



LESSON 12

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE Part 2

In the last lesson we began a study into the spurious doctrine of the so-called "immortal soul"—the concept of an immaterial, immortal, conscious entity (a being) that supposedly incarnates a body at birth and then vacates it at death. This erroneous teaching, illustrated in the diagram below, is promoted by churches today. It also exists, in some form, in most world religions. However, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures do not support this concept; indeed, Scripture is contrary to it.

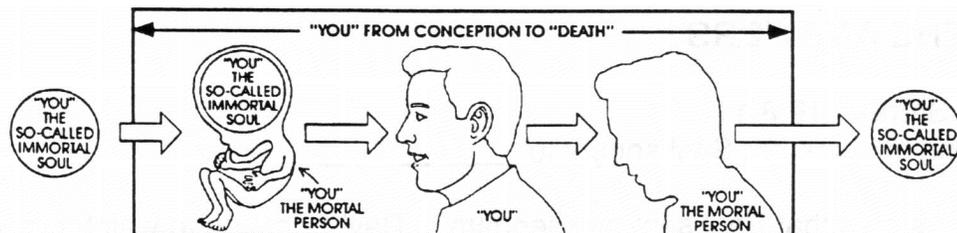
We began our study by examining the Old Testament use of the Hebrew word **nephesh** from which the English word **soul** is translated. We showed that this Hebrew word was also translated into 43 other English words including *creature, person, body, man*, and a host of *pronouns*. All of the examples we showed so far have indicated that there is no such thing as an "immortal soul." We have seen that man's "soul" is mortal – that is, it can die. It can be destroyed. It can be killed. That is the teaching of the Scriptures.

We have also seen that the **soul (nephesh)** comprises the "whole" person – the entire person – rather than a distinct, independent "entity" that separates from the body at death and continues to live on. The Old Scriptures plainly teach that when a person dies, ALL of the person dies – not just his flesh.

In this lesson, we look at the second most frequent rendering of the Hebrew word **nephesh**: "life" and "lives," as well as some other renderings. From these examples, we will gain more insight into the meaning of the word. We will also begin to examine the Old Testament concept of death and how it refutes the "immortal soul" teaching.

THE "IMMORTAL SOUL" DOCTRINE

"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:"



1. The essence of you (self #1) before entering a body. The "soul."
2. The so-called "immortal soul" (self #1) enters the live mortal person (self #2).
3. Thus, you are two "selves" – mortal and immortal simultaneously.
4. "You" (self #2) die and "You" (self #1 – the "soul") continue on in another form. "You shall not surely die!"

NEPHESH/SOUL = LIFE

In the *KJV* Old Testament, the Hebrew word **nephesh** (soul) was translated into “life/lives” 120 times. Let’s look at a few of these instances.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Joshua 2:1-21.

1. In verse 13 Rahab requests, “... deliver our **lives** (nephesh – souls) from _____.”
2. In verse 14 the men reply, “Our _____ (nephesh – soul) for yours ...”

Rahab wanted her life (nephesh/soul) and the lives (nephesh/souls) of her family spared from death. The two Israelite spies also wanted to preserve their lives (nephesh/souls) – to escape capture and death. This passage confirms that souls can die, and there is no indication that these people’s lives (souls) were immaterial spirit entities inhabiting their bodies.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Judges 18.

3. In verse 25 the children of Dan told Micah, “... lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou _____ thy **life** (soul) with the **lives** (souls) of thy household.”

The context of the above verse clearly deals with the possibility of Micah and his household being killed (losing their souls). Again, there is no indication that some invisible “spirits” inside these people would be lost.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 19:8-11.

4. According to verse 10, Saul sought to _____ David.
5. Verse 11 states that Saul sent messengers to David’s house to watch him and _____ him in the morning.
6. In verse 11 David’s wife tells him, “If thou _____ not thy life (soul) to night, tomorrow thou shalt be _____ .”

Obviously, Saul was not trying to kill an invisible “entity” living inside David. He wanted to kill the MAN David. Likewise, David’s wife wasn’t concerned about David saving an immaterial “being” residing in him – she was interested in David saving HIMSELF from death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In 1 Kings 19, verse 10 and 14, Elijah tells God that the children of Israel “seek my **life** (soul) to _____ it away.”

