

PURPOSE OF STUDY: To show that man doesn't possess natural immortality, but that eternal life can be found in Jesus Christ alone.

TEXTS:

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| 1. REV 1:18 | 10. GE 3:4 |
| 2. JN 11:11-14 (PS 13:3) | 11. 1TI 6:15-16 |
| 3. EC 9:5-6 (PS 146:3-4) | 12. JN 3:16 (2TI 1:10) |
| 4. PS 115:17 | 13. 1CO 15:51-4 |
| 5. JOB 7:9-10 | 14. JN 6:39, 40, 44, 54 |
| 6. JOB 14:21 | 15. JN 14:1-3 |
| 7. GE 2:7; PS 104:29-30 | 16. AC 2:29, 34 (HEB 11:13, 39-40) |
| 8. EZE 18:4 | 17. 1JN 5:11-13 |
| 9. RO 2:6-8 (GE 3:22) | |

THE STUDY:

- 1. What keys does Jesus claim to possess in the book of Revelation? REV 1:18**
Jesus has the keys to death and the grave.
- 2. How does the Bible refer to death? JN 11:11-14 (PS 13:3)**
Jesus referred to death as a sleep. David referred to death as a sleep. The fact is that death is described as sleep more than 50 times throughout Scripture. This may come as a surprise to you, but the Bible does not teach that people go straight to heaven or hell when they die; it says they "sleep" in the grave.
- 3. Are we conscious in death? Do our thought processes continue? EC 9:5-6 (PS 146:3-4)**
No. The dead know nothing. Their thoughts perish. This sleep of death is an unconscious sleep, because there is no consciousness in death.
- 4. Can the dead worship God? PS 115:17**
According to the Bible, the dead don't praise the Lord. If people went straight to heaven when they died, you would think that praising the Lord would be at the top of their list. Yet the Bible is clear that there is no praise, because there is no consciousness in death. The dead went to sleep "in silence".
- 5. Do spirits of dead people return to their houses to "haunt" them? JOB 7:9-10**
No. The dead don't return to their houses for the purpose of haunting them or for any other reason. They rest silently and unconsciously in the grave.
- 6. Do our departed loved ones watch over us from heaven? JOB 14:21**
Our loved ones who have died have no knowledge of our successes or our failures. Isn't it far more comforting to know that our loved ones don't need to be disheartened with our heartaches and failures, but that we may be reunited with them when heartaches are forever a thing of the past?
- 7. Doesn't the Bible teach that we have immortal souls? GE 2:7; PS 104:29-30**
We don't have souls; we are souls. Notice that man was not given a living soul, but he became a living soul. Body + breath of life = living soul (nails + wood = box). The reverse is also true; Body – breath of life = corpse (box – nails = pile of building material). Notice how the words spirit and breath are used interchangeably. The fact is that both words are translated from the exact same Hebrew word, ruach, which means "breath", "wind", or "air". When a person dies, the "breath of life" figuratively returns to God, as He alone is the Lifegiver who holds life and death in His control.
- 8. What does the Bible say happens to the soul that sins? EZE 18:4**

The Bible says that the soul that sins will die. Never does the Bible use the term “immortal soul”. The Bible teaches that man is mortal, subject to death.

9. What does the Bible say the righteous man looks for? RO 2:6-8 (GE 3:22)

He seeks immortality. Why look for something that you already have? Man does not naturally have immortality, therefore He seeks it. Remember in the garden when God cast Adam and Eve out “lest they... live forever”?

10. Where does the teaching of the immortal soul come from anyway? GE 3:4

It was the serpent who said “You shall not surely die.” The difficulty we run into is that our culture has been heavily influenced by the pagan, and not the Biblical, idea of death.

11. According to the Bible, who is the only One who is immortal? 1TI 6:15-16

Only God is immortal. Immortality is an attribute of divinity. Only God has life in Himself, unborrowed and underived. That’s what makes Him God. He alone of those who have lived in humanity can give life.

