



LESSON 14

THE “IMMORTAL SOUL” DOCTRINE

PART 4

NEW TESTAMENT “SOUL”

In Lessons 11-13 we have analyzed the Old Testament use of the word **soul** (**nephesh**). We have also examined the Old Testament teaching concerning **death**. In both cases we found no evidence to support the so-called “immortal soul” doctrine which has become so foundational in church theology. Instead, the evidence proves this spurious doctrine is false.

We are now ready to study the New Testament’s explanation of **soul** and **death**. As was the case with the Old Testament, we will find no evidence to support the pagan theory that man has a so-called “immortal soul” that does not die, but only separates from his body at death and continues living in some other place or realm. Such a concept is foreign and contradictory to God’s Word.

In the New Testament, the word **soul** is translated from the Greek **psuche** (#5590 in *Strong’s Concordance*). The chart below illustrates the variety of ways this Greek word was translated in the King James New Testament. The number of times of each particular rendering is also listed. From this information, we can see that the English word **soul** was the most common translation of the Greek word **psuche**. Thus, a study of this Greek word will help us understand more about the word **soul**.

It is also important to note that the Greek word **psuche** is used to translate the Hebrew word **nephesh** into Greek where Old Scripture is quoted in the New.

KJV TRANSLATIONS OF “PSUCHE”

(Translated as 8 different English words)

heartily (1 time)	us (1 time)	life/lives (40 times)	soul (58 times)	mind (3 times)	you (1 time)	heart (1 time)
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“Psuche” appears a total of 105 times in the Greek text.

PSUCHE = NEPHESH

When quoting the Old Testament, the New Testament uses the Greek **psuche** for the Hebrew **nephesh**. This indicates that the two words have a common meaning.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Genesis 2:7 states, "... and man became a living _____."
2. The answer above is translated from which Hebrew word? _____
3. 1 Corinthians 15:45 says, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made (became) a living _____."
4. The above answer is translated from which Greek word? _____

From the above two verses, we can see that the Greek word **psuche** (soul) was used to express the meaning of the Hebrew word **nephesh** (soul). These verses do NOT say that an "immortal soul" (a so-called independent conscious entity) was placed inside the man Adam. Rather, they state that the man Adam BECAME a living soul.

SOUL (PSUCHE) = LIFE

In the KJV New Testament, the Greek word **psuche** is translated "life" or "lives" a total of 40 times. Like the Hebrew word **nephesh**, it can refer to a living being.

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. In 1 Kings 19:10 Elijah says, "... and they seek my _____ (**nephesh**), to take it away."
6. Paul, quoting the above Old Testament passage, says in Romans 11:3, "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my _____ (**psuche**)."

Again, we see that the Greek word **psuche** is used in quoting the Hebrew word **nephesh**. In both passages, these two words are translated into the same English word: **Life**. The meaning is clear: Elijah's enemies (who were Israelites) were trying to kill him. Both **nephesh** and **psuche** refer to Elijah's "life" — something that could be destroyed (killed). They are not referring to a so-called "immortal soul" residing within him.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew Chapter 2.

1. According to verse 13, what did Herod intend to do with the infant Jesus?
A. Give Him gifts B. Worship Him C. Imprison Him D. Destroy Him
2. Verse 16 indicates that Herod _____ all the children up to two years of age that were in Bethlehem.
3. In verse 20 Joseph was told in a dream, "... for they are dead which sought the young child's _____."
4. The answer above is translated from what Greek word? _____

It is obvious from the passages above that Herod wanted to destroy Jesus – to put an end to Him and all He stood for. Herod was not seeking to destroy some invisible “entity” residing inside Jesus. Herod perceived that Jesus posed a threat to his kingship, so he wanted to eliminate that threat. The Greek word **psuche** was used to refer to Jesus Himself – not a so-called invisible entity living inside Him.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts Chapter 27.

5. According to verse 10, Paul perceived “that this voyage will be with _____ and much _____, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our **lives (psuche)**.”
6. In verse 22 Paul states, “And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no _____ of **life (psuche)** among you, but of the ship.”
7. As the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, Paul told the centurion in verse 31, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be _____.”
8. Verse 37 states there were “two hundred threescore and sixteen _____ (**psuche**)” in the ship.
9. According to verse 44, how many escaped to land safely? _____

In the above verses, the KJV translated the Greek word **psuche** into three English words: “life,” “lives,” and “souls.” Paul was concerned about saving the lives of those on board the ship; i.e., saving men from destruction. Here, **psuche** refers to mortal persons, not so-called “immortal entities.” Immortal entities would not need saving from death, but mortal men would.

