



# WHAT IS THE SOUL

*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—Genesis 2: 7.*

*How was the Human Soul Created?  
Of What Does the Soul  
Consist?*

*Is it Inherently Immortal?*

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*“He spared not their  
souls from death”*

Psalm 78: 50



**Breath  
of Life**

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## WHAT IS THE SOUL

EVERYBODY knows that the body dies, that it needs to be continually replenished and that it cannot be immortal. But the Scriptures speak of souls. Is the soul really indestructible—that God having made a soul cannot destroy it?

Reason tells us that, unless there is absolute proof to the contrary, the life of every creature is subject to the will of the Creator. Now notice that the Scriptures nowhere speak of the immortality of the soul, as is sometimes taught—neither in the various Bible translations nor in the original text. If you were to search the Scriptures and try to find the expression “*immortal soul*,” you would discover that no such expression can be found in the Scriptures. On the contrary, the Scriptures declare that “*God is able to destroy both soul and body...*” (Matt. 10: 28); and again, “*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezk. 18: 20). That which can die, which can be destroyed, is not immortal, is not proof against death, destruction. The Scriptures cited prove that neither souls nor bodies are immortal.

## MISCONCEPTIONS ON THE SUBJECT

What, then, is the soul? The general idea of the soul is that it is an indefinable *something* in us, but *what* it is or *where* it is located few attempt to explain. This unknown *something* is claimed to be the real, intelligent being, while the body is merely its house or container. A clergyman once defined a soul, stating: "It is without interior or exterior, without body, shape, or parts, and you could put a million of them into a nutshell";—a very good definition of *nothing*, we should say!

The body is not the soul, as some affirm. This is proven by Jesus' statement that "God is able to destroy *both* soul and body." In view of this, if our minds be freed from prejudice, we ought to be able to learn something further on this subject by examining the inspired record of man's creation.

### HOW MAN'S SOUL WAS CREATED

Turning to Gen. 2: 7, we read: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed [Heb. *blew*] into his nostrils the breath [Heb. *wind, power*] of life

[Heb. *lives*, plural—*i.e.*, such as was common to all living animals]; and man became a living soul [*i.e.*, a sentient being].”

From this account it appears that the body was formed first, but it was not a man, soul or *being*, until animated. It had eyes, but saw nothing; ears, but heard nothing; a mouth, but spoke nothing; a tongue, but no taste; nostrils, but no sense of smell; a heart, but it pulsated not; blood, but it was cold, lifeless; lungs, but they moved not. It was not a man, but a corpse, an inanimate body.

The second step in the process of man's creation was to give vitality to the properly “formed” and in every way prepared body; and this is described by the words “blew into his nostrils the breath of life.” When a healthy person has drowned, and animation is wholly suspended, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) has been effective introducing air into the lungs, and so gradually establishing the breath in the nostrils. In Adam's case it of course required no labored effort on the part of the Creator to cause the perfect organism which He had made to breathe

the life-giving oxygen of the atmosphere.

As the vitalizing breath entered, the lungs expanded, the blood corpuscles were oxygenized and passed to the heart, which in turn propelled them to every part of the body, awakening all the prepared, but until then, dormant nerves, to sensation and energy. In an instant the energy reached the brain, and thought, perception, reasoning, looking, touching, smelling, feeling and tasting commenced. That which was a lifeless human *organism* had become a *man*, a sentient being. The “*living soul*” condition mentioned in the text had been reached. In other words, the term “*living soul*” means neither more nor less than the term “sentient being”; *i.e.*, a being capable of sensation, perception, thought.

Moreover, even though Adam was perfect in his organism, it was necessary for him to *sustain* life, *soul* or sentient being, by partaking of the fruits of the trees of life. And when he sinned, God drove him from the garden, “*lest* he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree [plural, *trees* or *grove*] of life, and eat, and *live forever* [*i.e.*, by eating

continuously]” (Gen. 3: 22). How the fogs and mysteries of old scatter before the light of truth which shines from God’s Word!

### **ANIMALS ALSO ARE SOULS**

Now we can see why it is that the Scriptures speak of “souls” in connection with the lower animals. They, as well as man, are sentient beings or creatures of intelligence, only of lower orders. They, as well as man, can see, hear, feel, taste and smell; and each can reason up to the standard of his own organism, though none can reason as abstrusely nor on as high a plane as man. This difference is not because man has a *different kind of life* from that possessed by the lower animals; for all have similar vital forces, from the same fountain or source of life, the same Creator. All sustain life in the same manner, by the digestion of similar foods, producing blood, and muscles, and bones, *etc.*, each according to his kind or nature; and each propagates his species similarly, bestowing the *life*, originally from God, upon his posterity. They differ in shape and in mental capacity.

