

A Preliminary Study on The Biblical Meaning of “Soul”

In the Old Testament the word for soul is “nephesh” and in the New the word is “psuche” — with both terms having the same meaning.

“A MORTAL BREATHING CREATURE, A LIFE THAT IS SUBJECT TO DEATH,
AND A LIFE THAT CAN NOT IN ANY SENSE BE IMMORTAL”

*“Whoever touches the dead **body** of anyone and fails to purify himself defiles the LORD's tabernacle. That **person** must be cut off from Israel” (Numbers 19:13).*

The *bold* words in the above verse is the Hebrew word “nephesh”, commonly translated as “soul” in numerous places in the OT Scriptures. Is it valid to question WHY the translators didn’t use the word “soul” in these two places in this verse? We judge that it is very valid to ask that question, for that is the only way we can find out the WHY. We will address that in this article as a part of our study.

Almost every individual in most of the churches found in Christendom are persuaded that the word “soul” means *something* within the body of a person that is immortal and thusly not subject to death. They believe it (called the soul) continues in a conscious existence after the body dies and returns back into the dust of the ground. They accept this belief without giving it a second thought, and never think to question the validity of their belief.

Here are two verses of Scripture that one should ponder on concerning the term “soul”: “*Who knows not in all these, That the hand of Jehovah has wrought this, In whose hand is the **soul (nephesh) of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind***” (Job 12:9–10). These two verses of scripture tell us that God is in charge, and that *every living thing* has a soul (nephesh) — man, fish, bird, animal and all the creepy-crawly things on the land. And this goes right along with what is said by the Apostle Paul in Acts 17:28 that — “For in him (God) we live and move and are.” Yes, without God we are nothing at all: no spirit, no life, no movement, no nothing.

However, for those few individuals who sincerely and truly seek to grow in the knowledge of Christ (see Phil. 1:9, 3:8, Luke 11:52, Eph. 1:17, 1 Tim. 2:4, 2 Tim. 3:7, and many other verses), they start to look into the question and begin to make some very interesting observations and discoveries. They soon find that the Biblical meaning of “soul” is very contradictory to what is being taught. They find that immortality is never attached to the word “soul” and that even a “soul” can die and be no more.

I have to admit I was one of these individuals. That was a long time ago. Back in the late 1960’s I was fully immersed into believing that I had an immortal soul within my body, and that it was not capable of dying when I died, but that it would live forever, hopefully with God in Heaven. On the other hand, I was also taught that if I were to die in mortal sin that my soul would immediately go to a fiery hell to suffer forever and ever. I never entertained the thought that my teachers were wrong. It was during this time that I was approached by an individual who asked me to simply look in the Bible to see how

the term “soul” was used and from that I would find its meaning. He knew I was a Roman Catholic, and never did he ridicule or cut down my beliefs. He was very sincere, kind, and never acted like he was superior in knowledge of what the Bible had to say. He simply asked me to search the Bible if I wanted to understand what God chose to reveal to us what man was, and what man’s destiny was to be. I have no idea what church he belonged to, nor do I today. He called himself simply a Christian who wanted to share what he had learned about salvation, and the reason why Christ had to die and be resurrected. Of course, I was just a novice, or even less than a novice in my approach to understand what I read in the Bible. I had to get a dictionary and concordance to help me along. My priest was absolutely no help in this as he said I’d be utterly lost without the Catholic church telling me what the Bible really said about anything I had doubts on. When he said that the Bible was just a collection of myths and stories I began to seriously doubt anything I was taught since childhood.

However, I could not deny the truth that I was created and that God would be so unjust as to leave us in doubt as to what we had to do to be saved from our sins. Thusly, I started to really study what God had revealed to us in the Scripture about any topic pertaining to salvation. It is now 40 years later, and what one sees on this Web site is the result of all my studies over the years since I began to doubt my teachers and investigate if what I was taught was truth with a capital “T”. One should ask, as I asked myself, ***“How can the traditional and accepted religious teachings of the soul, making it immortal to boot, be completely different from what the Bible says about the soul, especially since the beliefs of Christianity are said to be based upon the Bible?”***

Why is this truth so hidden from men? Is not the Word of God sufficient for us to believe it? Why do men not see this truth? When we read the Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments, we see that it also tells us that the TRUTH is hard to know (because of tradition and philosophy) except from those whose minds and hearts please God. The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Thessalonians that *“...we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”* (2 Thess. 4:2–4).