“PSUCHE” CAN BE KILLED (DESTROYED)

As was the case with the Hebrew “nephesh,” the Greek **psuche** can also be destroyed.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Luke 6:9 Jesus asks, “Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save **life (psuche)**, or to _____ it?”

In the above verse Jesus specifically refers to destroying a **psuche**. If a **psuche** (a soul) were immortal it could not be destroyed.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Acts 3:23 states, “And it shall come to pass, that every **soul (psuche)**, which will not hear that prophet, shall be _____ from among the people.”

Acts 3:22-23 is a quote from Deuteronomy 18:18-19. The phrases “require it of him” and “shall be destroyed from among the people” both refer to the same thing. If **psuche** (soul) represented something “immortal,” then how could Peter say it would be destroyed (Acts 3:23)? Obviously, **psuche** (soul) is not immortal.

SOUL CAN DIE

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. According to James 5:20, a **soul (psuche)** can be saved from _____.
4. Revelation 16:3 states, “... and every living **soul (psuche)** _____ in the sea.”

In order for a **soul** to be saved from death, it must be able to die. It must be mortal. If a soul was immortal (not able to die), how could it logically be saved from death? It couldn't. However, James 5:20 clearly indicates that a soul can die. This verse is talking about sinners – mortal people (souls).

Souls are animals and people who live and breathe, and they are mortal according to Revelation 16:3. Neither people nor animals possess immortal souls.

Mortal: Subject to death; destined to die.

Immortal: Exempt from death; having unending life.

THE “LAYING DOWN OF LIFE” (SOUL)

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 10:1-18.

1. Jesus states in verse 11, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd _____ his **life (psuche/soul)** for the sheep.”
2. In verse 15 Jesus says, “... I _____ down my **life (psuche/soul)** for the sheep.”
3. Jesus continues in verse 17, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my _____.”

Here, in the three examples above, the word **life** is translated each time from the Greek word **psuche (soul)**. The phrases “lay down my life (soul)” and “giveth his life (soul)” are usually thought of as referring to death. However, Jesus is speaking of more than dying. Indeed, Jesus is speaking of the dedication of His life – His whole being – for the good and well-being of His sheep. In essence, He was giving His life, his personal desires, and sacrificing his pleasures to help the sheep. This is the essence of what He meant by “laying down His soul” for them. He also died for them as well.

Verses 7-16 use the illustration of a literal shepherd who “lays down his soul” for his sheep. This shepherd is not dying in order to protect the sheep from the wolves, although he is risking his life. A shepherd doesn’t provide protection by just dying. He no doubt risks his life for them, but “laying down his soul” indicates he **lived** to protect them and was even willing to risk death. He was dedicating his whole life (his soul) to protect his sheep from the wolves. He considered the welfare of his sheep to be of greater importance than his own personal comforts or safety.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 15:9-14.

4. Jesus states in verse 12, “This is my commandment, That ye _____ one another, as I have _____ you.”
5. In verse 13 Jesus says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his **life (psuche/soul)** for his _____.”

Read 1 John 3:11-24.

6. Verse 16 states, “Hereby perceive we love (“of God” is not in the Greek text), because he (Jesus) laid down his **life (psuche/soul)** for _____: and we ought to lay down our **lives (psuche/souls)** for the _____.”

How did Jesus love His sheep – His friends? He did so by dedicating Himself (not just his death, but his whole life) for their good and well-being. He rescued them from sin and death by his life. He also gave them **life** – New Covenant life. Eonian life. Jesus explained that the greatest love that a person can show is to dedicate their life (soul) for the benefit of others. It involves laying aside (denying) personal pursuits and comforts in order to help others. Jesus is the perfect example of such love.

THE LOSING AND GAINING OF SOUL

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 16:24-27.

1. Jesus states in verse 24, "If any man will come after me, let him _____ himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
2. In verse 25, what Greek word is twice translated into the English word **life**? _____
3. In verse 26, this same Greek word is again translated twice into the English word _____.

To follow Jesus requires a denying of self (i.e., loss of soul). This describes the process of regeneration (rebirth): spiritual growth and development. It is the "passing from death unto life" spoken of in 1 John 3:14. It is what the Apostle Paul described as the crucifying and putting off of the "old man" versus the putting on of the "new man" and the "renewing of the mind."

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Paul states in Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our _____ man is **crucified** with him, that the body of _____ might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Read Ephesians 4:22-24.

