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## Where Does Your Soul Go When You Die? (Part I)

**1 Thessalonians 5:23: (KJV) *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***



Death and taxes - two sure things for us in this life! Now, with taxes we can always try and avoid them - we can shelter our money, make less money, get a better tax advisor - you know - we can play the game and sometimes even come out ahead. With death there is no game, for it eventually finds every one of us. The only question here is what really happens when you die? Do you leave your body and go someplace or are you dead - really dead - as in not alive, not aware, just plain old expired? As you already know, such a question has many different answers - stay with us as we attempt to establish a biblical perspective on the matter!

### What were the circumstances and penalties surrounding the first human life and death?

This would be a key foundation with which to start, for the basic principles of all Scripture would logically have been established right from the beginning. Human life was created in God's image and man became a soul/being.

**Genesis 2:7: (NASB) *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being <5315>.***

Old Testament word for soul (KJV)/being (NASB):

**Soul/being: Strongs #5315 nephesh, properly, a breathing creature**

**The test of obedience: Genesis 2:15-17**

#### Observations:

- God gave man the perfect environment conducive for living.
- Man was tasked with its care and upkeep.
- Man had free access to all *except* the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- The potential consequences for disobedience were immediately present. God provided full disclosure up front.
- The consequence - the dying process - would have an immediate effect (*dying thou dost die*).

**Genesis 3:1-7:** Satan partially quotes God to subvert the truth into a lie. Satan was right...their eyes *were* opened! Satan told them a half-truth. Unfortunately the other half was that shame was born and the dying process began.

**What is the consequence - the full consequence - of disobedience for this being?**

**Genesis 3:17-19:** Part of the penalty would be the toil of life.

So, you - mankind - will return to the elements - not just your body - YOU. Is death defined here (in this first experience of humanity sinning against God) as simply going back to the pre-life state - the absence of life? Is that what God is saying?

**Are there Scriptures that verify death is the absence of life and that death is sin's penalty?**

If the foundation of life and death found in Genesis is true, it should withstand the test of the rest of the Bible. That **death is the absence of life** should be verifiable - easily proven throughout all of the Scriptures. We do not believe the Bible teaches the soul is immortal.

**This Romans text refers back to the original sentence for sin given in the garden: Romans 6:20-23:**

*The wages of sin is...burning forever in hell? No.*

*The wages of sin is...conscious separation from God? No.*

*The wages of sin is **death**.*

Sin brings death. Even in his enlightened state, the Apostle Paul does not add to or change the simple Genesis equation that dying is the absence of life. He does add that there is miraculous hope beyond the grave through resurrection - the bringing back to life that which was dead.



**Death is the absence of life:** [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#) [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#) [Psalms 6:5](#) [Psalms 115:17](#)

**The death of a body = the death of the person:**

[2 Kings 8:5](#): Her son was dead; his body was dead. Death is the absence of life or non-existence.

**Death is sin's penalty:** [1 Corinthians 15:20-22](#): (NIV) <sup>20</sup>*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.* <sup>21</sup>*For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.* <sup>22</sup>*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

Again here is the equation from the foundation in Genesis: Obey and live; disobey and die. Everyone *in Adam* is subject to the consequence of death. But they are also subject to the results of the ransom of Jesus - resurrection from death! For whom? Everybody, because they are all *in Adam*.

**This account of a yet-to-be-fulfilled prophecy confirms that souls can be destroyed - therefore they are not immortal:** [Ezekiel 18:1-4](#): What soul hasn't sinned? None, so all die as a consequence. This teaches the basic principle that sin brings death.

**Why did Job ask the question, "If a man die will he live again?"**

We must demand logic here, for this is a question based in logic. If the soul does not die but continues to exist, then to ask if you will live again is baseless, for in death you are already living, albeit in an altered state.