Jesus himself spoke of this same thing in Matthew 13:11–15, Mark 4:11–12 and Luke 8:10, which reads: *“...the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you (the Apostles), but to others I speak in parables, so that, ‘though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand’.*” Right before Jesus said this, he called out to all those within hearing and said, *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”* It is very apparent that not everyone who hears Jesus’ parables understands them. In Matthew 7:13–14 Jesus said, *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and **only a few find it.**”* Read also Matt. 11:25, 20:16, 22:14, 24:12–13; Luke 10:21, 13:23–24, 18:8; I Cor. 2:14, and II Tim. 4:3–4. In the OT, read Isa. 55:8, which is God telling us that *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,...”* In fact, read Isa. 55:6–11 to get the complete picture of what God says in verse 8.

Pay close attention to what Paul has to say in 2 Thess. 2:9–12 — “*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*”

All of the above scriptures quoted, and not quoted but mentioned, tell us WHY not everyone seeks out the truth, much less understands or wants it. It is tradition that stops the majority of seekers of truth — founded upon the pagan concepts of the word “soul” (nephesh/psuche). But what do learned scholars have to say about what they find the Scriptures saying? Let’s find out...!

When we investigate what these learned men have to say about the “immortal soul” theory we quickly find that most of them actually deny the immortal soul theory, and without concealing anything, show that the traditional teaching is not the teaching of the Scriptures! In fact, they seem to even boast of their honesty in their expertise. What they say contradicts and tells us that the translators of the Biblical manuscripts are dishonest in their translations. We will speak to this later in this article, and actually show it by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture.

As we get further along in this study, you will find that you are forced to choose between what the Scriptures have to say and what traditional orthodoxy in Christianity has to say. I am not afraid, even at this point, to say that the majority of orthodox (so called) Christianity is dead wrong in teaching any “immortal soul” theory as dogma to be believed; and before we finish this article, you may also find yourself saying the same thing. Let’s look at a few of these learned men and see what they say.

When we turn to *Webster's Dictionary* we find the following explanation of what the soul is. “*The Christian conception of the soul derives from the Greek, **especially as modified** by the mystery cults, as well as from the Bible...*” “*The more exact determination of the Christian conception was reserved for the Church Fathers, especially Saint Augustine, who taught that it is simple, immaterial and spiritual, devoid of quality and spatial extension. He argued its immortality from the fact that it is the repository of Imperishable truth.*”

Hasting's Bible Dictionary faces head-on the truth that it finds and says that the “*Soul is throughout a great part of the Bible simply the equivalent of ‘life’ embodied in living creature. In the earlier usage of the Old Testament it has no reference to the later philosophical meaning the animating principle still less to the idea of an ‘immaterial nature’ which will survive the body.*”

Young's Concordance tells us that both “nephesh and psuche” mean “animal soul (life).” Not to be outdone, *Strong's Concordance* describes the term “nephesh” as, “A breathing creature, an animal; or, abstractly, vitality.” “Psuche” is described as “*The animal, sentient principle.*” Looking at the meaning of *animal* in these definitions, we

find that it refers to *living flesh*, whether of *literal animals or mankind*, which is also an animal or creature of God.

When we look at the well-known *Funk & Wagnal Dictionary* we find it saying: “Among the ancient Hebrews ‘soul’ (*nephesh*) was the equivalent of the principle of life as embodied in living creatures, and this meaning is continued throughout the Bible.” ... “It was Augustine especially who, in part on religious grounds and in part **as the disciple** of the later Greek Philosophy, taught the simple, immaterial and spiritual nature of the human soul view which has remained that of the scholastic philosophy and of Christian theologians down to the present time.” This dictionary states the real meaning of the Hebrew “nephesh” and admits that the theory of the “immortal soul” was systemized and given strength by Augustine in the beginning of the fifth century AD — 200 or so years after Tertullian taught a form of it from the writings of Plato, who was a disciple of the one who originated it, Socrates.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia tells us that the “Soul has various shades of meaning in the Old Testament, which may be summarized as follows: Soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion and passion” “Nephesh or soul, can only denote the individual life with a material organization or body.” ... “In the New Testament ‘psuche’ appears under more or less similar conditions as in the Old Testament.” This is true, which anyone can verify with a concordance listing all uses of the terms in both Testaments.

