

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.)

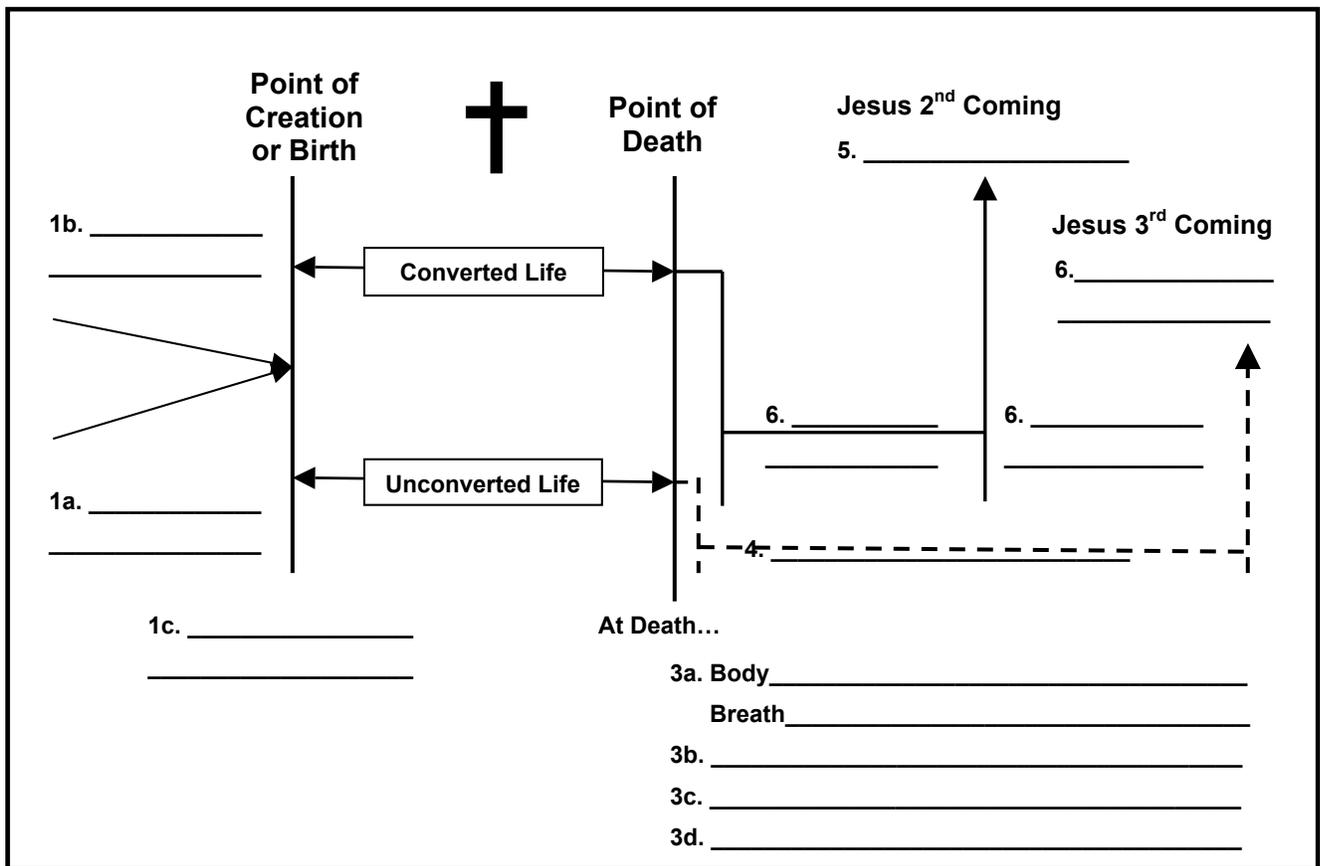
3. If a "soul" is simply a unique, whole individual, made of dust and given life by God, then we can quickly understand the following texts that give us insights into death and the grave. Summarize each.
 - (a) Ecclesiastes 12:7 _____
 - (b) Ecclesiastes 9:5,6 _____

- (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.



