

LESSON 7 - BIBLE TEACHING ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

"He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof is known no more" Psalm 103:14-16.

The next "key" to unlocking the true teachings of scripture is to understand what it reveals to us concerning human nature. If we do not grasp the proper scripture fundamentals relating to human nature, we will never understand the truth concerning the work and teaching of Christ, who came to open and show the way to attain to immortality, which is a promised gift of God.

The universal opinion and concept of human nature is that there is in it something that is undying - something that will live on after the death of the body. The common term for this "something" is "soul", or "immortal soul". In this lesson we will see that while the words "immortal" and "soul" are both found in the Bible, **they are never once used together**, or even in the same verse or chapter. In fact, "immortal" is found only once in all of scripture, and that is in relation to God (1 Timothy 1:17).

What, then, DOES the Bible say about the "soul"? What is the scriptural definition of "soul"?

Please recall Lesson #4 (page 4) where we learned about the various helps that are available to help us with understanding the Bible, because English was not its original language. It is interesting in this regard to look up the word "soul" in Strong's Concordance, where we will find that the original words from which it was translated was the Hebrew "nephesh" and the Greek "psuche".

Armed with this knowledge we can trace the terms "nephesh" and "psuche" in Englishman's Hebrew and Greek concordances, which list together every occurrence of the original words in order. What is the point of such an exercise? We will confirm that nowhere in the whole of the Bible do we ever find such expressions as: "never-dying soul", "immortal soul", or "immortality of the soul". Rather we will find that what is said about souls is always the very opposite. We will find that the scriptures abound with references to the *absolute mortality and brief existence of humankind*.

Bible usages of the word "soul," indisputably determine its basic meaning. We find the word "soul" (Hebrew *nephesh*; Greek *psuche*) simply means a breathing creature, without any reference to how long it will exist.

In Genesis 1 and 2, the original Hebrew words describing animals

BibleKEY fact:

“ If we do not grasp the proper scripture fundamentals relating to human nature, we will never understand the truth concerning the work and teaching of Christ ”

BibleKEY Word Search:

"soul" - from Strongs Hebrew Dictionary #5315 (Old Testament) - **nephesh**, neh'-fesh; from 5314; properly, a breathing creature, i.e. animal or (abstractly) vitality; used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense (bodily or mental): Translated in the KJV by the following words: - any, appetite, beast, body, breath, creature, X dead (-ly), desire, X [dis-] contented, X fish, ghost, + greedy, he, heart (-y), (hath, X jeopardy of) life (X in jeopardy), lust, man, me, mind, mortally, one, own, person, pleasure, (her-, him-, my-, thy-) self, them (your) -selves, + slay, soul, + tablet, they, thing, (X she) will, X would have it.

BibleKEY fact:

“ We find the word "soul" simply means a breathing creature, without any reference to how long it will exist. ”

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and humans are the SAME (chay nephesh). What is said of one is said also of the other. For example

"God created . . . every living creature (chay nephesh) that moveth" (Genesis 1:21).

"Let the earth bring forth the living creature (chay nephesh)" (Genesis 1:24).

These verses are speaking exclusively of the animals, before man was created. The first 4 occurrences of *nephesh* (translated "*creature*" and "*life*") are applied to the animals (Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 30). Now please notice what is said concerning the creation of man -

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed (neshamah) into his nostrils the breath of life (neshamah chay), and man became a living soul (chay nephesh)." (Genesis 2:7).

We see that ***exactly the same words*** are used to describe both animals and mankind - though translated respectively "living creature" and "living soul." Both are living creatures, creatures of life. But nothing in the original Hebrew carries the idea of a creature of everlasting life. If it did, we would have to agree to the same condition for both men and animals. They are identical in basic physical constitution.

In Genesis 2:7, we are shown that Adam was formed of *the dust of the ground*; and when the breath of life entered his nostrils, HE (the inanimate dust form) "became a living creature," a creature of life. The dust-formed object itself ***became*** (not received) a living soul or creature, just like all the rest of the animals.

The Bible tells us souls can be hungry, and can be satisfied with food -

"An idle soul (nephesh) shall suffer hunger" (Proverbs 19:15).

"They gave their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul (nephesh)" (Lamentations. 1:11).

Souls can go to the grave, and come up from the grave -

"His soul (nephesh) draweth near unto the grave" (Job 33:22).

"He will deliver his soul (nephesh) from going into the pit (sheol = grave)" Job 33:28.

"Thou hast brought up my soul (nephesh) from the grave" (Psalms 30:3).

This word *nephesh* occurs about 750 times. It is rendered "soul" 470 times, "life" 120 times, person 30 times. It is applied to animals alone 22 times, and of men and animals together 7 times. It is also translated: man, person, self, beast, fish, creature, body, heart, appetite, etc. (see definition on page 1).