Liddell and Scott’s Dictionary also gives us the same sense of the Greek term by saying it is “*the breath, life, spirit, of man and animals.*” Parkhurst’s *Lexicon* (himself a believer in the immortal soul theory of Augustine) admits that “As a noun *nephesh* has been **supposed** to signify the spiritual part of man, or what we commonly call his soul. **I must for myself confess that I can find no passages where it has undoubtedly this meaning.**” “Gen. 35:18, 1 Kings 17:21-22 and Psalms 16:10 seem fairest for this signification. But may not ‘nephesh’ in the three former passages be most properly rendered ‘breath,’ and in the last, ‘a breathing or animal frame’?”

The above quotations from recognized Authoritative scholars and dictionaries clearly show us that the “immortal soul” theory, a dogma among most churches of Christianity, and even of non-Christian religions, is generally admitted by its supporters to be contradictory to what the Bible has to say about the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words it uses. The English word “soul” is based for the most part upon the teachings of the early Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other not so well-known early teachers.

The main issue facing us can be stated much as follows: Is the Word of God as we find it expressed in the Bible of any value and authority? If God’s word does have value and authority to us, why do we so blatantly accept the theory based upon pagan Greek philosophical speculations? Is it that we do not really seek to grow in the knowledge of Christ? Do we not really believe Jesus when he said, “**As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept**

my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day” (John 12:47–48)?

We will, in a latter part of this article, bring forth the words of Jesus speaking of what the word “soul” really means. It will be up to you, the reader, to decide for yourself if Jesus’ words mean exactly what they say by the way he uses them — and in his context, not mine. I do not say that you should believe the words I say, but that you should concern yourself with what God revealed to Moses which he wrote down, and with what Jesus himself had to say in the New Testament. Thusly, we will now attempt to examine what God revealed to Moses in the Old Testament about the nature of man.

THE ORIGINAL WORD TRANSLATED BY OUR TRANSLATORS AS “SOUL”

In the Old Testament the original word in the Hebrew language is *nephesh*, commonly translated with our English word “soul”. In the New Testament the original word in the Greek manuscripts is *psuche*, commonly translated with our English word “soul”. At this point in this article we will be looking at what the Old Testament has to say, and leave the New Testament for the second part of this examination.

PART ONE: The Old Testament use of the word *nephesh*

The term “nephesh” is found 752 times, and in 475 of those times it is translated as the word “soul” in our English language. The 475 figure is from the count of the word found in the KJV of the Bible. Other Bible translations translate *nephesh* by a lesser amount in most versions, but the 752 figure stands. The balance of the times the Hebrew term *nephesh* appears in the Old Testament is translated by over 40 different terms, all related to our being living, mortal creatures.

Here are some of the words used in place of the Hebrew *nephesh*: soul, man, person, beast, deadly, heartily, myself, me, creature, mortality, appetite, breath, mind, heart, any, self, body, one, themselves, ghost, dead, he, her, they, life, will, fish, himself, herself, yourselves, refresh, desire, thing, own, greedy, pleasure, contented, and lust, plus a few more, all related to an essence attributed to the makeup of the natural body. None of these words can be made to indicate an immortal soul residing within the body of man. It should be obvious that a word with such broad usage shows that it is applied in the Old Testament to all animated bodies — creatures — including man.

In an article of this size it is virtually impossible to address each and every usage of the word *nephesh*, so we will be leaving it up to you, the reader, to do a little research on your own to convince yourself one way or another of what we do examine in detail. We will give generalities at this time without listing all the verses and/or passages backing them up; however, we will give one or two to start you on the road to your decision making process. A Concordance is greatly needed, and is a must-have help for everyone.

Here are eleven uses of *nephesh* in the Old Testament: (With a Scripture sample reference.)

22 times it is used of animals alone (Genesis 1:21–28).

7 times it is used of men and animals together (Numbers 31:28).

53 times it is used of individuals and persons (Genesis 2:7).
 96 times it is used of persons doing things (Leviticus 5:1–4).
 22 times it is used of man’s appetites and animal desires (Proverbs 6:30; Genesis 34:3).
 231 times it is used of man’s mental/emotional actions (Genesis 34:3; Numbers 21:4).
 22 times it is used of God cutting off souls (Psalm 78:50).
 32 times it is used of man killing other souls (Joshua 11:11).
 242 times it is used to say souls are subject to death (Ezekiel 18:4; Psalm 22:29).
 13 times it is used of souls that are already dead (Isaiah 53:12).
 13 times it is used of souls being buried in a grave (Job 33:22).

