



LESSON 15

THE “IMMORTAL SOUL” DOCTRINE PART 5

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

In Lesson 14 we saw examples of how the New Testament supports what the Old Testament teaches concerning **soul** and **death**. No evidence was found to support the pagan teaching of an “immortal soul” that exits men’s bodies at death and continues living consciously in an alternate realm or dimension. We have learned that this concept is foreign and contradictory to God’s Word.

However, a number of New Testament passages are commonly used by proponents of the so-called “immortal soul” doctrine in an attempt to prove their position. In this lesson we will examine a few of these passages to see what they really say in light of the scriptural meaning of soul. In doing so, we will see that none of these examples support the spurious “immortal soul” doctrine.

MOSES AND ELIJAH ON THE MOUNT

The episode of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13) is often used by advocates of the “immortal soul” doctrine as proof that the dead are really alive – i.e. their so-called “immortal soul” continues living after their body dies. So let us examine this example to see what it really says.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 17:1-13.

1. According to verse 2, Jesus was _____ before the disciples.
2. Who does verse 3 say appeared to the disciples? _____ and _____
3. What does verse 3 say they were doing? _____
4. Jesus told the disciples in verse 9, “Tell the _____ to no man ...”

Those who claim the preceding passage shows that Moses and Elijah were still alive long after their death, invariably quote only the first few lines. They incorrectly reason that since Moses and Elijah were seen by the disciples and were talking to Jesus, they must have still been alive. After all, they say, dead people could not speak and be seen. However, verse 9 (which is always avoided by these “immortal soul” advocates) clearly indicates that what the disciples saw was **a vision** – i.e. something like a dream (not real). In other words, to make a point, God had given them a vision that featured Moses and Elijah.

The word **vision** in this passage is correctly translated from the Greek word **horama** also used in reference to Peter’s **vision** described in the tenth chapter of Acts.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 10:9-19.

1. According to verse 10, Peter fell into a _____.
2. Verses 11 and 12 indicate Peter saw a great _____ descending in which was a variety of four-footed _____.
3. Verse 19 states, “While Peter thought on the _____ ...”

No serious Bible student would claim that the sheet and animals in Peter’s **vision** were real and alive. Yet, some want the **vision** in Matthew 17 to mean that Moses & Elijah were real and alive. To use this passage as proof that Moses and Elijah were still alive at that time completely ignores the fact that the experience was a **vision**. This error violates prudent study procedure and causes confusion.

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

Advocates of the “immortal soul” doctrine also use Matthew 22:32 to attempt to prove that Jesus believed the dead are not really dead. This verse, they say, proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive ... somehow. However, they use this verse out of context. One might wonder ... if they believe that death is not real, then they must also believe that the “raising” is not real. Without a real death there can be no real raising.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 22:23-33.

4. Verse 23 states, “The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no _____ ...”
5. In verse 29 Jesus tells these Sadducees, “Ye do err, not knowing the _____ , nor the power of God.”
6. After quoting God’s words from Exodus 3:6, Jesus states in verse 32, “God is not the God of the _____ , but rather of the _____ .”

Jesus was refuting the Sadducee's doctrine that the dead are not raised. He was not stating that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive in "heaven" or any other place. Rather, He was referring to the "life" or motivation that was in Israel's patriarchs who followed God. That "life" or inspiration was the subject. It distinguished between those who loved God and those who didn't. That "life" was the subject of Moses' lecture to Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19, "*I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live.*" Moses was not referring to biological life. They were already alive biologically. Rather, he meant the gift of spiritual life that opens men's eyes and compels them to follow God.

Since we have seen in earlier lessons that the biologically dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and in death there is no remembrance of God (Psalm 6:5), it logically follows that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead at this time, and Jesus was not suggesting that they were still alive. Rather, Jesus was stating that God had given Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob new life/spirit in the day they were biologically alive. That they had been given "life" was the proof that Yahweh was their God.

Moses and Jesus both were speaking of "life" in the sense of inspiration and motivation from God. In fact, those who claim that people never fully die, and they can remain alive as "immortal souls," are negating the need of a future raising. Without death, there is no need of a "raising from the dead."

BELIEVERS "NEVER DIE"

John 11:25 is used by some in an attempt to prove that Christians continue to live in "heaven" after their death. Let's take a closer look at this passage to see what it really says.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 11:1-44.

1. In verse 24 Martha says that she knows her brother Lazarus will _____ again in the raising at the last day.
2. Jesus responds in verse 25 by saying, "I am the raising, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were _____, yet shall he _____."
3. Jesus continues in verse 26 by stating, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall not _____ ("in the age"). (The phrase in parentheses is in the Greek but omitted in the KJV.)"