**Job therefore believed that death was in fact an absence of life and his other statements on the matter support this:**

[Job 7:21](#): (NASB) <sup>21</sup>*Why then do You not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; And You will seek me, but I will not be.*

[Job 14:14](#): (KJV) *If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.*

**What is the context of this verse? It is Job lamenting the finality of death:** [Job 14:7-15](#): Job compared the ability of a tree to maintain life - even though it had been cut down - to the death of a human who cannot maintain life. Job asks to be hid in "Sheol," translated as grave, pit or hell. At this point, Job is suffering so greatly that he is praying for death to hide him until that "something after." Who else goes into Sheol?

**Bad people:** [Psalms 9:17](#): (KJV) *The wicked shall be turned into **hell <7585>**, and all the nations that forget God.*

[Psalms 55:15](#): (KJV) *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into **hell <7585>**: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

**Good people:** [Psalms 49:15](#): (KJV) *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the **grave <7585>**: for he shall receive me. Selah. (More on this text later.)*

[Hosea 13:14](#): (KJV) *I will ransom them from the power of the **grave <7585>**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O **grave <7585>**, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

Isn't it interesting the English translators used the words *grave* or *pit* to translate the exact same Hebrew word when a "good person" died but used the word *hell* when a "bad person" died?

What we have seen so far from the Scriptures is the soul is man's "being." Man does not *have* a soul, man *is* a soul. When we die, the soul dies. It ceases existing. The words "immortal soul" do not exist in the Bible. However, God's plan is built for life and resurrection. When God gave death as the penalty for sin, He also told us this would not be the very end.



### Are there Scriptures that say the soul is immortal?

The human soul is the human being, a breathing creature. God created Adam as a living, breathing creature. The penalty for Adam's sin was death - the absence of life. Contrary to some religious traditions, the Scriptures do not teach that when man dies his soul goes on and lives someplace else and cannot be destroyed.

If what we have been saying is *not* correct according to Scripture, then we should be able to locate several Scriptures that speak contrary -that forcefully challenge the presented idea of death as the absence of life.

Let's take a look at the concept of immortality. According to the Webster's Online Dictionary, to be immortal is to be exempt from death, or exempt from oblivion. You cannot die; life is perpetuated without an outside force.

There are only two words used in the New Testament for this:

**Immortality:** Strongs #861 *aphthrsia* (af-thar-see'-ah); incorruptibility; (figuratively) immortality, incorruption, sincerity  
**Immortality:** Strongs #110 *athanasia* (ath-an-as-ee'-ah); deathlessness KJV-- immortality

Wouldn't we expect to see at least an inkling of these words connected with the human "soul" if in fact the Bible was teaching that the "soul" was inherently immortal?

Romans 2:7: (KJV) *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and **immortality <861>**, eternal life:* If the human soul were already immortal, why would we be told to seek for it? If you are seeking something, you do not already have it.

There is a difference between eternal life and immortal life. Adam and Eve had the ability for eternal (everlasting) life if they obeyed and continued to obey. The Tree of Life would have kept them sustained forever. Eternal life needs an outside source to keep the life perpetuated. Life could end but doesn't.

Immortal life is self-perpetuating (not dependent on an outside source) and indestructible.

**What kind of "body" goes to heaven?** 1 Corinthians 15:42: (KJV) *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in **incorruption <861>**.* Something corruptible can be ruined. Here incorruption describes the reward of the true followers of Christ. The reward is to be raised beyond corruptibility, which means they will have life within themselves.

1 Corinthians 15:50: (KJV) *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit **incorruption <861>**.* We are not automatically provided a state of immortality here and now. Faithful followers will be given a new body and new name in heaven but only after a resurrection from death.

1 Corinthians 15:53-54: (KJV) <sup>53</sup>*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on **immortality <861>**.* <sup>54</sup>*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on **immortality <861>**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* As an interesting side note, ancient Egyptian culture was steeped in the thought of life continuing after a physical death where the Hebrew culture was not.