As you can see from the above, the usage of the Hebrew term *nephesh* is applied to tell us many things about the nature of man. Only a careful, individual examination can solidify a reasoned and enlightened conviction of what God revealed to us through the writers of the Scriptures. Proceeding, we will now look at the very first usages of this Hebrew word and see how they are applied.

King David, in Psalm 8:4, asks an important question: “What is man?” Because of the influence of pagan philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus, with the ideas they put forth from their philosophical imaginations which were, in part, made a dogmatic part of the beliefs in most of Christianity, we must, like King David, also ask ourselves, “What is man?” Is man an immortal soul residing in a material body made from the dust of the ground? What is life? What is death?

King David’s question is answered in Genesis 2:7 (KJV). The authority of this answer is beyond dispute, for it came from the One who created man! Moses, God’s chosen messenger, was the person who penned this answer from God. It is mandatory that we consider it most worthy of belief for it is our Maker, through Moses, telling us what we are:

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

No careful reader of this verse will fail to understand that God’s creation of man is described in two distinct stages: 1) The forming of the body of man from the dust of the ground and 2) The breath of life to animate the body He made. The combination of these two stages caused God’s creation to **become** a living person/being/soul/creature! The word, *nephesh*, is translated by these different English words in the various versions of this verse by our translators.

But this is not the first time *nephesh* is used in the Bible, nor is man (Adam) the first of God’s creative work! In Genesis 1:20 we read that God said,

“Let the waters swarm with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

We see here the same terms spoken of that which were spoken of the creation of Adam, and him becoming a living soul (*nephesh*). Then in the next verses (21–23) we see...

*“And God created the great sea–monsters, and every **living creature** that moves, where with the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.*

Once again we see what God created on the fifth day; using the very same terms that he applied to the creation of Adam, a *living soul*. Not only that, but we read that God blessed them!

The next day (Genesis 1:24) we see the record saying:

*“And God said, Let the earth bring forth **living creatures** after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so.”*

This is the third time God used the word *nephesh*, which our translators have depicted with the English word “creatures”. The next time God used this word our translators have depicted it by the English word “life”, which, in the KJV of scripture they do 117 times.

After God created man from the dust of the ground, He then breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, and this creature (man) became a living soul and was told in Genesis 1:29–30,

*“Lo! I have given to you — every herb yielding seed which is on the face of all the land, and every tree wherein is the fruit of a tree yielding seed — to you shall it be for food; and to every living thing of the land, and to every bird of the heavens and to every thing that moves on the land wherein is **life**, every green herb for food”*

As you can see from these five instances where the Hebrew term *nephesh* occurs, our translators have translated it with the English word “soul” once, as “creature” three times, and once with the word “life”. This last use, where *life* is used instead of “living creature”, actually appears in the Hebrew as *nephesh chay* which is the same terms used to tell us what man **became** when God gave man the breath of life; i.e., a *living creature/being/life/soul*.

The first four times *nephesh* is used it is used exclusively of animal life, be it in the sea, the air, or on the land. The fifth time is used of man to tell us what man **became!** God laid the foundation for the meaning of the term He inspired Moses to use. It is up to each individual to consider if they want to accept it or not. Remember the question asked in the beginning, WHY? It is very important, and we will entertain an answer later on in this article.

It is only proper to go to the earliest use of a word to see how it is used to understand what it means. In this case we have gone back to its earliest usage in the Scriptures, Genesis, the first book of the Bible. We have found its meaning to be the result of God's breath of life given to all his creation, whether it be sea creatures, birds of the air, beasts of the land, and all creeping things on the land. Included in God's creation, and the last thing He created, was man (Adam).

In going to the Scriptures we find that Jesus, God's only begotten Son, told us that "***The Scriptures cannot be broken!***" (John 10:35). Jesus put His seal on the Old Testament as the **unbreakable word of God**, and also made reference to Moses in many places as an authority that we must listen to. When Jesus was confronted by the religious leadership of the Jews, He had this to say in John 5:46–47 (NIV),

"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

The Apostle Peter tells us in Acts 3:22 referencing Jesus as the Prophet:

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you'."

We have quoted what Moses penned about the term he used to describe what man became, and also applied the very same term in his description of all *living creatures* on this world. I, personally, believe what Moses wrote. If we were to reject Moses' writings, we are in effect rejecting what authority Jesus applied to Moses. If we believe Jesus, whom God anointed as the Christ, doesn't that mean that we should also believe what Moses said?