BibleKEY word search:

"breathed", "breath" - from Strong's Hebrew Dictionary #5397
neshamah, nesh-aw-maw'; fr. 5395; a puff, i.e. wind, angry or vital breath, divine inspiration, intellect. or (concr.) an animal: ***Translated in the KJV by the following words:*** - blast, (that) breath (-eth), inspiration, soul, spirit.

"life", "living" - from Strong's Hebrew Dictionary #2416: ***chay***, khah'-ee; from 2421; alive; hence raw (flesh); fresh (plant, water, year), strong; also (as noun especially in the feminine singular and masculine plural) life (or living thing), whether lit. or fig.: ***Translated in the KJV by the following words:*** - + age, alive, appetite, (wild) beast, company, congregation, life (-time), live (-ly), living (creature, thing), maintenance, + merry, multitude, + (be) old, quick, raw, running, springing, troop.

BibleKEY fact:

“...***exactly the same*** (Hebrew) words are used to describe both ***animals*** and ***mankind*** - though translated respectively "***living creature***" and "***living soul***" ”

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It is *never* said to be immortal: always the very opposite. It is over 300 times spoken of as being able to die, naturally liable to death, being killed (32 times), actually dead (13 times), and going to the grave (13 times). For example -

"None can keep alive his own soul (nephesh)" (Psalm 22:29).

"Shall he deliver his soul (nephesh) from the hand of the grave?" (Psalm 89:48).

"He spared not their soul (nephesh) from death" (Psalm 78:50).

Ezekiel says conclusively:

*"The soul (nephesh) that sinneth, **it shall die**" (18:4).*

Leviticus 24:17-18 is very striking and revealing -

"And he that killeth any man (nephesh) shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast (nephesh) shall make it good; beast (nephesh) for beast (nephesh)."

And finally, the Bible speaks of souls as actually dead -

"He shall come at no dead body (nephesh)" (Numbers 6:6).

"Neither go in to any dead body (nephesh)" (Leviticus 21:11).

And the New Testament picture is the same (where the Greek equivalent for "soul" is "*psuche*").

*"The third part of the creatures that were in the sea and had life (psuche), **died**" (Revelation 8:9).*

*"Every living soul (psuche) **died** in the sea" (Revelation 16:3).*

"Men that hazarded their lives (psuche) for the Name of Jesus" (Acts 15:25).

"Neither count I my life (psuche) dear to myself" (Acts 20:24).

"For the work of Christ he was nigh to death, not regarding his life (psuche) (Philippians 2:30).

To translate "*psuche*" by "immortal soul" in any of the above places would create an absurdity. Paul makes it inescapably clear that a "living soul" is a "natural body" when he says

"There is a natural (psuchikon < psuche: soulish) body, and there is a spiritual (pneumatikon) body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul (psuche); the last Adam [Jesus] was made a quickening spirit (pneuma)" (1 Corinthians 15:44).

The Scriptures show us clearly that, far from the common conceit of his being an ever-living portion of the divine essence, natural animal man unguided by the commandments of God, is as absolutely *nothing* -

"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing" (Daniel 4:35).

"Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away" (Psalm 144:4).

"What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

BibleKEY fact:

“ *Soul... is never said to be immortal: always the very opposite. It is over 300 times spoken of as being able to die, naturally liable to death, being killed (32 times), actually dead (13 times), and going to the grave (13 times)* ”

BibleKEY word search:

"soul" - (New Testament) from Strongs Greek Dictionary #5590 **psuche**, psoo-khay'; from 5594; breath, i.e. (by impl.) spirit, abstr. or concr. (the animal sentient principle only; thus distinguished on the one hand from 4151, which is the rational and immortal soul; and on the other from 2222, which is mere vitality, even of plants; these terms thus exactly correspond respectively to the Hev. 5315, 7307 and 2416): **Translated in the KJV by the following words** - heart (+ -ily), life, mind, soul, + us, + you.

BibleKEY fact:

“ *The Scriptures show us clearly that natural animal man unguided by the commandments of God, is as absolutely nothing* ”

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There is nothing anywhere in the Bible that makes a difference between a man and his body, or indicates that a man can exist apart from his body. We have seen that God made *man* (himself) of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and "*HE (the man) became a living soul*" or creature. The dust-formed being itself *became* a living creature.

This certainly refers to the body formed out of the dust. God did not breathe *into it* a "living soul." That is not what it says. It says the breath of life - breathed in - *made the dust-formed man a living soul*.

Because of disobedience to God's law, Adam (this dust-formed man) was sentenced to return to the earth (Genesis 3:17-19) -

"Till thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust THOU art, and unto dust shalt THOU return" (v.19).