In verse 24 Martha refers to her understanding of the future raising. However, in verse 25 and 26 Jesus emphasizes **a different raising**: a spiritual raising from spiritual death. This raising refers to the "new birth" or regeneration also called being "born again." This takes place during a person's biological lifetime. Verse 26 is not saying that believers never die biologically. Rather, it says believers will be "alive" (spiritually) "into the age" of Christ's Reign: during the New Covenant Age [which is NOW].

The idea of people "going to heaven when they die" derives from pagan origins: religions that worship "sky gods." The idea is simply inserted into this passage by translators. Nowhere in this passage is it stated (or suggested) that Lazarus' soul continued to live. In verse 14 Jesus plainly stated that the man Lazarus was dead. He made no reference to Lazarus being "alive in heaven" or in "limbo." While only his body had died. According to verses 17 and 39, the man Lazarus had been dead in the grave during the four days following his death ... not alive in an alternate existence. In verse 43 Jesus made no reference to calling Lazarus back from another existence to re-enter his decomposing body. These pagan notions are interjected into this passage without Scriptural evidence to substantiate them.

THE “SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR”

Revelation 6:9-11 is sometimes wrongly used as proof that Christian martyrs are alive in “heaven.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Revelation 6:9-11.

1. According to verse 9, where did John see those who had been slain? _____
2. Verse 10 indicates they cried with a loud _____ .
3. In verse 11 they are given white _____ and told to _____ for a little season.

It is important, first of all, to understand that this “opening of the fifth seal” is part of a **vision** that John saw nearly 2,000 years ago. As in the “appearance” of Moses and Elijah on the mount with Jesus, this scene occurred only in a **vision**. The language used is symbolic in meaning.

Those who misuse this passage as proof that souls of dead people are “alive in heaven” do not attempt to explain why these souls are said to be “under the altar.” Neither do they explain why these souls were told to “rest for a little season.”

The symbolic language used in this passage is very similar to that used in the case of Abel (refer back to lesson 13). Recall that when Cain murdered Abel, God did not say that Abel’s soul went up to Him “in heaven” to tell Him that Cain killed him. Rather, God said that Abel’s blood cried from the ground. Righteous Abel certainly would be included in the symbolic souls John saw in his vision that were crying from under the altar. In fact, there is an interesting connection between “crying from the ground” and “crying from under the altar.”

These martyrs were people (souls) who had lost their lives defending their faith in Christ. In fact, any true Christian presents himself to God as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1) and is willing to sacrifice his life for his faith. Interestingly, the word **slain** in Revelation 6:9 is translated from the Greek word **sphazo** which means “to slay, or slaughter” ... referring also to a sacrifice.

In the law of sacrifices in Leviticus 4, the priests were commanded to offer the bullocks upon the altar and “pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering” (Leviticus 4:7). The blood of sacrificed animals was to be poured under the altar upon the ground. In fact, even when the people killed animals for food, they were also commanded to pour the blood upon the ground and cover it with dust. Why? Leviticus 17 says that it was because the soul (life) of the animal is in the blood; and the soul of the animal was to be put in the ground. The fact that the animal soul was killed and placed in the ground proves that man’s soul also dies and goes into the ground ... not to “heaven.”

John did not see dead saints living in “heaven.” Rather, he saw a **vision** representing righteous saints (symbolized by “white robes”) who were “slain for (i.e., dedicated to) faith in God” and were “under the altar” where they were abiding in the “rest” (Hebrews 4) provided by Christ.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Hebrews 11:5 says, “By faith Enoch was _____ that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him...”
5. Hebrews 11:13 plainly states, “These **all** [including Enoch] _____ in faith...”

Some say that Hebrews 11:5 proves that Enoch never died, but that God took him directly to “heaven” ... assuming that “Heaven” is a place where people can go to live forever. But, verse 13 clearly includes Enoch among those that **died**. The phrase “he should not see death” does not mean “that he should never die.” It means that God moved Enoch out of the hands of wicked men who sought to kill him. It is clear from Hebrews 11:13 that Enoch did indeed die eventually.