At this point most of our opponents, i.e., those believing in the pagan philosophical idea that man has an "immortal soul" within them, back away from the term *soul* and switch over to the word *spirit*. This I welcome. Now if they would stop using the English word "soul" to mean an "immortal" entity in man that can never die, be destroyed, or "be no more", I would be happy.

The "spirit" is not the topic of this article, *soul* is the subject! But we won't let that pass so easily, for it is a good subject for a future article. Some of what we have mentioned also applies to the term (ruach) *spirit*, which in these same early foundational chapters of Genesis also is used of animals alone, and also of men and animals together, thusly Solomon makes this point: "***Man and beasts...they have all ONE spirit.***" (Eccl. 3;19).

In applying both of these Hebrew words, *nephesh* and *ruach* (soul and spirit), to animals and man, the Scriptures seem to be protecting us from the arguments of immortality being an attribute of man. For who would accept that all life, fish, birds, animals, and creeping things would have the same thing as they imagine man to have — an immortal entity residing within their body? None do, although some individuals are leaning that way with a ceremonial burial of their pets, including prayers said for them! What we need to do is to listen and accept what the Scriptures have to say on the subject, and not listen to the ones who promote what pagan Greek philosophers influenced them to introduce into Christianity; and to which the Apostle Paul had to contend with and even warned about in his letters.

We have only looked at the first five usages of the term *nephesh* so far. Looking further, we find that of the next eight mentions of the term, six are applied directly to animals, and two to human beings. This term is used indiscriminately among animals and people. There are seven places where this term is applied to both man and animals together. A very interesting example can be found in Numbers 31:28 (NIV).

*“From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the LORD **one** out of every five hundred, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep or goats.”*

What is interesting is that translators of the NIV do not actually translate what the manuscripts of this verse really says. They left out the translation of *nephesh* which occurs right after the word “one” and injected what? — Nothing! The word is simply ignored. The KJV does a better job of accurately translating the Hebrew of this verse, as do some other translations of the Bible.

*“And levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: **one soul** of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep:”*

As you can read, *nephesh*, i.e., translated “soul” in the KJV, which the NIV left out, is equally applied to human beings and animals. Let’s look at one more comparison, Proverbs 12:10, in both the KJV and the NIV.

*“A righteous man cares for the **needs** of his animal,
but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.” (NIV)*

*“A righteous man regards the **life** of his beast;
But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” (KJV)*

Again, as you can see, translators have shied away from using the term “soul” in place of the Hebrew word *nephesh*. The bold words in the above quotes is the Hebrew term *nephesh*. Does this tell you anything about the translators and the bias that they have against a consistent rendering of the Hebrew Old Testament? We will get to that later in this article.

But for now, let’s take a look at the Scriptures telling us that a *nephesh*, translated by whatever English words we see in its place, is going to be controlled by the context of the passage and verse.

In the beginning of this article we mentioned a question that we will now seek an answer to. That question is, “What is death?” And to follow that up, we also ask, “Can *nephesh* die?” Of course, that would be a moot question if there really was an immortal soul within our body — immortal, meaning not subject to death. However, we have not found any reference to that idea in the whole of the Bible. In fact, the only *nephesh*, i.e., a person said to have immortality is the resurrected Jesus and, naturally, God Himself. Let’s look at a law that was laid down by Moses, who got it from God on the Mountain: (Leviticus 24:17–18)

*“And he that kills **any** man shall surely be put to death.
And he that kills a **beast** shall make it good; **beast** for **beast**.”*

Let’s look at these same two verses from the Hebrew Scriptures.

*“He that kills the **nephesh** of a man, shall surely be put to death.
And he that kills the **nephesh** of a beast shall make it good;
nephesh for **nephesh**.”*

As you can see, the term nephesh occurs four times in these two verses of Scripture. Would you put the term “soul” for nephesh in these four places? What about the word “life”? Would that fit? Why not try it? Let it read as follows with “soul” in its place:

*“He that kills the soul of a man, shall surely be put to death.
And he that kills the soul of a beast shall make it good; soul for soul.”*

Now let’s put the word “life” in its place:

*“He that kills the life of a man, shall surely be put to death.
And he that kills the life of a beast shall make it good; life for life.”*

Another verse that should be considered is Leviticus 17:10–11. It reads,

*“And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that eats any manner of blood, I will set my face against that **soul** that eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the **life** of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your **souls**: for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the **life**.”*

