us make man in our *image....*" The Hebrew indicates far more than merely the *outward* form and shape of God. "Image" also refers to *mind and character!* God intended for man-to whom He gave a thinking, reasoning mind-to develop the very mind and character of *GOD!*

Each animal was created with a brain suited for its particular animal kind. But animals do not have the potential of MIND and CHARACTER that God gave to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power!

It is this very special attribute of MIND AND CHARACTER that separates men from animals!

Animals do not have reasoning, self-conscious minds. Animals follow *instinctive* habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration and reproduction. God has "programmed" their brains, so to speak, with particular *instinctive* aptitudes. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests, etc. These aptitudes are *inherited*-they are not the result of logical cognitive processes.

Consider the millions of birds that flock south each year as winter approaches in the Northern Hemisphere. They don't stop to "reason" why, they don't ask themselves whether they should, they don't "plan" an itinerary for the trip! At the appropriate time-as if signaled by the preset alarm of a clock-they leave their summer feeding grounds in the north and travel many thousands of miles south. Scientists don't fully understand how or why-they merely observe the operation of this amazing animal *instinct*.

Each species or kind of bird builds a different type of nest, feeds on different foods, and many migrate at different times to different places. But none of these actions is planned by the birds. They are merely the capability and proclivity that Almighty God built into the *instinct* of these birds at creation.

But man is vastly different. Man is able to perceive and understand various ways to do any one thing. Man reasons from knowledge, draws conclusions, makes decisions, can act according to a thought-out plan.

Each man may build a different house, eat many different foods-live an entirely different way of life from other men. If a man wants to change his way of life *he can!* Man is not subject to instinct. He is not governed by a set of pre-determined habit patterns as animals are.

Man can *choose*-he has free moral agency. He can devise codes of conduct and exercise self-discipline. Man can originate ideas and evaluate material knowledge because he has a *MIND that is patterned after God's own mind!* Man can devise, plan, and bring his plans to fruition because he has been given some of the very creative powers of God!

Man alone can wonder: *Why* was I born? What *is* life? What *is* death? Is there a *purpose* in human existence? Man, unlike the animals, not only "knows" how to do certain things, but he also KNOWS he knows-that is, he is *aware* that he has "knowledge". He is *conscious* of the fact. He is self-conscious, aware of his own existence as a unique being.

The attributes of mind and character make man God's UNIQUE physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with mankind and intends that man develop the "image" of GOD'S *perfect mind and holy character!*

WHAT MAKES MAN'S MIND UNIQUE?

Many animals have physical brains as large or even larger than man's brain, and with similar cerebral cortex complexity-but none has the powers of intellect, logic, self-consciousness and creativity as man does.

What gives man's brain these unique abilities?

And what will God use, after the death and complete dissolution of the physical body and brain, to *reproduce* each individual at the resurrection?

1. Since man has no immortal soul within him that enables him to live on apart from his body after death (remember man is a MORTAL soul), does the Bible speak of a "spirit IN man"? Job 32:8; Zech 12:1; 1 Cor. 2:9-14. Notice especially verse 11 of I Corinthians 2. Is this spirit "in" man *clearly distinguished from* the Holy Spirit of God? Same verses in I Corinthians 2.

COMMENT: This spirit is *not the man* -it is spirit essence from God that is IN the man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms the human MIND. It imparts to man's brain his *unique* powers of intellect and personality-the ability to think rationally and make free will decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or other types of physical knowledge.

But that is all! The spirit that is IN man has no consciousness of itself. It is *not* an "immortal soul." This spirit is *not* "the man."

Because of this spiritual element, the Bible often uses the word "spirit" simply to mean man's *mind*, intelligence, attitude. To distinguish this "spirit in man" from mere physical breath, the book of Job continues in context to use two separate Hebrew words-ruach for spirit, *neshamah* for breath (Job 33:4; 34:14.)

2. When a person dies, does this totally non-conscious "spirit in man" return to God who gave it? Eccl. 12:7.

COMMENT: This spirit in each individual, of necessity, does more than merely impart the power of intellect to the physical brain. It becomes a spiritual "recording" and "mold" of the entire person-even to preserving memory, knowledge, character and outward appearance. And so when a person dies, that spirit "recording" returns to God and is "filed" away until the time God will "replay" it to bring about the resurrection of the identical personality to life and consciousness. Yet while filed away, it has no consciousness of its own.

Why haven't you heard this truth before? Simply because the whole world has been DECEIVED!