Is it logical that Elijah was afraid that an invisible entity inside him was going to be taken from him? Of course not. Rather, he was simply stating that people were trying to kill HIM – take his life (soul) – just like they did to other prophets.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. In Psalms 31:13 David states that his enemies devised to **take away** his _____.
3. In Psalms 35:4 David mentions those that seek after his _____ and devise to **hurt** him.
4. In Psalms 38:12 David says those that seek after his _____ lay **snares** for him.
5. In Psalms 40:14 David speaks of those that seek after his _____ to **destroy** it.
6. All four of the answers above are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

In the above passages, David speaks of enemies that wanted to kill him. Notice how the words **soul** and **life** are used interchangeably for the same Hebrew word, **nephesh**. Both of these words refer specifically to the mortal man David. If so-called invisible, immortal entities existed within people, how could they be taken away, captured, hurt, or destroyed? Obviously, they couldn’t.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Jonah 4.

7. Jonah says in verse 3, “Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my **life** (soul) from me; for it is better for me to _____ than to _____.” (Also see verse 8.)

In the verse above, Jonah wasn’t asking God to remove something from his body. He was simply asking for death – the ending of his life. Those who claim this says that Jonah was asking for an invisible, immortal entity to be removed from his body are simply reading a pagan concept into the passage. It’s not really there.

NEPHESH/SOUL IS ALSO “MIND”

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Genesis 23:8 Abraham says, “If it be your _____ that I should bury my dead out of my sight ...”
2. Deuteronomy 18:6 uses the phrase “and come with all the desire of his _____.”
3. 1 Chronicles 28:9 uses the phrase “with a perfect heart and with a willing _____.”
4. Ezekiel 23:17 states, “...and her _____ was alienated from them.”
5. All four of the above answers are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

In the above references, “**mind**” refers to a person’s intellect or thoughts. There is no indication that this “mind” is an immaterial entity separate from the person. A person’s soul includes his individual thoughts and intellect (mind). There is no suggestion in the Old Scriptures that a person’s mind (soul) remains alive and conscious after his body dies. Such an idea is pagan and comes from the imagination of mortal man.

SOUL CAN BE “HEART”

FIND THE ANSWERS

6. Exodus 23:9 states, “Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the _____ of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
7. Leviticus 26:16 uses the phrase “... cause _____ of **heart** ...”
8. 1 Samuel 2:33 uses the phrase “... to _____ thine **heart** ...”
9. Abner tells David in 2 Samuel 3:21, “... and that thou mayest reign over all that thine **heart** _____.”
10. Proverbs 28:25 states, “He that is of a _____ **heart** stirreth up strife ...”

The word **heart** in each of the above passages is translated from the Hebrew word **nephesh** and refers to a person’s feelings, emotions, and desires. Soul, then, includes an individual’s unique emotional makeup. Again, there is no indication that these feelings, emotions, and desires belong to a separate entity or being residing inside a body, or that these emotions continue to exist in conscious form after a body dies.

NEPHESH CAN BE “DESIRE”

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 6:9, “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the _____ : this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.”
2. In Jeremiah 44:14 it says, “... to the which they have a _____ to return ...”
3. Micah 7:3 states, “... and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous _____ : ...”
4. Habakkuk 2:5 states, “... he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his **desire** as hell, and is as death, and cannot be _____, ...”

In each of the verses above, the word **desire** is translated from the Hebrew word **nephesh** and refers to a person’s wishes, longings, aspirations, cravings, yearnings, etc. These desires reflect that person’s soul – his individual identity. These desires belong to that PERSON and not to a separate entity inside him.

FIND THE ANSWERS

More English words translated from the Hebrew “**nephesh**.”

5. Exodus 15:9 _____ (See also Psalm 78:18.)
6. Deuteronomy 23:24 _____ (See also Psalm 105:22.)
7. Jeremiah 34:16 _____
8. Psalm 27:12 _____ (See also Psalm 41:2; Ezekiel 16:27.)
9. Isaiah 56:11 _____
10. Ecclesiastes 6:7 _____ (See also Proverbs 23:2.)

The examples above indicate additional characteristics of “soul.” None of these verses indicate that these traits belong to an invisible entity residing inside a person, or that they continue after the person dies. In these examples, the Hebrew word **nephesh** is used to identify personality traits of mortal people.

SOUL AND BLOOD

FIND THE ANSWERS

Genesis 9:1-7.

1. Verse 4 states, "But flesh with the life (nephesh) thereof, which is the _____ thereof, shall ye not eat."
2. Verse 5 declares, "And surely your _____ of your **lives** (nephesh) will I require: ... at the hand of every man's brother will I require the **life** (nephesh) of man."
3. Leviticus 17:11 reads, "For the **life** (nephesh) of the _____ is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your **souls** (nephesh): for it is the _____ that maketh an atonement for the **soul** (nephesh)."
4. Psalm 94:21 states, "They gather themselves together against the **soul** (nephesh) of the righteous, and condemn the innocent _____ ." (See also Psalm 72:14.)
5. Proverbs 28:17 says, "A man that doeth _____ to the blood of any **person** (nephesh) shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him."