Introduction**Romans 6:23**

²³For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. Genesis 2:7

⁷And 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 being.

Answer: (a) God formed a body using dust or dirt.

(b) God breathed in the “breath of life”.

(c) A person who is alive and conscious.

2. Genesis 2:15-17

⁵Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Ezekiel 18:4

⁴ “Behold, all souls are Mine;
The soul of the father
As well as the soul of the son is Mine;
The soul who sins shall die.

Answer: God claims all “souls” as His and that the “soul who sins shall die”.

3a. Ecclesiastes 12:7

⁷ Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Answer: When a person dies, their body decays and returns to dust, and the breath of life returns to God.

3b. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6

⁵ For the living know that they will die;
But the dead know nothing,
And they have no more reward,
For the memory of them is forgotten.
⁶ Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished;
Nevermore will they have a share
In anything done under the sun.

Answer: The dead are unconscious; they are totally unaware of what is happening on the earth.

3c. Psalm 115:17

¹⁷ The dead do not praise the Lord,
Nor any who go down into silence.

Answer: The dead do not praise or interact with God.

3d. Psalm 146:3, 4

³ Do not put your trust in princes,
Nor in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help.
⁴ His spirit departs, he returns to his earth;
In that very day his plans perish.

Answer: When a person dies, their body decays and their plans are no more.

4. John 11:11-14

¹¹These things He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”

¹²Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” ¹³However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

¹⁴Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.”

Answer: Sleep

5a. Romans 2:7

⁷eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality

Answer: Immortality will be given to those who are saved when Jesus comes with His Kingdom of Glory.

5b. 2 Timothy 1:10

¹⁰but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Answer: Jesus dealt with the sin problem at His 1st Coming (Kingdom of Grace) and thus saved us from sin and the resultant death, thus immortality is something we will have when Jesus' 2nd Coming takes place.

5c. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: *“Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

Answer: At the 2nd Coming immortality will be given to those who are saved because they have accepted the Gospel of Jesus and have been over-comers in Jesus strength.

Revelation 2:7

⁷“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

6. John 5:28, 29

²⁸Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice
²⁹and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Revelation 20:5

⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Answer: As long as we have trusted our life to God and followed where He leads, we know that regardless of when we die, we can look forward to the resurrection at Jesus' 2nd Coming and know that we will be raised to a life of immortality.

Lesson 14, LIFE ONLY IN CHRIST

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Notes for the Instructor

Purpose of lesson 14: In this introduction to the state of the dead, it is impossible to answer all of the existing arguments about the immortality of the soul. Rather, the presentation is intended to bring a simple understanding of the subject of death, which has already been raised in studies on the history of Satan, the penalty for sin, and the resurrections of the dead. Thus, it is placed at this point in the series. The overall intent is to help the student cease to fear death, but rather seek for a relation to the Lifegiver which guarantees his future. Thus, the study has another great appeal to be rightly and daily in personal relation to Christ, and opens the door to be more sensitive as studies on obedience soon will follow.

During the study itself: In connection with question 1(c), read the RSV or NIV to help explain the meaning of "a living soul." Also study the term "soul" in 1 BC 223. You should also study, if possible, 3 BC 666 and 4 BC 638, 639, for a fuller understanding of the note at the end of question 5.

Make the sequence of ideas in question 5 very clear: (a) man seeks for immortality; (b) it is brought to light in the gospel; and (c) it is received by man at the second coming.

Appeal: See the last sentence under "purpose" above. Also, question 6 offers us a share in Paul's glorious faith and hope.

Illustration: The diagram emphasizes the difference in the destinies of the one who accepts Christ and lives for him in this life, with the one who refuses the gospel. It visualizes the core appeal of the entire subject.