Hebrews 11:4-5 corroborates Genesis 5:24 which was discussed in lesson 13. The word **translated** is rendered from the Greek word **metatithemi** which means to transfer or transport. Enoch was transported and thus spared death temporarily, but he died later. Enoch’s transportation can be viewed in much the same manner as Elijah’s transportation (2 Kings 2:11) as explained in Lesson 13.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

A New Testament story that is used by some to try to prove the “immortal soul doctrine” is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). This story, they claim, tells of “souls” or “spirits” of dead people who are still alive. The claim, of course, is that the righteous go to a place called “heaven” after they die, while the wicked dead go to a “burning hell.” However, this story is clearly a parable.

PARABLE VS. LITERAL

This passage of Scripture is not a historical account of the fate of two literal people. Rather, it is a **parable**. Therefore, like all parables, it is figurative (symbolic) and should be understood as such. However, some say that because this passage speaks of a “certain” rich man, it refers to a literal man. However, other parables, which no one would take literally, begin the same way. Consider the following examples.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Luke 13:6, Jesus began the parable of the vineyard with the words, “A _____ man had a fig tree ...”
2. In Luke 15:11, Jesus began the parable of the two sons with the words, “A certain _____ had two sons...”
3. In Luke 16:1, Jesus began the parable of the unjust steward with the words, “There was a certain _____ man...”

Teaching people about deep spiritual values is not easy. Jesus used parables, along with other ways, to give his disciples insight and inspiration. Jesus gave of himself (his life – his soul) for the good and well-being of people who needed help. His life, and his death, were dedicated to rescuing us from sin and death. His life, and his death, were given for the purpose of implanting **life** – eonian life – into his disciples. Jesus explained that the highest love that a person can show is to dedicate his life (soul) for the benefit of those he loves. It means laying aside (denying) personal pursuits and comforts, and dedicating one’s self for the betterment of others. Jesus is the perfect example of such love.

THE “HEAVEN” OF THE CHURCHES

Many claim this parable shows that the beggar went to a location called “heaven.” Yet, the word “heaven” never appears in the story. This word is simply assumed or read into the account.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Luke 16:22 states that the beggar was carried to Abraham’s _____ .

Some, who believe this is a literal story about the pagan concepts of “heaven” and “hell,” will say that “Abraham’s bosom” is symbolic of “heaven.” However, if it were literal as they claim, why would symbolic language be used in a literal story? Again, this is inconsistent. Also, nowhere in Scripture is the term “Abraham’s bosom” used to refer to a place called “heaven.” This false notion is simply interjected into the passage. In addition, if the so-called “heaven” is symbolically represented, then why was the so-called “hell” not so represented? Here is another unexplainable inconsistency.

MISUSE OF “HELL”

Those who try to use this story to prove that wicked people go to a fiery place called “hell” when they die do not understand the meaning of the Greek word translated as **hell**.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. According to Luke 16:23, where was the rich man? _____

The word **hell** in the above verse is translated from the Greek word **hades**. This word is used nine other times in the New Testament, and in none of them is it connected in any way to a place of torment for sinners. Let’s consider these examples.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. In Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15, the city of _____ , which was “exalted unto heaven,” was to be brought down to **hell [hades]**.

This town was located in Galilee. It was not in an outer space “heaven,” nor was it sent down to a subterranean burning hell to be tortured. The concept of “hell,” as commonly taught in most churches today, does not fit the meaning of this verse. The churches teach the doctrines of “Heaven,” and “Hell” as it was borrowed from ancient pagan beliefs.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus states that the _____ of hell [hades] would not prevail against his ecclesia.

Since the word “gates” refers to courts, this is a reference to man’s ungodly law system not being able to prevail against the Reign of Christ. The idea of a burning place of conscious torment for dead people makes absolutely no sense for this verse.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Acts 2:27 and 31 state that God did not leave Christ’s _____ in hell [hades].

If the word **hades** in the above verse referred to a burning place of torment for the wicked, then what sense would it make to state that Jesus’ spirit would not be left there? Obviously, this makes no sense and is a blasphemous thought. Since we have learned that “souls” can die; and since Jesus was dead in the tomb for a short time; this verse is simply saying that God did not allow Jesus to remain in a state of death, but raised Him up.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. Revelation 1:18, 6:8, 20:13-14 all speak of _____ and hell [hades].”

None of the above references in Revelation make any mention of a state of conscious torment in a burning subterranean abode. The churches simply read this pagan idea into the passage. Where did such a revolting idea come from? From Greek and Roman **mythology**. The word “hades” meant “unseen place.” The Greek & Roman pagans borrowed the term and redefined it to refer to a place where the dead lived on in a conscious state. This mythical Greek/Roman concept, which is a cornerstone of church religion, certainly did not come from Holy Scripture. (The subject of “hell” will be studied in more detail in future lessons.)