Again, we see the four bold faced words in these two verses are the Hebrew term **nephesh**. Notice that the English word “soul” is used twice, and so is the word “life”. Is there any consistency apparent here? Why would the translators not transpose this usage; where soul is put life, and where life is put soul? Or better yet, translate all four occurrences of **nephesh** with either soul or life. “Man” is the noun that “soul” refers to, in effect calling “man” a “soul”. I, personally, have no problem accepting the term “soul” as the English word for **nephesh**, and the same goes for the word “life”. Or better yet, just leaving the term as **nephesh** in place of translating it would be very acceptable to me. But if they want to translate it as they have, bracketing it after each occurrence or making a note mentioning that it is the Hebrew word **nephesh** would be a good start in letting the readers of the Bible know the true term. It was not my purpose to examine for you each and every place the term **nephesh** occurs in the Old Testament, nor *psuche*, its Greek counterpart in the New Testament (of which we will examine a few verses later in this article).

Nephesh is the Hebrew term that is translated “soul” 475 times out of 752 times it is used. Life is used 117 times. However, **this same term is used in reference to its**

“**death**”. Let us look at some of the verses where it tells us that a *nephesh* can die. (Ezekiel 18:4)

“The nephesh (soul/being/life/person) that sins, it shall die.”

Ezekiel records this as coming from God, so we should seriously consider it in any study that we do on the topic of “soul”. There is nothing in the context wherein this statement is made that would indicate a *nephesh* is immortal, rather, the context is stated in such a way to enforce the idea that it is mortal — subject to death, destruction, and extinction.

In Genesis 2:16–17 we read of God warning Adam and Eve that if they ate of the *tree of good and evil* that they would “surely die.” And eventually, after they were no longer able to eat of the *tree of life*, they did die. God had created man from the dust of the ground, and told his first couple that “Dust thou are, and unto dust shall thou return” (Genesis 3:19).

We have already shown that man, made up of the dust of the earth, and combined with the *breath of life* from God, became a living *nephesh* — a living *soul/being/life/person*. When the *breath of life* leaves the body of dust, i.e., man, man returns to the dust of the ground from which he was made: he is no longer a living *nephesh*, he is dead, completely **dead!**

When we look and examine all uses of the word *nephesh* in the Old Testament we find that one out of every three references, numbering almost 300, refer to the *nephesh* being mortal, i.e., subject to death. Psalm 22:29b records for us this following statement:

*“All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him,
even he that cannot keep his **soul** (nephesh) alive.”*

This is a very pregnant statement. No man can save his own *nephesh*. However, God can save man’s *nephesh*! That is the reason why God sent the Christ — to save man’s life (*nephesh*). Christ is the only ONE who has immortality, and will only give it to those who are declared by Him to be righteous and worthy of immortality. This won’t happen until the Christ returns at the last day to resurrect the dead, both unbelievers and believers. We will expound on this topic at the end of this article. Right now we are examining the subject of man’s *nephesh*.

There are, as I have found, 32 passages of Scripture in the Old Testament that speak of the *nephesh* being killed by men. If this *nephesh*, thought of as “soul”, is immortal, how could the Scriptures tell us that man can kill it? Doesn’t it seem odd that God would inspire certain men He chose to reveal this to us? Or are we to ignore what God’s prophets told us? Jumping ahead to the New Testament, we find the Apostle Peter in his letter (II Peter 1:20–21) telling us that “*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (NIV).

We will do well by reading what is revealed in the Bible, and trying our best to understand what God has revealed to us. The writers of Scripture, moved by the Spirit of God in them, wrote in their own language what God moved them to write. Although the Translators of the Bible have put God's word to us in our own language, even though they had preconceived ideas of certain words and a bias to influence us into their philosophy, they couldn't hide the truth God revealed without exposing their philosophical bias. Men, during all ages, have sought to understand God's Will by asking questions of those men who were looked upon as being highly learned and had a form of godliness, and when answers were not clear-cut, they started their own study and found answers to satisfy them. While many of the answers they found seemed to be correct, they found other men question them further. Today, men who have questions have a distinct advantage over the men of old. Technology has progressed in such a way that any individual can study what the Bible has to say in the meanings of the words of all the languages of the world. There are Concordances, Lexicons (dictionaries), old manuscripts, old versions of the Bible, many commentaries, many versions of the Scriptures in various languages, and all available on computers which enable men to add to their knowledge base. God's word will never pass away or be covered up by the philosophical speculations and ideas of man.