2 Timothy 1:10: (KJV) *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and **immortality <861>** to light through the gospel.* After Jesus' sacrifice, death would no longer be the terminal state that lasts forever but now would have an ending.

1 Timothy 6:16: (KJV) *Who only hath **immortality <861>**, (Jesus raised from the dead and dwelling at the right hand of God) dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.* The New Testament says we do not have immortality, agreeing with the Old Testament.

Are there plain statements of Scripture that clearly define the matter of death as an absence of life for *all* "breathing creatures" alike? If so, the foundation built in Genesis would show us that our entire world is suffering from the consequences of sin.



**Man and animals alike meet with the same destiny of death:** Psalms 49:16-20: Man can do well in life, but when he dies, he is like the beasts that perish. Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

Genesis 2:7 describes man as **Strong's #5315 "nephesh" - a breathing creature**. Genesis 1:20-21 describes the animals with the exact same Hebrew word. **Man and animal referred to in the same way - both are "souls:"** Genesis 1:30 Genesis 2:7 Genesis 7:22 Genesis 9:16

All of the above Scriptures indicate man and animal are of the same make-up. In both cases, their lives are a result of the combination of their body and God's breath of life. In both cases, they are subject to death. **So, is there any difference between man and animal?** Genesis 1:26-27: Man was created in the image of God including reasoning and creative capacities, which is different from just being given the breath of life. Humankind was given dominion (care and responsibility) over the earth and animal life.

**This not only verifies all we have been saying but is also a prophecy of the grace of Jesus:** Psalms 49:5-9: Humankind could not give a ransom to God for each other, but Jesus could. Notice - the foes of the righteous are subject to - what? Death and decay! Romans 5:12: Everyone has sinned and death is the consequence - not torment, not your soul being even more "alive" than when you were living. Psalms 49:10-15: Both the wise and the foolish perish. All that we build, all that we cling to ends up of no value in death.

In accordance with the plan of God, upon resurrection from death, the world of mankind goes through a period of judgment and will need to make amends for their thoughts, deeds and actions in this life. We believe these will be miraculously recalled after being brought back from the state of being dead. Jesus referred to death as "sleep" when he raised Lazarus from the tomb, which is a great analogy. Job referred to death as a sleep from which you cannot be awakened. The concept of sheol or oblivion is a state of non-existence.

**BUT, there is hope for redemption from death in the prophesied ransom of Jesus and the prophesied glory of the true church:** Romans 5:18: Here we have the "man for a man" concept. Everyone in Adam dies as a consequence of sin; however, that is not the end. Oblivion is there for a time but it is not the end.

**Remember we discussed those following after Christ, *seeking for immortality?***

1 Peter 2:12: God's plan makes extraordinary sense with the understanding that death, as proclaimed in Genesis, is the penalty for sin. Adam's sin plunged the entire human race into sin and therefore death. Jesus came and ransomed Adam from his penalty and in the process bought the entire human race as well. All of us suffer but all of us have the opportunity for life. Be a faithful follower of Jesus because those who observed you will remember that example and glorify God.

**Jesus freely offered his life/soul/being/person to die as a ransom:** John 15:13: (KJV) *Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his **life** <5590>* (Greek: also translated "soul") for his friends.

**Life:** Strong's #5590 psuche (psoo-khay'); breath, the animal sentient principle only

Isaiah 53:12: The followers of Jesus are in a different category. They not only have the opportunity for eternal life; they have the opportunity for immortal life. That is different. (*Many are called but few are chosen.*) The Christian has a difficult path but his reward is beyond our comprehension. They have to prove their faithfulness now, because if immortality is given to a being, God must know they will never turn against Him, like Lucifer did. Satan, therefore, does not have immortal life because he will be destroyed.

We believe the Scriptures tell us the human soul is the human being and when the human being dies, you die! You stop existing until such a time when you are called from death in the resurrection.

***So, where does your soul go when you die?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***