

LESSON 11 - BIBLE TEACHING ABOUT IMMORTALITY (2)

"The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, & shall come forth: they that have done good to the resurrection of life, & they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation" - John. 5:28-29

IN THE PREVIOUS LESSON we reviewed the definitions and Bible applications of the terms "mortal" and "immortality". We saw how that the same terms are used for animals as are used in connection with humans when referring to the life principle. We went back to the beginning where the Bible narrates the very incidents connected with the origin of death, and illustrates that that which is the cause of death has been inherited by all generations. The lesson ended on the observation that it is **ONLY the good news of the Bible message** that contains the hope that people may live again under certain conditions. Any concept that theorizes about an automatic transition to an existence of any kind after death for all people that have ever lived is totally inconsistent with this scriptural fact.

This lesson will focus on immortality - **NOT OF THE SOUL BUT OF THE WHOLE PERSON**; and on what the Bible says about what we must do in order to be granted it.

We learn what immortality is by our daily association with mortality, which is deathfulness in relation to existence. A "mortal" is a creature capable of death, and whose natural end is death; dying; destined to death. We see it daily all around us. The Scriptures (and we also) speak of an animal "dying" just as they speak of a mortal man dying. We have no difficulty accepting the plain clear meaning as to the animal. But under the "immortal-soul, eternal torture" theory, when we come to the mortal man, we must give "dying" an entirely different meaning.

Immortality is just the reverse of mortality: deathlessness, endless existence. To be immortal, we require to be incorruptible in substance, just as now we are corruptible. Paul, speaking of the body of the righteous, present and future, in death and resurrection, says -

"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption . . . it is sown a natural BODY, it is raised a spiritual BODY" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

And further in verses 51-53 -

"We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed . . . this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

This is the only way the Scriptures ever say we can attain to eternal life: by bodily change at the resurrection at the last day. Till then the dead "sleep." Note the Scripture's constant emphasis on the BODY. It knows nothing of existence without a body. And this "spiritual BODY" the righteous will be changed to is a real substantial body which can be handled and felt. Our bodies, we are told, will be made like unto Christ's

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"glorious BODY." We learn what this is like by events which happened right after his resurrection. He said to his disciples -

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I MYSELF: handle me, and see: for a spirit (such as they imagined, an apparition) hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

The risen, immortal Christ had "flesh and bones." "It is I myself." The disciples handled Jesus, and he ate with them (v. 43). To Thomas he said later (John 20:27) -

"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

This same body was to continue forever -

"This SAME Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

What "same Jesus"? The very one with "flesh and bones" - "I myself" - whom they had handled a few days before. Such is the body like unto which our bodies will be fashioned at Christ's return, if we are accepted of him.

Animal, or natural, bodies are sustained by the blood coursing through their veins:

"The life of all flesh is in the BLOOD thereof" (Leviticus 17:14).

NOT, we note, in some imaginary, abstract, immortal spark that is just using the body. Present animal life is not inherent and self-sustaining. It depends on all the continuing, uninterrupted, orderly functions of this animal system - breathing, digestion, blood circulation, etc., - and is at the total mercy of the environment: heat, cold, pressure, lack of air, poison, disease, violence, accident, all these can destroy it. And it is inherently, of itself, steadily tending to death. The cleverest doctor cannot cure this condition: he may merely postpone briefly death's victory.

Jesus is the only true doctor who can heal eternally. He offers resurrection to a spirit-body existence, independent of environment, and free from any possibility of accident, dissolution, disease or decay -

"That which is born of the Spirit IS spirit" (John 3:6).

- for the "mortal and corruptible" has "put on" - been transformed to - "immortality and incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:53). Paul told the Roman ecclesia (Romans 8:11) -

"He that raised up Christ from the dead (the Example and Forerunner) shall also quicken your MORTAL bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in you."

Note well that eternal life comes only by a mortal BODY being "quicken" - not by the flying off somewhere of some supposed "immortal essence" in man.