One more part of this examination of the Old Testament is left, and it will more than show that the "immortal soul" concept is NOT a teaching to be found in the Scriptures of the OT.

Nephesh, the Hebrew term commonly translated with the English word "soul", is also spoken of as referring to "dead" bodies, i.e., corpses. There are approximately a dozen or so verses which show this. For example, see Numbers 6:6, 19:11-20, and Leviticus 21:11 (in context). We will not bring them all up here, letting you examine them for yourselves. Look up "body" in a Concordance where it references "death", and you will have a good start.

PART TWO: The New Testament use of the word *psuche*

Everything we have looked at so far came from the Old Testament. It is the foundation for the teachings of the New Testament, so we must not do as some do and ignore it. The Bible is one single set of Scriptures that is regarded as the inspired and authentic Word of God that speaks to us, teaches us, and shows us the way to save our "soul". This is something that does not get revealed via the philosophical teachings of men, regardless of how much anyone thinks of how great these men may be in the realm of Christendom. The "soul" in the New Testament cannot be understood without understanding the "soul" of the Old Testament: it is used of all living things, including man himself; it is spoken of as dying; it is spoken of as the mind, heart, appetite, and all emotions that are a part of a breathing creation of God. A "soul" is the whole creature, the result of the created body and the *breath of life* injected into it, which results in a living "soul". The lessons of Scripture say, "*Hear, and your soul shall live*" (Isaiah 55:3).

This article is getting quite long, so we will now examine only a few passages in the New Testament where it mentions "soul" and "life" for the Greek term "*psuche*",

which is the Greek term for the Hebrew term “*nephesh*”. Whenever the New Testament writers quote from the Old Testament, wherein the Hebrew term *nephesh* is used, the New Testament writers use the Greek term *psuche*. **Both of these terms mean the same thing.** The Greek term *psuche* is translated with our English word “soul” 39 times; souls 19 times; life 34 times; lives 5 times, and 8 times by other words such as mind, heart, etc.

When one talks of the *psuche*, **when translated as “soul”**, one immediately thinks of it as something “immortal” residing in the body of man. That thinking comes strictly from the speculations taught by Socrates through his pupil Plato, and his followers, Aristotle, Virgil and Epicurus. While the early Christian writers of the mid to late second and later centuries accepted the idea of the soul being immortal, they have not accepted all of what was taught from these pagan philosophers — mainly the resurrection of the dead. These pagan philosophers did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, but thought that the soul was pre-existent and was the real person occupying the body.

While we deny any immortality of a soul within man for the simple reason that **man himself IS a soul**, many raise an objection which, though it has no real foundation, seeks to prove that the Greek *psuche* had two established senses which they assumed to be carried into the Septuagint (LXX) and the New Testament. These assumed senses by objectors is that a soul in man is an immortal, ethereal, entity (the real person) within the body of man, in addition to being related to the nature of man’s living experiences.

If the Greek term had such a sense (an immortal sense), we would sincerely admit to their argument; but none of these objectors have ever made any serious attempt to respond to what we bring out from a study of what the Scriptures have to say about this subject. But to assume that this peculiar sense is given to the term *psuche* or “soul” in the Greek language is only to exhibit an utter ignorance of the variety of senses attributed in the Greek language according to the philosophical or theological ideas of the schools from 400 BC all the way up to our day.

Psuche, in the mind of a Platonist, a Stoic, or an Epicurean — schools of philosophy which represent the ideas of ancient Greek pagan philosophers — meant totally different ideas. Without going to the many different writers individually to show this, we quote a passage from Arnobius, a Christian father of the third century who was thoroughly conversant with the Grecian ideas propagated in these schools of philosophy:

“This one, he says, speaking of the conditions of *psuches* (souls) are both immortal, and survive the end of our earthly life; that one believes that they do not survive, but perish with the bodies themselves; the opinion of another, however, is that they suffer nothing immediately, but that, after the form of man has been laid aside, they are allowed to live a little longer, and then come under the power of death.” (Arnobius, Adv. Gentes, II, 57. Anti-Nicene Library, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.)