Nor can it be said that while man is a



*soul* (or intelligent being) beasts are without this soul-quality or intelligence, thought or feeling. On the contrary, both man and beast have soul-quality or intelligent, conscious being. Not only is this the statement of Scripture, but it is readily discernible as a fact, as soon as the real meaning of the word *soul* is comprehended, as previously shown.

To illustrate: Suppose the creation of a perfect dog; and suppose that creation had been particularly described, as was Adam's, what difference of detail could be imagined? The body of a dog created would not be a dog until the breath of life would be caused to energize that body;—then it would be a *living creature* with sensibilities and powers all its own—a living soul of the lower order, called dog. Like Adam, when he received life, he became a *living creature* with sensibilities and powers all his own—a living soul of the highest order of fleshly beings, called man.

### **MAN'S GREATER INTELLIGENCE**

If the great difference between man and beast is not in the life which animates both, and not from lack of soul-power, which both possess, can it be that the difference is

in their bodies? Yes; assuredly, the natural difference is physical, in addition to which is the fact that God has made provision for man's future, as expressed in His promises, while no such provision for a future life is made for beasts—nor are they intellectually capable of appreciating metaphysics. Other things being equal, the size and weight of the brain indicates capacity and intelligence. In this respect man has been more highly endowed than the brute, by the Creator. The brute has less brain power than man, and what it has belongs almost exclusively to the selfish propensities. Its highest conception of right and wrong is the will of its master, man. It cannot appreciate the sublime in morals or in nature. The Creator did not give it such brain-capacity.

But although, because of his fall into sin and death, man's condition is far from what it was in its original perfection when pronounced "very good" by the highest Judge—so that some, by the cultivation of the lower organs of thought and a failure to use the higher, intellectual faculties, have dwarfed the organs of the brain representing

these higher faculties, yet the organs are still there, and are capable of development, which is not the case with the most nearly perfect specimens of the brute creation.

So then it is in that the Creator has endowed man with a higher and finer organism, that He has made him to differ from the brute. They have similar flesh and bones, breathe the same air, drink the same water, and eat similar food, and all are souls or creatures possessing intelligence; but man, in his better body, possesses capacity for higher intelligence and is treated by the Creator as on an entirely different plane.

### THE BIBLE TESTIMONY

To this the Scripture testimony agrees. We read (Gen. 1: 29, 30), "To you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life [Heb. '*nepesh chayah*'—a living soul]."—Again (Gen. 1: 20), "Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath *life* [Heb.—a living soul]."—See marginal readings.

The same lesson, that the life principle

is no different in mankind from what it is in all other creatures whose breath is taken through the nostrils, as distinguishing them from fish, is taught in the account of the destruction wrought by the Deluge (Gen. 6: 17; 7: 15, 22). This is in full accord with King Solomon's statement that man and beast have all "one breath" [Heb. *ruach*, spirit of life]—one kind of life; and that "as the one dieth, so dieth the other" (Eccl. 3: 19). When he asks (Eccl. 3: 21), "Who knoweth the spirit of man that [it] goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that [it] goeth downward to the earth?" he is controverting the heathen theory, which even at that time had begun to speculate that man had some inherent quality which would prevent his death, even when he seemed to die. The wise man challenges any proof, any knowledge, to such effect. This challenge to others to produce proofs, or admit that they have no such knowledge, follows his statement of the truth on the subject in verses 19 and 20.

## **DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MAN AND BEAST**

The distinction between man and beast

is not in the kind of breath or life, but in that man has a higher organism than other animals; possessing moral and intellectual powers and qualities in the image or likeness of those possessed by the Creator, who has a still higher organism, of spirit, not of flesh. And, as already shown, man's hope for a future life lies not in his inherent powers, but in his Creator's gracious provision which centered in the redemption of every soul of man from death, by the great Redeemer, and the consequent provision that whosoever will may have everlasting life by resurrection, subject to the terms of the New Covenant.

Our Redeemer "poured out His soul [being] unto death," "He made His soul [being] an offering for sin" (Isa. 53: 10, 12); and it was the soul of Adam (and his posterity) that He thus bought with His precious blood—by making His soul (being) an offering for sin. Consequently souls were redeemed, and souls are to be awakened, resurrected (Psa. 49: 15).

### **MAN WILL LIVE AGAIN**

Yes, God has made provision for our living again; and ever since He made known

His gracious Plan, those who speak and write intelligently upon the subject (for instance, the inspired Scripture writers), as if by common consent, speak of the unconscious interim between death and the resurrection morning, in which sentient being is suspended, as a "sleep." Indeed, the illustration is an excellent one; for the dead will be totally unconscious of the lapse of time, and the moment of awakening will seem to them like the next moment after the moment of their death.