From the above verses, we see that souls (**nephesh**) have blood and are identified with blood. Obviously an invisible, immortal spirit being has no blood. Logically, the blood is used in reference to mortal beings. "Doing violence to a person's blood" is an expression meaning "to kill someone." Without blood a mortal cannot live – thus, "life is in the blood."

GOD'S SOUL

FIND THE ANSWERS

6. Speaking of Israel, God says in Jeremiah 9:9, "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my _____ (nephesh) be avenged on such a nation as this?"

God refers to His **soul** in the above verse. Does this mean that God has some kind of invisible entity living inside His body? Obviously, God does not have a mortal body. But God does have individual identity; He does have intellect; He does have unique personality characteristics. In other words, God has a soul and it can be avenged.

KEY POINTS

Let's review some basic facts that our study of the Hebrew word "**nephesh**" has revealed.

NEPHESH (SOUL)

1. It is used for creatures (animals and people) and it is used for God.
2. It denotes the life (animation – condition of being alive) of a creature.
3. It is used to refer to a dead person.
4. Man's soul dies – it can be killed or destroyed (thus, it is mortal).
5. Man's soul goes to the grave.
6. Man's soul is his life, and his life is in his blood.
7. The soul of man can be hurt, devoured, strangled, captured, persecuted, imprisoned, and carried into captivity.
8. The soul of man can be traded (bought and sold), can eat and drink, can touch, and can do work.
9. Man's soul can commit sin and trespass.
10. Man's soul is born from the womb (loins) of mortals.
11. Soul is used to denote the intellect and thoughts (personality) of a person.
12. Soul is used to denote feelings, emotions, and desires (heart) of a person.

MISUNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURES

Those who desire to cling to the false immortal soul doctrine use several Old Testament passages in an attempt to prove their position.

RACHEL'S DEPARTING SOUL

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Genesis 35:16-20.

1. Speaking of Rachel, verse 18 states, "And it came to pass, as her **soul** (nephesh) was in _____, (for she died) ..."

The above verse is used by some to prove that when Rachel's body died, her soul (the "real Rachel") left (departed) her dead body and continued living. However, these verses do NOT say that her "soul" kept on living while only her body died; they do NOT say that her "body" died and was buried while "she" (her soul) kept on living. Rather, these verses clearly say that "Rachel" died and was buried.

We have seen that **soul** (nephesh) refers to "life." The "departing of her soul" simply means that her life departed. It ended. She lost her life.

THE WIDOW'S SON

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Kings 17:17-23.

1. According to verse 17, there was no _____ left in the woman's son.
2. In verse 21 Elijah petitioned God to "let this child's _____ come into him ('return') again."
3. Verse 22 states that the **soul** of the child came into him again ('returned'), and he _____ .

Again, these verses are used by some to suggest that an immaterial entity left the boy's body and later re-entered it. However, his breath and life left him. And then life was restored (returned). The "going" and "coming" of an independent entity is simply read into this passage by those who want it to be there.

GIVING UP THE GHOST

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Job 11:20 states, "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the _____ ."
5. Jeremiah 15:9 uses the phrase, "she hath given up the _____ ;"
6. In the two verses above, the answers are translated from what Hebrew word? _____

Using the common English definition of "ghost" (a disembodied spirit), some advocates of the "immortal soul" teaching refer to the above verses as proof of their theory. However, the Hebrew word **nephesh** does NOT mean "disembodied spirit." The phrase "giving up the ghost (i.e., soul)" is an expression meaning "to die."

The Job passage simply says that the wicked have no hope – their hope is compared to death. The verse in Jeremiah is referring to the Israel people and is speaking of their destruction (see verse 7) – their death as an independent nation. Does it make any sense that the Israel people, as a whole (one body), would have a "spirit entity" living inside it? These passages do NOT speak of a disembodied spirit entity leaving a person's body.

THE “CALLING UP” OF SAMUEL

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 28:3-20.

1. Verse 3 states, “Now Samuel was _____, and all Israel had lamented him, and _____ him in Ramah, even in his own city.”

The verse above clearly states that Samuel was dead and buried. There is NO mention or indication that only his body died and was buried while some part of him kept living somewhere. In fact, the word **nephesh** (soul) is not even used in this passage with regard to Samuel.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Verse 3 continues, “And Saul had put away those that had _____ spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.”
3. After inquiring of God and getting no answer, verse 7 indicates that Saul told his servants to seek out a woman with a familiar spirit that he might _____ of her.

God had forbidden the seeking of “familiar spirits.” But Saul disobeyed God’s command by seeking after one anyway. Take note that Saul did not see Samuel, but only heard through a necromancer (medium). Saul assumed the woman was speaking for Samuel. Samuel had not actually appeared or spoken although they both thought he did.