3. Can the human mind-having only this "spirit of man"-understand the *spiritual* things of God? I Cor. 2:1 1. What must be added before a man can comprehend spiritually-revealed knowledge? Same verse.

COMMENT: The spiritual cannot be seen with the eye, heard with the ear, felt with the hands. The human mind, which can receive knowledge only through the physical senses, can never really comprehend spiritual concepts and principles without the Holy Spirit of God. Your Bible shows that the greatest minds cannot really come to know and understand SPIRITUAL truths with their natural minds.

Just as surely as no animal brain-such as that of a cow, for example-can comprehend or understand *human* affairs, so no human mind can have comprehension of spiritual things on the divine plane *unless and until* it has received the Holy Spirit of God! (More about the function and receiving of the Holy Spirit will be covered in a forthcoming lesson.)

ORIGIN OF THE "BIG LIE"

The truth about the "spirit in man" is so important that Satan tried to twist, warp and pervert it long ago. He clouded the minds of men and deceived them into believing his "big lie" as far back as the time of Adam and Eve.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived Eve. Notice what happened:

1. What did Satan tell Eve? Gen. 3:4.

COMMENT: Here was the *origin* of the "immortality of the soul" doctrine believed by so many today! Satan told Eve she would "not surely die"-in other words, she had an "immortal soul" that would live forever. Eve swallowed this lie-hook, line, and sinker!

2. Has Satan deceived the WHOLE world? Rev. 12:9.

COMMENT: The devil has deceived the whole world on nearly every point of God's truth! And virtually the entire world today believes some variation of the ancient "big lie". Millions have been deluded into believing in reincarnation or the transmigration of souls as a result of the false doctrine of an ever-living soul.

Satan has deceived the world with a COUNTERFEIT doctrine that perverts the truth about the "spirit in man." With his cunning counterfeit, Satan has withheld from the minds of BILLIONS the truth about the "spirit in man," and the need for a resurrection from the dead!

NOT YET IMMORTAL!

We have clearly seen that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul. What, then, *does* the Bible teach about immortality?

1. According to I Timothy 6:15-16, who has immortality inherently?

2. Is God also incorruptible? I Tim. 1: 17.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated "immortal" here is *aphthartos*, meaning "incorruptible." God is incorruptible. Man is not.

3. Now turn to I Corinthians 15:53 and 54. Do these verses say that man is already immortal?

What must man *put on*? Verse 53. *When* will man be "clothed" with immortality? Verse 52. Does

- this happen at the time of the resurrection when Christ returns to earth? I Thess. 4:16.
4. Who brought to mankind the knowledge of how to receive eternal life and immortality (incorruption)? 11 Tim. 1:10. Doesn't this verse plainly show that immortality is something man does *not already* have? Then is the Gospel also the good news about how to receive immortality? Same verse.
 5. Is immortality to be *sought* for? Rom. 2:7. Is eternal life a free gift bestowed on those who seek immortality? Same verse and Romans 6:23.
 6. Was David, king of Israel, still alive as an immortal soul after he died? Acts 2:29, 34. Will he be *raised* from the dead? Jer. 30:9.

WHY A RESURRECTION?

If man were an immortal soul in a material body-and if the death of the body released the soul-then there would be no need for a resurrection to immortal life. Man would merely continue living after death. But the very fact that the Bible teaches the resurrection from the dead is *further proof* that man does not have an immortal soul!

1. If Christ had not risen from the dead, would faith in a future life by a resurrection be all in vain? I Cor. 15:14-17. If there will be no resurrection, have those who are dead in their graves perished forever? Verse 18.
2. However, did Christ Himself warn that the unregenerate-unrepentant-man *is* to perish? Luke 13:3, 5. If man were an immortal soul, could he actually "perish"? (See in your dictionary that the word "perish" means to CEASE living.)
3. Who will *hear* the voice of the Son of God at the resurrection? John 5:25. Do they then "rise"? I Thess. 4:16.

COMMENT: The dead cannot "hear" unless they are first *restored to life!* The dead are pictured throughout the Bible as *being asleep* in their graves, awaiting the day of the resurrection. Notice Jesus' words when describing the death of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha:

"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" (John 11:11-14).

Death is pictured as a sleep. Death, like sleep, is a condition in which people are not conscious and from which they can be "awakened"! Notice the plain evidence of Scripture:

"And many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall *awake*?" (Dan. 12:2). "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which *slept arose*" (Matt. 27:52). "and when thy days be fulfilled," said God to David, "and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers..." (11 Sam. 7:12).