This "quicken" (which means "being made alive") is the second birth into literal life. (Scripturally, it is the 3rd "birth": The 1st birth refers to birth from the womb; the 2nd birth refers to birth from water at baptism into Christ; the 3rd birth refers to birth from the grave by Spirit-transformation at the resurrection - John 3:5). Daniel was shown that the

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“Our bodies, we are told, will be made like unto Christ's "glorious BODY." We learn what this is like by events which happened right after his resurrection. The risen, immortal Christ had "flesh and bones." "It is I myself." The disciples handled Jesus, and he ate with them (Luke 24:39,43). Such is the body like unto which our bodies will be fashioned at Christ's return, if we are accepted of him.”

BibleKEY definition:

Quicken: "being made alive"

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righteous would have glorious, shining bodies, radiating the Spirit of God (Daniel 12:3) -

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

And Isaiah describes their tireless strength and vigor, a glorious gift of God to be like Himself (Isaiah 40:28-31) -

"The everlasting God, the Lord, Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary . . . They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint".

This gift, so freely offered by God (for no man could possibly earn or merit it), is still conditional upon man's TOTAL submission to God and diligent obedience to His will. What God expects from us we may compare to what we expect of our children. We do not expect them to be perfect; but we do expect them - if we do our part properly (as God always does) - to submit and obey in love to the best of their ability.

God alone is the Judge and Prescriber of what is right and required in the way of obedience, as we have seen from Romans 2:7 -

"To them (and to them only) who by patient continuance in well doing seek for . . . immortality, (God will render) eternal life."

"Patient continuance" is the key - a steady, consistent course in the right spirit -

"He that DOETH God's will shall enter into the Kingdom" (Matthew 7:21).

"He that OVERCOMETH shall eat of the Tree of Life" (Revelation 2:7).

"They that DO His commandments shall have right to the Tree of Life" (Revelation 22:14).

"Eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him" (Hebrews 5:9).

"If thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matthew 19:17).

Such passages show that only certain ones who follow a specific course of life will be given immortality. Note that, unfortunately, this goes contrary to the flesh-pleasing theory (termed "Universalism") that all at last will be forced to be saved, in spite of themselves. **God desires love and freewill obedience.** As we have seen, the principle of free-will is at the very root of God's purpose with His creation. In direct connection with those who will be saved, the Scriptures speak of those who will be destroyed. The next verse in Romans 2, for example, says of the same final "day of wrath and revelation" -

"But to them who do not obey the Truth, (God will render) indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man that doeth evil."

Contrary to Universalism, the Bible's message is that only a few will be saved -

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and FEW there be that find it" (Matthew. 7:14).

"Cast him into outer darkness . . . many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew. 22:13).

Universalism is a gross over-exaltation of the importance of man. And it is an understandable, humane revulsion against the dreadful orthodox theory of hopeless, purposeless, never-ending torture for the great bulk of mankind.

God's purpose, as revealed by the Scriptures, is not to perpetuate forever

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“What God expects from us we may compare to what we expect of our children. We do not expect them to be perfect; but we do expect them - if we do our part properly (as God always does) - to submit and obey in love to the best of their ability.”

BibleKEY definition:

Universalism: "the theological doctrine that ultimately all men will be saved by God's grace"

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every human being that ever lived. The divine plan is the development of a select, spiritually-minded, heavenly-charactered family for God's Glory and Name. The worlds vast and teeming passing populations are merely incidental to that Plan. God graciously invites all, but He forces none. Let not dust-and-ashes animal man exaggerate his fictitious importance. God is -

"Taking OUT OF the nations a people for His Name" (Acts 15:14).

Jesus says, clearly defining the two FINAL destinies (John 5:28-29) -

"The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

To many, indoctrinated in the theories of the religious establishment, "damnation" inescapably carries the picture of eternal hell flames. But it simply means "condemnation, rejection, judgment against"; and the judgment is total destruction -

"Punished with everlasting DESTRUCTION" (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Some again argue that if it is "destruction", then it is not "punishment" - that one must be conscious to be "punished". Have they never heard of "capital punishment"? Deprivation of life - especially where perfect, endless life is at issue is the supreme and ultimate punishment. It completely rids God's beautiful universe of the wicked without leaving billions screaming hopelessly in hell to all eternity. Any who can believe in eternal hell tortures is no fit material for the family of a loving God. God is just and stern, but He is not a fiend, as the superstitions of Christendom make Him to be. He is truly, to the wicked, a "consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29) - but, remember, it is a "**consuming**" fire: not an ever-torturing one.