Apparently, because they sought lying wonders, and not truth, God sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: (2 Thess. 2:11).

FAMILIAR SPIRITS

The words “familiar spirit” are translated from the Hebrew word “**owb**” (#178 in *Strong’s Concordance*), defined as “a necromancer” (a ventriloquist). An “owb” (necromancer) would have used trickery and deception. It was a mark of their trade. Because the belief in “spirits of dead persons” and their claim of calling them up (necromancy) were heathen trickery, God specifically forbade Israel from associating with such pagan practices. They practiced **ventriloquism** to make it sound like the dead were actually speaking. (See Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12.) Death was the penalty for such association.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Verse 13 states that Saul asked the woman, “... what _____ thou?”
5. In verse 14 he asked her, “... What _____ is he of?”
6. Verse 14 also indicates that Saul _____ it was Samuel.

The preceding verses clearly indicate that Saul himself did not see Samuel. Rather, he asked the necromancer woman what she saw. It is obvious that Saul was completely dependent upon the information supplied by this woman. From her description, Saul believed she saw Samuel. She deceived Saul into believing she could see and talk to Samuel's ghost, the same way spiritist mediums do today. Accepting her trick led Saul into the further delusion of accepting her ventriloquism as the voice of Samuel.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Verse 15 states that Samuel said to Saul, "... Why hast thou _____ me, to bring me up."

The above verse is used by some as proof positive that the "real" Samuel (his "ghost" or "spirit") was indeed alive and speaking to Saul. However, according to spiritism protocol, "called-up" spirits speak through the medium (necromancer). Thus, it was the woman speaking and not Samuel. This passage is simply written from Saul's perception, who believed it actually was Samuel who was speaking to him. God apparently used the voice of the woman to deliver a message to Saul about his forthcoming death.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. In verse 19 the supposed voice of Samuel tells Saul, "... and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with _____: ..."

The above verse is used by some to prove that Saul's body would be killed and his conscious "soul" or "spirit" would join Samuel. However, we have already seen that Samuel himself (not just his body) was dead and buried; the same end came to Saul and his sons as described in 1 Samuel 31.

This whole narrative was simply about a king who violated God's command and died because of it. As we saw, God did not accuse him of talking to Samuel but, rather, of talking with a necromancer (medium). That the medium spoke words which later came to pass does not prove it was Samuel. God could have caused this woman to speak truth as easily as He caused Balaam's donkey to speak, and later caused Balaam to pronounce good upon Israel in Numbers 22-24 even when Balaam's intent was to pronounce evil.

Another point to consider is that if Samuel actually appeared alive to the woman and Saul, then we would have to attribute to this evil woman the power to resurrect godly men from the grave, if only temporarily. The Scriptures attribute no such power to anyone but God. Christians need to be on guard against anyone who misuses this passage.

CONCLUSION

Putting together what we have learned from lessons 11 and 12, we can conclude that **SOUL** is the composition of traits, characteristics, and form which define a thing's or person's individual identity. The soul of something **IS** its essential, unique identity. "Soul" **IS** uniqueness – it distinguishes one thing, or personality, from another. It **IS** a person's, or a thing's, essence; its identity.

"Soul" is **NOT** an invisible section of a person. It is **NOT** a "life spirit entity" inhabiting a person's body. It does **NOT** keep on living after the body dies – it is **NOT** immortal. Rather, at the death of a person, "the living soul" ceases ("identity" and "personality;" "mind" [intellect and thoughts]; and "heart" [feelings, emotions, and desires]); it becomes a "dead soul." In the next lesson we will see what the Old Testament teaches regarding "death," and how it destroys the immortal soul doctrine.



LESSON 12

Page 112

1. death
2. life
3. lose
4. smite
5. slay
6. save; slain

Page 113

1. take
2. life
3. soul
4. life
5. soul
6. nephesh (#5315)
7. die; live

Page 114

1. mind
2. mind
3. mind
4. mind
5. nephesh (#5315)
6. heart
7. sorrow
8. grieve
9. desireth
10. proud

Page 115

1. desire
2. desire
3. desire
4. satisfied
5. lust
6. pleasure
7. pleasure
8. will
9. greedy (strong of soul)
10. appetite

Page 116

1. blood
2. blood
3. flesh; blood
4. blood
5. violence
6. soul

Page 117

1. departing

Page 118

1. breath
2. soul
3. revived
4. ghost
5. ghost
6. nephesh (#5315)

Page 119

1. dead; buried
2. familiar
3. inquire
4. sawest
5. form
6. perceived (meaning he assumed it)

Page 120

1. disquieted
2. me

NOTES