The term “hades” in the Greek lexicon means “unseen place.” The concept of being “in hades” simply means being dead, forgotten, or unseen. To discard plain Bible teaching and interpret this **parable** as a pagan Roman story, is neither logical nor justifiable.

MISUNDERSTANDING OF “TORMENT”

Some argue that the phrases “in torments” and “place of torment” in this story prove the existence of a literal place where wicked souls go to be tortured. This error is caused by interpreting figurative language in a literal manner, and by assuming that the Bible agrees with pagan Greek theology.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Speaking of the dead rich man, Luke 16:23 states, “And in hell [hades] he lifted up his eyes, being in _____.”
2. Luke 16:28 says, “... lest they also come into this place of _____.”

The words “torments” and “torment,” in the King James Version, are rendered from the Greek word **basanos** meaning a “touchstone.” A “touchstone” is a stone used to test (examine) metals for purity. This word is figuratively used for the examination, scrutinizing, trying or testing of a person – his motives, character, integrity, etc. **Basanos** does not suggest a subterranean burning hell, as some like to think. “Torment” is a wrong translation. The rich man was obviously being tested.

OTHER INCONSISTENCIES

If this parable were really a literal story of two men, one in “hell-fire” and one in “heaven,” then consider the following questions:

1. Why did Jesus use so many symbols: purple, fine linen, gate, sores, crumbs, table, dogs, five brethren, etc.
2. Why does the Bible not mention anywhere else about people conversing between “heaven” and “hell”?
3. Considering the pagan doctrine, how could a person in “hell” see another person in “heaven” and speak to him?
4. Why did Abraham refuse to testify to the five unbelieving brethren?

There is much more to this story. Space in this lesson does not permit further explanation of this tremendous kingdom parable. (It will be dealt with in more detail in later lessons.)

THE THIEF IN PARADISE

One of the favorite passages used as proof that people continue living after they die (i.e. by way of their so-called “immortal soul”) is the story of the thief on the cross. However, a close study of the context proves otherwise.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 23:39-43.

3. In verse 42 the repentant malefactor (wrong-doer, i.e. criminal) told Jesus, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy _____.”
4. Jesus said that the thief hoped to be in _____.

These verses are interpreted by many to mean that Jesus took the thief with Him to “heaven” immediately after he died ... to continue living in an alternate venue. However, this conclusion is based upon faulty assumptions. First, the word “paradise” does not refer to a place in the sky. That idea was adopted by the churches from Greek/Roman myth about pagan gods who lived in sky abodes. Secondly, they misunderstand Jesus’ statement. They assume He was giving a promise to the thief, but in fact He was chiding the thief for thinking that a “death bed confession” would get him into the pagan’s “heaven.”

“PARADISE”

First of all, notice the relationship between the words “kingdom” (verse 42) and “paradise” (verse 43). Immediately after the malefactor asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom, Jesus told him he would be with Him in paradise. This indicates Jesus understood these two terms to be closely related, if not identical. Jesus’ kingdom refers to His “reign.”

Notice that the word “heaven” appears nowhere in this passage. The idea that “paradise” means “heaven” is simply read into the passage or is assumed without any Scriptural evidence. Nowhere in the New Testament does the Greek word for “paradise” [**paradeisos**] mean “heaven” or a location in outer space.

Jesus did not tell the repentant criminal that he would go to a place in the sky when he died. Rather, Jesus answered him that death was not the end ... and he would receive life in “the raising.”

KINGDOM & PARADISE

The word “kingdom” is translated from the Greek “**basileia**” which means “kingship” or “reign.” In the New Testament is usually refers to the Reign of Christ. That Reign began when God put Jesus upon the throne and gave Him “all authority” (Mtt. 28:18).

Under Christ’s Reign his people are under his protection. “Paradise” is translated from the Greek “**paradeisos**” – from an ancient Persian word meaning “enclosure, garden, park.” It is an area or state of protection under Christ’s Kingship.

USE OF THE WORD “TODAY”

Some will argue that Luke 23:43 states that Jesus and the malefactor went to “Heaven” the same day they died. That would mean they didn’t really die. The way this passage is rendered in most Bible versions they seem to support this idea. However, the following is a literal translation of the Greek text.

LITERAL TRANSLATION OF LUKE 23:43b

“... truly, to you I am saying, today you will have yourself with me in the paradise.”

Let us consider this carefully. This has been a difficult verse, not because it was originally said or written in a difficult way, but because it has been transmitted down through the years via translators and teachers inured with pagan church doctrine.