The man himself was referred to as "thou" the conscious, guilty "thou". Similarly Abraham said of himself -

"I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27).

Mankind dies as the animals of the field. In constitution they are both alike. As we have seen that they were created alike, so we find they die in the same manner -

"I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy ALL flesh wherein is the breath of life (ruach chaiyim)" Genesis 6:17.

"ALL flesh died that moved upon the earth: of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life on the dry land, died" (Genesis 7:21-22).

Solomon adds the conclusive statement of God -

"That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them. As the one dieth, so dieth the other: yea, they HAVE ALL ONE BREATH (ruach: spirit, same word). So that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast . . . all go to one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes 3:18-20).

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (ruach, breath, animating power, that which was breathed in to make the dust-formed soul live) shall return to God Who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

That this is God's Own universal spirit, and not a personal conscious entity that ascends to God at death, is positively proven by exactly the same being said of the animals in Psalm 104 (see the whole context)

"Things creeping innumerable, small and great beasts . . . all wait on Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season . . . Thou takest away their breath (ruach: spirit), they die and return to their dust" (vs. 25-29).

BibleKEY fact:

“ *Man dies as the animals of the field. In constitution they are both alike. As we have seen that they were created alike, so we find they die in the same manner* ”

BibleKEY definition:

"constitution" - *the total physical condition and nature of the body*

BibleKEY word search:

"breath" - (Old Testament) from Strongs Hebrew Dictionary H7307 **ruwach**, roo'-akh; from 7306; wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; fig. life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extens. a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (includ. its expression and functions): **Translated in the KJV by the following words** - air, anger, blast, breath, X cool, courage, mind, X quarter, X side, spirit ([-ual]), tempest, X vain, ([whirl-]) wind (-y).

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And in the book of Job we read -

"If God set His heart upon man, if He gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh shall perish together, and MAN shall return again unto his dust" (Job 34:14-15).

Here again, it is clear that the spirit withdrawn is God's, and it is man himself who in consequence returns to dust. If it were true that man has an immortal soul that, at death, ascends up to be with God for ever, this statement would lose all its force; because it would then mean that when God withdraws His Spirit, all flesh would *not totally* perish, and man would *not totally* return to dust in the absolute and final sense that the context of the passage requires.

Solomon, we saw, said that *"man hath no pre-eminence above a beast"* (as to his natural life and physical constitution). Similarly David says -

"Man, being in honor, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:12).

"Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:20).

It is vitally important that we understand the truth of the Bible on this subject. This is the foundation. Without having clearly in our minds what we are by nature and what our natural destiny is we cannot understand God's plan of salvation. The popular theory of the "Immortality of the Soul" blinds people's eyes to the only means of attaining to the true Eternal Life, which is not a present possession, but the GIFT of God (Romans 6:23) to those who serve Him faithfully. Once having clearly perceived and accepted the Bible truth that man is a mortal, dying creature, a brief passing vapor, then we can go on to see the beautiful love and mercy of God in the scriptural plan of human redemption.

BibleKEY fact:

“ The popular theory of the "Immortality of the Soul" blinds people's eyes to the only means of attaining to the true Eternal Life, which is not a present possession, but the GIFT of God (Romans.6:23) to those who serve Him faithfully ”

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Name Mr/Mrs/Miss

Address Postal Code

* You may need an additional sheet for your answers if there is not enough space below. Your answers to the following questions will help you - and us - to determine how much you have discovered about your Bible. Please return this form in the envelope provided even if you are unable to answer all the questions. On receipt of it we will forward a further study, as well as some

1. What is the basic meaning of the word "soul" as used in the Bible?
2. What terms are used in Genesis 1:20 & 24 to describe animals as created?
3. What terms are used in Genesis 2:7 to describe man as created?
4. What are the Hebrew words used in Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 30; 2:7 for "living soul" and "living creature"?
5. Are men and animals described (physically) by God in the same way?
6. Is there anything in the original words which carries the idea of never dying immortality when the Bible mentions "living soul" and "living creature"?
7. From what was Adam created?
8. Is a soul capable of dying? Give two scriptural verses to prove your answer.
9. How does God value all who are not guided by His commandments?
10. Does the Bible show any difference between a man and his body?
11. In the creation of man, what was it that "became a living creature"?
12. What happens to man when he dies?
13. In what manner did Abraham describe himself in Gen. 18:27?
14. Quote verses to prove that animals and man all have the same breath of life.
15. Is there any difference between **man** and **animals** with regard to their physical nature? Try to use a passage of scripture to prove your answer.
16. What effect does the theory of the "Immortality of the Soul" have upon an understanding of God's plan of salvation?