

LIFE ONLY IN CHRIST

In our recent studies, particularly in relation to the second coming of Christ and the millennium, and last time in connection with the origin and end of sin, the matter of "death" has been mentioned but not discussed. The Bible says that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), and that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Both Christians and unrepentant sinners die. Given time, death is the lot of all mankind in all ages.

In this lesson we need to examine God's Word in order to see what happens to someone who dies, if being a Christian makes any difference, and then re-clarify the final destinies of the Christian and the one who refuses the good news of salvation. Our study must be done carefully as there are several very different beliefs in connection with these things. Let us see what the Bible says.

1. Briefly, we need to begin with the question, What kind of a being did God create when He first made man? Open the Bible and read Genesis 2:7.
 - (a) What was the first ingredient that God used? _____
 - (b) How did God bring life into the body? _____
 - (c) The King James version says that when the body and breath were united, by God, the man became a living soul. What is that?

2. In connection with all living human beings, the question comes, Are they "immortal" (imperishable, eternal, destined to live in all ages), or "mortal" (subject to death, destined to die)? We could fairly say that Adam and Eve were created with "conditional immortality." (Review Gen. 2:15-17.) Had they remained obedient to God, they would have lived on through the ages. But their disobedience (Genesis 3) brought them under the penalty of death. That is mortality.

It is agreed by all that the body of man dies. That is no problem. But what about man's soul--doesn't it live forever, even after the body dies and is placed in the grave? This question has troubled many for a long, long time. What can we conclude by tying together question 1(c) and Ezekiel 18:4?

(An important note: The core of the problem in this discussion centers in the question, Is the "soul" something apart from the body, or a way of referring to man as a unique individual? A careful study of the Old Testament word, nephesh, makes it clear that a unique individual is what is meant. Also, the parallel New Testament word, psuche, never conveys the idea that "soul" is something that lives apart from the body. The idea that the soul is something separate from the body and indestructible was a non-biblical philosophical concept that early invaded both Jewish and Christian thinking.)

3. If a "soul" is simply a unique, whole individual, made of dust and given life by God, then we can quickly understand the following texts that give us insights into death and the grave. Summarize each.
 - (a) Ecclesiastes 12:7 _____
 - (b) Ecclesiastes 9:5,6 _____

- (c) Psalm 115:17 _____
- (d) Psalm 146:3,4 _____

4. What did Jesus call "death" in John 11:11-14? _____
5. The words "soul" and "spirit" are used some 1,700 times in the Bible, but neither are ever referred to as immortal before the second coming of Christ. What do the following Scriptures teach us about the true Scriptural meaning of "immortality".
- (a) Romans 2:7 _____
- (b) 2 Timothy 1:10 _____
- (c) 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 _____

(Note: It is the acceptance of the gospel of Christ, and being an over-comer in His strength (Revelation 2:7), that are the keys to our inheriting immortality and an eternal home with God.)

6. The dead, both Christians and unrepentant sinners, all sleep, awaiting one of two resurrections. (See again John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:5.) Is the important point in connection with death, the fear of death, or in having such a relation to Christ that, should we die, we have the assurance that we will be in the first resurrection when immortality is received? Summarize the wonderful promise of hope in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.
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