Death is described as a *sleep* dozens of times in the Bible when referring to the kings of Israel and Judah! "David *slept* with his fathers..." (I Kings 2:10). Notice that it does not say "the body slept while the soul was conscious." It plainly says, "David slept." It was the conscious person who fell "asleep" in death!

In the following verses the same expression is used to describe death. Look up each one and see for yourself that death is compared to a sleep: I Kings 11:21, 43; 14:20, 31; 15:8, 24; 16:6, 28; 22:40, 50; 11 Kings 8:24; 10:35; 13:9, 13; 14:16, 22, 29; 15:7, 22, 38; 16:20; 20:21; 21:18; 24:6; 11 Chronicles 9:31; 12:16; 14:1; 16:13; 21:1; 26:2; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20.

Certainly here is *conclusive evidence* that the dead are not conscious-and that man does not have an "immortal soul"!

MAN TO BECOME SPIRIT

1. Job once asked the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" What was Job's answer to his own question? Job 14:14. What is the change Job spoke of, and *when* will it take place? I Cor. 15:51-53.
2. Will Job, David and all those in the resurrection be like God? Ps. 17:15. Is God *spirit*? John 4:24. Are they therefore to be composed of spirit then? I Cor. 15:42-49. Compare this with I John 3:2.
3. Why were Adam and Eve *not* permitted to eat the fruit of the "tree of [eternal] life" after they sinned? Gen. 3:22-24. Note last part of verse 22.

COMMENT: This plainly shows that Adam and Eve did not have immortality *inherent in* themselves!

The "tree of life" symbolized the Holy Spirit-the way to eternal life. Adam was created incomplete. He was created to need the Holy Spirit of God in order to live forever. Adam, however, had to choose whether or not he would accept the free gift of the Holy Spirit. He *chose* (I Tim. 2:14, first part), by disobeying God, *not* to receive the Holy Spirit and was

consequently cut off from access to the tree of life! Here is yet another proof that *no man* has eternal life inherent within himself.

WHEN DID PAUL EXPECT TO BE WITH CHRIST?

Some who believe that humans have immortal souls use Philippians 1:23-24 as proof. Do these verses contradict all of the plain scriptures we have studied? Let's understand what the Apostle Paul meant.

1. Did Paul have a desire to be with Christ? Phil. 1:23.

COMMENT: All Christians should have the same desire. But does this verse state *when* Paul would be with Christ? Absolutely not! But people try to read certain ideas *into* this verse! Let's notice *when* Paul expected to be with Christ.

2. Did Paul expect to receive something from Christ when he met Him? 11 Tim. 4:6-8. And when would that be-the time when Jesus returns and all the saints are *resurrected*? verse 8. Notice the words "at that day".

3. When Christ *returns*, what will He bring with Him? Isa. 40:10; Rev. 22:12. When will all (both dead and living) Christians "meet the Lord"? I Thess. 4:16-17.

COMMENT: Those who are dead in their graves are not conscious; they have no knowledge of passing time. The very next moment of their consciousness will be the time of the resurrection! That is why Paul wrote what he did in 2 Corinthians 5:9: "Wherefore we labour [while yet alive], that, whether present [alive in the flesh] or absent [dead in the grave], we may be accepted of him."

The Apostle Paul often wrote about the resurrection of Christians at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and about the rewards they will receive at that time. Paul expected to receive the reward of his labors and to be with Christ at the resurrection from the dead-the awesome event to which every true Christian eagerly looks forward!

"BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT"

There are some who claim that man is "body, soul and spirit," misunderstanding Thessalonians 5:23. But they never seem quite sure which of the two-the soul or the spirit-is immortal! Let's understand this expression.

1. What does the Bible reveal about "body, soul and spirit"? I Thess. 5:23.

COMMENT: Does this verse really contradict all the *plain* verses we have already studied? Paul here refers to the spirit in man as the nonphysical component in the human brain that gives the brain in man a God-plane power of intellect. And to the mental processes of the physical life when he used the word "soul". And to the flesh or physical being when he used the word "body".

What's wrong with having your *body, mind and spirit* preserved blameless-preserved from the penalty of sin-in anticipation of the coming of Christ? (See also 11 Corinthians 7:1.) That is something we should all fervently desire!

How plain the Bible really is. Man is MORTAL, corruptible flesh-organic matter with a temporary life. He does not have eternal life inherent within himself. He does not have an "immortal soul"! He is a physical, fleshly creature destined to die and turn to dust and remain that way-except for the intervention of the Almighty-except for the resurrection from the dead!