5. In verse 22 Paul writes, "That ye _____ off concerning the former conversation (manner of life) the **old man** which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."
6. Paul continues in verse 23, "And be _____ in the spirit of your mind."
7. In verse 24 Paul says, "And that ye _____ on the **new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Read Colossians 3:1-17.

8. In verse 5 Paul says to "... _____ therefore your members ..."
9. In verse 8 he says to "... _____ off all these ..."
10. Verses 9 and 10 state, "... seeing that ye have put off the _____ man with his deeds; and have put on the _____ man, which is _____ in knowledge after the image of him that created him ..."

NOT ALL OF ISRAEL ARE CHRIST'S SHEEP

“Crucifying the old man” and “putting off the old man” are equivalent to denying self and mortifying the soul, while “putting on the new man” and “renewing your mind” correspond to “finding your soul” (Matthew 10:39). These phrases are describing the operation of New Covenant life (eonian life).

In an earlier lesson (#5), we saw where Paul used the terms “walking after the flesh” versus “walking in the spirit” and “children of flesh” versus “children of promise.” Paul also explains this as being “dead to sin,” “walking in newness of life,” and being “alive unto God through Jesus.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 6:1-3.

1. In verse 2 Paul asks, “How shall we, that are _____ to sin, live any longer therein?”
2. Paul states in verse 4, “Therefore are we **buried** with him [Jesus] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in _____ of life.”
3. In verse 11 Paul writes, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be _____ indeed unto sin, but _____ unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

These verses describe a death of our old sinful souls and a birth of a new soul patterned after that of Jesus. Essentially, our old identities (souls) are replaced with new ones. We become “new creatures.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a _____ creature (creation); old things are passed away; behold, all things are become **new**.”

The “new creation” refers to the new soul (identity) that Jesus gives to us after our old soul (identity) is crucified. We then have new life. Thus, we share in the life and spirit of Jesus. This is what Paul talks about in Galatians 2.

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. Paul states in Galatians 2:20, “I am **crucified** with Christ: nevertheless I _____; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who **loves** me, and _____ himself for me.”

These verses are not talking about immortal, invisible spirit entities existing inside of people. Rather, they refer to the people themselves – to their identities or how they are known. This includes their whole profiles, traits, characteristics, and everything that defines them as individuals. People’s “souls” are the essential identities and essences that distinguish them.

Through the process of New Covenant life (eonian life), Jesus is re-creating souls. He is giving His sheep new lives; new identities; new priorities in life. Old ways of living are replaced by new behaviors. The former ways of thinking are regenerated into new minds that conform to the mind of Christ. This is described in the New Scriptures as “putting on Christ.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 13:11-14.

1. What does Paul say to “put on” in verse 14? _____

The phrases “awake out of sleep,” “cast off the works of darkness,” “put on the armor of light,” and “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” are all referring to the workings of New Covenant life within mortal people. These are describing the giving of **life** to spiritually-dead souls: The rebirth of the “soul” (the self).

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 13:11-14.

2. Galatians 3:27 states, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **put on** _____.”
3. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says, “But we (spiritually regenerated or reborn) have the _____ of Christ.”
4. Philippians 2:5 states, “Let this _____ be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

JESUS GIVES LIFE

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. In John 10:10 Jesus says, “I am come that they (His sheep) might have _____ , and that they might have it more abundantly.”
- Read John 11:25.**
6. 25. Jesus said unto her, I am the raising, and the _____ : he that believes in me, though he be dead, he shall _____.

The preceding verses clearly show that Jesus gives **life** to His sheep. The giving of life is described by Jesus in John 10:28.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 10:27-28.

1. Speaking of His sheep, Jesus says in verse 28, "... And I _____ unto them **eternal eonian** life ..."

Jesus calls this life that He gives "**eonian**" life. The King James version, like most versions, mistakenly uses the word "eternal" rather than "eonian." The Greek word is **aionian** (#166 in *Strong's Concordance*) which is the adjective form of the Greek word **aion** (#165) meaning "an age"; i.e., a time period. The "age" in this case refers to the New Covenant age (eon). This verse, then, is talking about the giving of "New Covenant" life; i.e., eonian life that Christ gives us in this New Covenant eon.

The improper use of the word "eternal" and "everlasting" has been a major stumbling block in the understanding of key verses of Scripture. "Eonian" life should not be confused with "immortal" life. This will be discussed in detail in future lessons.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON DEATH

We have seen how Old Testament teaching concerning death disproves the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine. The New Testament does not change or contradict that teaching. In fact, it reaffirms it.

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Peter says in Acts 2:29, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both _____ and _____, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day."