Actually, Jesus was saying that it was a little late for the dying thief to be looking for a way to repent. The blessings of forgiveness and eonian life can hardly be enjoyed when one is dead. Thus, the fallacy of the “deathbed confession.”

The malefactor had spent his time as a thief, and his habits had eaten up his years that could have been used to repent and seek truth. Now he was trapped in a Roman net from which there was no escape. Therefore, the option of protection under Christ’s Reign (i.e., “paradise” or protection and safety) was no

longer an option since the time to enjoy protection and safety during his "life" was quickly fading. I agree that true repentance, regardless of when, is commendable. But as Solomon wrote, "Remember your Creator now, in the days of your youth, ..." (Ecclesiastes 12:1) i.e., while you still have time and vigor to serve Him. I don't think "youth" meant literal childhood, but rather "before your youthful vigor is spent" ... or, in the case at hand, "before death is imminent."

The thief mistakenly believed in the pagan ideas promoted in Mithraism (an offshoot of Zoroastrianism which is also called Babylonianism). One such idea is a post-death "life in the sky."

The Greek verb in question in this verse ("esh" - ese) is future middle voice. But the *KJV* translators have rendered it merely future (see GREEK SYNTAX below).

HERE ARE SOME POINTS TO PONDER:

1. The thief asked Jesus to remember him when He (Jesus) came into his kingship (vs. 42). So, when did Jesus come into his "kingship"? He was announced as King upon his ascension to the throne after God raised him from the dead (Matthew 28:18). Since Christ's Reign began after the thief died, how could it benefit the dead thief?

2. Since "paradise" means a pleasant place of safety and protection, Jesus could not have been referring to a paradise after death, for the dead are resting in the grave; they "know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and need no protection or safety. In death there is no awareness, no threat, no temptation, no sin.

3. Obviously, the thief was thinking in terms of the pagan myth that the dead continue to live. Jesus, however, said in essence: Your attempt at repentance is both misguided and too late.

4. The truth of enjoying and benefiting from Christ's Kingship is very different from the pagan "sky god doctrine." Christ's Reign is here and now. It reaches into the hearts of men and provides a means for them to begin a new life and use their remaining years to live as vessels of honor following Jesus. That blessing occurs with living people, not dead people.

GREEK SYNTAX

In Luke 23:43, the *KJV* quotes Jesus as saying "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." The *KJV* mistranslates the Greek verb "ese" as "shall be" (future tense), ignoring the fact that it is middle voice. This Greek verb means "to be; to exist." But the Greek middle voice means the action must return to the subject. So instead of saying "you will be ...," the middle voice says, "You will have yourself to be" Therefore, Jesus said, in essence: "Today (now that you are desperate) you wish yourself to be with me in paradise." Jesus could have been posing a rhetorical question, or He could have been chiding the thief who had already wasted his life.

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this lesson that the typical New Covenant arguments used to prove the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine are nothing more than misinterpretations, misapplications, and the fraudulent imposition of pagan teachings that have been adopted by the church world. In fact, these same passages, when interpreted correctly, disprove the "immortality of the soul" and support the Biblical truth that men's souls are indeed mortal. They die and go to the grave. They do not continue living in an alternate location or dimension in accordance with Greek and Roman pagan religions. Men (souls) die and cease to live until God raises them from the state of death. At this time, there is only one man who was born mortal, died, and then was raised immortal. That One was Jesus (1 Timothy 6:14-16). He was the "firstfruit of them that sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The rest of us await the promise of immortality in the future raising.

We have now concluded our five-part study of the correct meaning and use of the word "soul." We are now ready to study the words "heaven" and "hell" as used in the Scriptures. In the next lesson, we will expose the misconception which they refer to as literal places where so-called "immortal souls" of the deceased continue living.



LESSON 15

THE “IMMORTAL SOUL” DOCTRINE PART 5

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1. transfigured (changed in appearance)
2. Moses & Elijah (Elias)
3. they were talking with Jesus
4. vision

Page 142

1. trance
2. sheet; beasts
3. vision (Gk: horama)
4. resurrection (raising)
5. Scriptures
6. dead; living

Page 143

1. rise
2. dead; live
3. die

Page 144

1. “under the altar”
2. voice
3. robes; rest
4. translated
4. died

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1. certain
2. man
3. rich

Page 146

1. bosom
2. in hell
3. Capernaum

Page 147

1. gates
2. soul
3. death

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1. torments
2. torment
3. kingdom
4. paradise

NOTES