"He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8).

- which ends in the triumph of death. The wicked are finally overcome and swallowed up by the "Second Death". Being of no use in the divine economy, they are put out of the way:

"Where the wicked cease from troubling" (Job 3:17).

Beside the accepted and the condemned, a third class of people are those who never knew the will of God, never having seen the light of His Word. These will not be saved, as is commonly supposed. If such were saved, it would be wiser to remain in darkness. Knowledge would merely endanger their salvation. Preaching the Gospel would be the height of cruelty, if ignorance assures salvation. Catholicism is more logical than Protestantism in this respect, for it has its "limbo" for problem cases. But both are wrong. The Bible reveals that -

"As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." (Romans 2:12)

Perfectly just, perfectly reasonable: no obedience or disobedience; therefore no reward or punishment. In God's plan, all those without knowledge of His law are not responsible to His law. Resurrection does not take place in their case. As Isaiah says, speaking of the heathen who had afflicted Israel -

BibleKEY fact:

“*The divine plan is the development of a select, spiritually-minded, heavenly-charactered family for God's Glory and Name.*”

BibleKEY word search:

"destruction" - Strong's # 684 apoleia, ap-o'-li-a; from a presumed der. of 622 (see below); ruin or loss (phys., spiritual or eternal):-damnable (-nation), destruction, die, perdition, X perish, pernicious ways, waste.

622 apollumi, ap-ol'-loo-mee; from 575 and the base of 3639; to destroy (reflex. to perish, or lose), lit. or fig.:-destroy, die, lose, mar, perish.

BibleKEY definition:

"second death" - a term used in Revelation describing the death of those who, after appearing before Christ at the Judgement Seat, are judged unworthy of eternal life and are left to experience a final death from which there will be no hope of

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"They are dead: they shall not live. They are deceased: they shall not rise: Thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." (Isaiah 26:14)

And of the same class, Jeremiah says -

"They shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake" (Jeremiah 51:39).

"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (Proverbs 21:16).

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

(Does "perish" here, applied to beasts, mean eternal life in torture? Who would say so? If not, neither can it mean that for man, who is "like" them).

"Alienated (separated) from the life of God through ignorance" (Ephesians 4:18).

"Having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

All men are sinners in their natural state, though most are ignorant and non-responsible:

"The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:25).

"Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Christendom's theories of saving these ignorant sinners en masse (they dare not send them to eternal torments) puts a premium on ignorance, and makes knowledge a thing to be avoided at all costs. But God is just, and herein is His justice shown. God could not with justice punish those who were not obedient to a Law they did not know. Neither could He in justice reward them for that they did not do. Therefore He puts them aside. The true doctrine of the mortal, perishing nature of man, just like the beasts, solves the horrible orthodox nightmare of billions writhing in endless torture as the ultimate result of God's purpose. What a travesty of a loving God! What a colossal divine failure that would be!

Everlasting Life is not a present, universal possession. It is a future reward to be bestowed upon the righteous and obedient, through the mercy of God, at the last day judgment seat of Christ, when he returns to the earth to reign.

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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. a) Through what message is life and immortality possible to mankind?

b) Of what significance is this to theories about existence after death?
2. What is the meaning of immortality?
3. What happens to the righteous who are alive when Christ comes?
4. a) What is the nature of the spiritual body?

b) How do we know?
5. How are natural bodies sustained in life?
6. What class of people will be rejected at the judgment seat?
7. To what belief or doctrine does the term "Universalism" refer?
8. What will happen to the enlightened rejectors, and those who are disobedient to the will of God?
9. What will happen to those who die without knowing God or His will?
10. Why is God just in letting the ignorant remain in their graves to live no more?