Note that the above verse refutes the idea that David's soul could have been alive in Peter's day. It in no way suggests that his body is dead and buried while some other part of him remains conscious. Scripture is clear: David was **dead** and in the ground – not alive in some place called "heaven." This is consistent with Old Testament teaching.

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. Paul states in Acts 13:36, "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on _____, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw _____ ..."

Paul, like Peter, states that David died and was buried. Notice there is no mention that it was only David's body that fell asleep (died) while he – or some part of him – remained awake (alive). Also note that this verse says David (all of him) saw corruption (decay). Those who support the so-called "immortal soul" doctrine believe that David is presently alive in a place they call "heaven." However, Scripture does not support that idea.

The phrase "fell on sleep" is an idiomatic expression meaning "died." This is consistent with the old Testament use of the word "sleep" in referring to "death" (see lesson 13). It is important that this type of sleep (meaning "death") is not confused with literal sleep (slumber – a lying down to rest). In literal sleep (slumber), a person is still alive. This is also true of a person in a coma – they are still alive. However, when the Scriptures use the word "sleep" in reference to someone dying, it refers to the cessation of life and breath.

The erroneous doctrine of "soul sleep" suggests that a person doesn't really die, but is only in a state of dormant "sleep." Like the "immortal soul" doctrine, the "soul sleep" teaching changes the meaning of "death." Both positions attempt to make "death" just another form of life.

DEATH IS NOT LIFE

"Death" and "life" are opposite in meaning – they are mutually exclusive terms. In fact, death is the absence of life. Logic demands that a person is either dead or alive – not both at the same time. If a person is alive, then he cannot be dead. Both the "immortal soul" and "soul sleep" doctrines are illogical; both violate the meaning of life and death; both contradict Scripture.

NO DEATH = NO RAISING

Another important point to keep in mind is that without death, raising from the dead is impossible. An immortal soul would have no need to be raised from death. An immortal soul would have no need for Jesus. If Jesus' mission was to give life, and if souls already possess immortal life, then of what value is the life Jesus gives? The "immortal soul" doctrine not only destroys the need for raising from the dead, but it also eliminates the need for Jesus. Scripture teaches that man is mortal; i.e., he dies. Scripture also teaches that a man without Christ is spiritually dead. Man needs to be raised to life, both spiritual and biological, that can only be obtained through Christ.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we have seen how the Greek word **psuche**, like the Hebrew word **nephesh**, was used to refer to mortal people. It was not used to refer to immortal entities.

Jesus gives His sheep **life**: New Covenant life during their mortal lifetimes. He has been doing that for some 2,000 years now. He has been sustaining his ecclesia (see lesson 10) and is doing so today. He explained that we can "lose our souls" or we can "save our souls."

The immortal soul doctrine completely contradicts and denies the Gospel of Christ's Reign. Without death, there can be no new life; i.e., no raising from the dead (spiritually or physically). We must not deny the miraculous working of the New Covenant by believing the pagan immortal soul doctrine.

A number of New Testament passages are often incorrectly used to support the pagan concept of the immortal soul. Because of faulty translation and misunderstanding of Scripture, these passages seem to support the idea that people have immortal souls; i.e., that they really can't die, but that they continue living after their body dies. However, correct translation and proper understanding of these Scriptures reveal the truth of God's Word: Man is indeed mortal and dies completely. We shall examine these passages in the next lesson.



LESSON 14

THE “IMMORTAL SOUL” DOCTRINE PART 4

Page 132

1. soul
2. nephesh (#5315 in *Strong's*)
3. soul
4. psuche (#5590 in *Strong's*)
5. life
6. life

Page 133

1. D (destroy him)
2. slew
3. life
4. psuche (#5590)
5. hurt; damage
6. loss
7. saved
8. souls
9. all of them

Page 134

1. destroy
2. destroyed
3. death
4. died

Page 135

1. giveth
2. lay
3. life (“soul” is the proper translation)

Page 135 (continued)

4. love; loved
5. friends
6. us; brethren

Page 136

1. deny
2. psuche
3. soul
4. old; sin
5. put
6. renewed
7. put
8. mortify (reckon as dead)
9. put
10. old; new; renewed

Page 137

1. dead
2. newness (renewal)
3. dead; alive
4. new
5. live; gives (not “gave”)

Page 138

1. the Lord Jesus Christ
2. Christ
3. mind
4. mind

Page 138 (continued)

5. life
6. life
7. live

Page 139

1. give
2. dead; buried
3. sleep; corruption

NOTES

We suggest the following books for additional study:

Spirits On Trial - Ben Williams

Doctrine Of Salvation - Ben Willams

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