12. Who does God promise to give the gift of immortality – eternal life – to? JN 3:16 (2TI 1:10)

Only those who believe receive immortality; Jesus has brought it to light through the gospel.

13. When does the believer receive immortality? 1CO 15:51-54

At the second coming of Jesus, at the last trumpet...the dead will be raised imperishable.

14. When did Jesus say He would raise the believers to eternal life? JN 6:39, 40, 44, 54

He clearly taught that He would raise up the believers “at the last day.” He repeats this 4 times in John 6.

15. Did Jesus teach that people go straight to heaven when they die? 14:1-3

Not at all. In fact, He taught that if we were going to be with Him where He was, He would need to come back to get us!

16. Did the apostles believe the spirits of the dead were in heaven? AC 2:29, 34 (HEB 11:13, 39-40)

Peter taught that David had not ascended into the heavens, but that he was still resting in his tomb in his day. Paul taught that most of the heroes of faith were yet enjoying their eternal reward. The exception, of course, would be Enoch, Moses and Elijah, whom the Bible teaches were taken to heaven early.

17. Since Jesus has immortality and will grant it to us when He returns at the Second Advent, how can we be sure to receive it? 1JN 5:11-13

He who has the Son has life. Death is a peaceful sleep until the return of Jesus. There is no consciousness of the passage of time in the grave. For the righteous, the next event after death is the resurrection. Death for the believer is no more to be feared than a rest in the arms of a loving Savior. When we accept Jesus we receive the gift of eternal life and the promise of immortality.

APPEAL:

God loves us so much that He gave His only Son so we could have hope beyond the grave – the hope of eternal life. He wants us to have the hope that we will see our loved ones again. Their lives are safe in His hands, as are ours. The most important question that we must settle is “Do I have the Son?” Have I given my life into the hands of Jesus? Have you? Don’t you want to place your life in His hands today?

DIFFICULT TEXTS/OBJECTIONS:

Ge. 35:18: “The Bible says that when Rachel died, her soul was departing (KJV); this means her soul went to heaven when she died.” The NIV translation says she “breathed her last”. In Luke 23:46 the KJV says Jesus “gave up the ghost.” The Greek word is *ekpneo*, which simply means “to expire; to breathe out”, which is why other translations translate this passage “He breathed His last.”

2 Co. 5:8: “The Bible says that as soon as we’re ‘absent from the body’ we are ‘present with the Lord’.” If you read the passage carefully, you will see that there are three stages of existence here – clothed in the earthly tent (body); unclothed or naked (in the grave); and clothed in the heavenly tent (body). Paul is simply expressing the desire to be “further clothed” with the immortal body. Most people miss the “unclothed” state of being in the grave, and assume that Paul is teaching we go to heaven at death.

Rev. 6:9-11: “Revelation says there are souls of martyrs under the altar in heaven, where they went when they died.” If the souls of the martyrs went right to heaven when they died, then the souls of their persecutors went right to hell when they died. In that case, the “souls” of the martyrs wouldn’t need to cry out for revenge. God told Cain in Genesis 4:10 that his brother Abel’s blood cried out *from the ground*. Did Abel’s blood really cry out? Of course not! This was merely a figurative way of saying that God keeps record of all who suffer for Him. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Ps. 116:15). In due time, God will avenge their blood at the punishment of the wicked.

1 Th. 4:14: “The Bible says when Jesus comes again, He will bring the souls of the righteous with Him to get their bodies.” The text says God will bring with Him (Jesus) those who *sleep*... First of all, take note that they are *asleep*. Second of all, the context likens God “bringing” these people to God raising His Son from the dead. Where did God bring His Son from? The grave, of course. And just as Christ died and was raised, “even so” (in the same manner) will God the Father bring (forth from the grave) those who sleep in Jesus. A companion text is 2 Co. 4:14, which tells us virtually the same thing. We know within the context that the living will not precede those who have fallen asleep, for the dead in Christ will “rise” and then the living will be caught up “with them”. They wouldn’t need to rise if Jesus were bringing them with Him – this is plainly speaking of bringing their bodies forth from the grave.