For instance, we read that, speaking of Lazarus' death, our Lord said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Afterward, because the disciples were slow to comprehend, He said, "Lazarus is dead" (John 11: 11, 14). Were the theory of consciousness in death correct, is it not remarkable that Lazarus gave no account of his experience during those four days? None will claim that he was in a "hell" of torment, for our Lord calls him His "friend"; and if he had been in heavenly bliss our Lord would not have called him from it, for that would have been an unfriendly act. But as our Lord

expressed it, Lazarus slept, and He awakened him to life, to consciousness, to his sentient being, or soul returned or revived; and all this was evidently a favor greatly appreciated by Lazarus and his friends.

## WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM “ASLEEP”

The thought pervades the Scriptures that we are now in the night of dying and sleeping as compared with the morning of awakening and resurrection. “Weeping may endure for a *night*, but joy cometh in the *morning*” (Psa. 30: 5). Thus, Luke says of Stephen, the first martyr, “*He fell asleep*”; and in St. Paul’s speech at Antioch we find the same appropriate, hopeful and peaceful figure of speech, “*David fell on sleep*” (Acts 7: 60; 13: 36). St. Peter uses the same expression, saying, “*The fathers fell asleep*” (2 Pet. 3: 4). St. Paul used the words “*asleep, slept or sleep*” many times as shown in the following scriptures:

“If there be no resurrection, . . . then they also which are fallen *asleep* in Christ are perished” (1 Cor. 15: 13, 18). “Christ is risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of

them that *slept*" (1Cor. 15: 20).

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are *asleep*" (1 Thes. 4: 13).

"Them that *sleep* in Jesus, will God bring [from the dead] with [by] him" (1 Thes. 4: 14).

The Biblical term sleep does not mean that they are not really dead but that they "fell asleep" (are dead) in peace to await the Lord's Day (the Day of Christ, the Millennial Day), fully trusting that He [Christ] is able to keep that which they committed unto Him against that Day (2 Tim. 1: 12). This same thought runs through the Old Testament as well—But Job puts the matter in very forceful language saying, "Oh, that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be [over] past!"

The present dying time is the time of God's wrath—the curse of death being upon all, because of the original transgression. However, we are promised that in due time the curse will be lifted and a blessing will come through the Redeemer to all the



families of the earth; and so Job continues, “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come; [then] thou shalt call (John 5: 25) and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire unto the work of thine hands” (Job 14: 13-15). And we of the New Testament times read our Lord’s response, All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God [calling them to awake and come to a full knowledge of God and to a full opportunity of everlasting life] (John 5: 28, 29).

## **IS THERE HOPE FOR THE UNSAVED DEAD**

Question: What is the hope held out for all except the Elect of the Gospel Age?

Answer: “The whole [human] creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God [the saints].” Then shall follow “times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began,” in which “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” through “Abraham’s Seed” (Rom. 8: 22, 19;

Acts 3: 19-21; Gal. 3: 16, 29).

**Question:** Are the dead conscious or unconscious?

**Answer:** “The dead know not anything” (Eccl. 9: 5; Psa. 146: 4; Isa. 38: 18, 19). “The dead praise not the Lord” (Psa. 115: 17; 6: 5; Eccl. 9: 6).

## REWARDS — AT DEATH OR RESURRECTION

**Question:** Were the Apostles promised translation to heaven at death?—or must they await Jesus’ Second Coming?

**Answer:** “As I said to the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you [Apostles],” “I will come again and receive you unto myself” (John 13: 33; 14: 3).

**Question:** Were the Ancient Worthies rewarded at death?

**Answer:** “These all died in faith, not having received the promises; . . . that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11: 13, 39, 40).

## DAVID NOT IN HEAVEN

**Question:** David was one of the holy prophets: Was he rewarded by being taken to heaven?

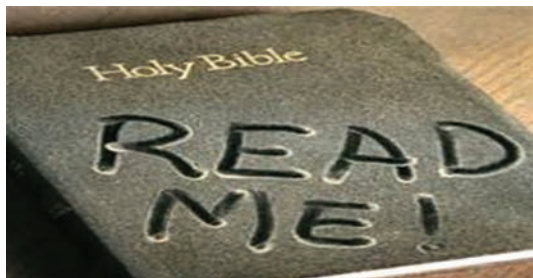
**Answer:** “David is not ascended into the heavens” (Acts 2: 34).

**Question:** How many had gone to heaven up to the time of our Lord’s ascension?

**Answer:** “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man” (John 3: 13).

**Question:** Can He who created man destroy him? Can the soul be destroyed by its Creator?

**Answer:** “Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna [the ‘Second Death’].” “He spared not their souls from death.” “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Matt. 10: 28; Psa. 22: 29; 78: 50; Ezek. 18: 4, 20; Joshua 10: 35; Isa. 38: 17; Psa. 56: 13; 30: 3; 119: 175; Matt. 26: 38; Isa. 53: 10, 12).



*“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*—Matthew 6: 10.

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