1 Pe. 3:19: “While Jesus was in the tomb, His Spirit went and preached to other spirits in prison so they could be saved.” The text tells us that the same Spirit working in Christ was the same Spirit through whom Christ Himself communicated His message to the people in Noah’s day who were enslaved by sin “*when... the longsuffering of God waited... while the ark was being prepared*”. This clearly refers to the work of the Spirit while the people were alive in Noah’s day, and not while they were dead and buried some time later. Furthermore, this text neither supports the idea of a second chance for salvation nor the immortality of the soul. Peter’s point is exactly the opposite – in Noah’s day the people had an opportunity to hear the gospel, but they refused to believe and were lost as a result. So in our day we have the same opportunity; if we refuse, we will *not* have a second chance, so we need to take this chance very seriously.

Lk. 23:43: “Jesus promised the thief on the cross that he would go to paradise the day that he died. This proves that the immortal soul goes to heaven at death.” Jesus told the thief “Assuredly, I say to you, Today you will be with Me in Paradise.” The first problem we run into is that this contradicts what the Bible says about death. The second problem is that Jesus couldn’t have promised the thief that he would be with Him in Paradise that day because Jesus didn’t go to Paradise that day. In John 20:17, on Sunday morning, two days after the crucifixion, Jesus tells Mary He has “not yet ascended” to His Father. The problem is in the punctuation of the passage, which was added by translators years after it was written. In light of the passage in John, it should read that Jesus said “Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise. In other words, “Today, when I don’t look like a King, much less Savior of the world, I am promising you eternal life.

Mt. 10:28: “Jesus said not to be afraid of the one who can kill the body, because our soul will still live.” The word translated “soul” is the Greek word “*psyche*”, and is used often in the NT to refer to our life (Mt. 10:39; 16:25; Lk. 14:26; Jn. 12:25; Ac. 20:10). In fact, there are 40 times in the NT where the word is translated “life”. The point Jesus is making has nothing to do with an immortal soul, which the Bible does not teach. Rather He is stating that, since He has the keys of death and the grave (Rev. 1:18),

we don't need to be afraid of the harm people can bring to our bodies, because our lives are in God's hands. God alone can "kill the soul," that is, take away our life. It is interesting to note that when Luke, a gentile author, writes about the same thing, he doesn't use the expression "destroy both soul and body." Instead, he says "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" (Lk. 12:4-5). One theory is that Luke, being a gentile author, and knowing the Greek concept of the immortal soul, did not want his readers to get the wrong idea and read Greek dualism into the text, so he avoided the use of the word "soul" altogether. The entire point is that the "soul" *can* be killed; that it is NOT immortal!

1 Sa. 28:7-19: "King Saul went to a spirit medium who summoned the immortal spirit of Samuel the Prophet." If we read the story carefully, we find many inconsistencies, not only with the Bible, but with the popular theory of the immortal soul. First of all, God had forsaken Saul (v. 16). Why would the spirit of Samuel, the faithful prophet of God, speak to Saul instead of God (especially when God urges His people to seek the living instead of the dead – Is. 8:19). Second, Saul got the information from a spirit medium, which God had forbidden His people to do (v. 9; Lv. 20:6; Dt. 18:10-12). Third, the alleged spirit came up from the ground; but if the popular theory is correct, which this passage is supposed to prove, then Samuel's spirit would have come from above, from heaven, and not from the grave. Fourth, Samuel tells Saul that he is going to die in battle, and come to be with him. But Saul was a wicked king, and if he would be going anywhere, it would certainly not be the same place that Samuel was. The reality of the passage is that the spirit that the medium conjured up was a "spirit of devils, working miracles..." (Rev. 16:14). God sent Saul a strong delusion, that he should believe the lie because he would not receive the love of the truth (2 Th. 2:11-12). The Bible records the reason that Saul died in 1 Chronicles 10:13 – "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness... because he consulted a medium for guidance..."