As Arnobius shows us, there were widely different ideas being taught and speculated on by the Grecian philosophers concerning the term *psuche*. To a Platonist *psuche* meant a never-dying principle, or to put it as they speak of it, “the real person inhabiting the body until the body’s death”. To an Epicurean it didn’t mean the person (*psuche*) at all, but simply animal life which died with the body. To a Stoic it meant a

principle or person (*psuche*) which had greater vitality than the body, and which survived the body, but was also mortal and after a period of time would itself die and cease to exist. However, like the Sadducees of Judahism, none of the above philosophies admitted to the resurrection of the body. It is very evident that the term *psuche* had no uniform or universal sense among the Greeks. Grecian philosophers and teachers were completely at odds with one another, and the general population for the most part simply ignored or considered the whole idea as an entertainment to be listened to and enjoyed.

The Jewish Encyclopedia states: “The belief that the soul continues in existence after the dissolution of the body — after death — is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere taught in Holy Scriptures.” History shows us that the pagan philosopher Socrates and his pupil Plato were the first ones to organize and propagate the idea that the term *psuche* meant a separate part of man that was immortal. This idea spread through the philosophical academies, although it was considered only as a **theory** of Socrates and Plato.

We are therefore free to examine the New Testament to see what is its view of the term *psuche*; we are free to believe that the sense attached to the Hebrew *nephesh* of the Old Testament is the same as the sense of the New Testament *psuche*; we are free to fault the Grecian and Christian philosophers who teach as followers of pagan Grecian ideas, and we are free to be wholly independent in our studies to seek what God chose to reveal to us in His Word — the Bible.

In the New Testament book of Acts, chapter 17, verses 16–33, we read of the problem Paul was confronted with by a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. While these two groups were at odds with each other, debating constantly, they united to hear the new “idea” Paul was proclaiming to the ordinary man on the street. Verse 21 is very revealing in this regard: “*For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new things.*” Paul then set out to proclaim the Good News, until, that is, he mentioned that God raised up the body of Jesus from the dead. To these philosophers the resurrection of the dead was heresy, along with the thought of a One God who would judge those who created their own gods to worship instead of Him, the only true God.

It is through Athenagoras, Tatian, the spurious works attributed to Clement of Rome, and a few other not so well-known writers that we have the earliest known Christian advocates of the theory of an immortal soul within the body of man. These were late-second century writers. From their writings we see the influence Plato’s works had on their thinking process. However, this theory required a more powerful advocacy than that of these men who didn’t have the skills and the influence of men after them. This theory found its required advocate in the person of Tertullian in the third century, followed by Origen a few years later. These two men were well-known for their skills in rhetoric and philosophical thinking. Tertullian was somewhat of a conditionalist in one sense even while being a follower of Plato, while Origen was an advocate of Universalism.

Tertullian was a master of the Latin language, a powerful speaker, had a vehement nature and a vivid imagination. He was well suited to impress his ideas, in spite of his heresies and strange hallucinations; he left a lasting impression on the people of his

day and upon the Latin Church of succeeding generations. But it was due to Augustine in his systemizing the Platonic theory into Christian theology that created the acceptance of an immortal soul within man into the churches. The history is there for anyone willing to pursue the introduction of the immortal soul theory into Christianity, although the Scriptures don't support it at all.

We have observed in our examination of the old Testament that the Hebrew *nephesh* was applied to all breathing creatures, including man. We will now make the claim that the New Testament does the same. In the book of Revelation (8:9) we read that a "...third part of the creatures that were in the sea and had life" (*psuchas*) "died." Why the word "souls" was not used here is to be questioned, for that is what the word *psuche* is also translated as. It doesn't matter at all for our purpose whether the creatures living in the sea were of fishy flesh or men symbolized by the word creature. The object is that "souls", i.e., *psuchas*, lost their lives — even stronger because the *psuche* is stated as a plural. Our translators have somewhat disguised this by the word "life"; and the NIV doesn't indicate that the term *psuchas* even appears in the passage.

Liddell & Scott's Dictionary defines this term as "the breath, life, spirit, of man and animals." However, with the influence the Platonic theory had on the translators, the idea which their philosophy had on succeeding generations of philosophical students, it quickly became an unspoken dogma of Christianity that *psuche* incorporated an immortal principle of an ethereal entity within the human body. Let it be understood here that our modern translators — schooled in this Platonic philosophy and traditional teachings that are almost always said to be a part of the Gospel — prefer to use "soul" as conveying from usage its idea of the immortality of a soul.

Yet, in spite of this strong prejudice, which led our translators as frequently as possible to confound the word in 98 places out of the 105 places it occurs, and have translated it either soul or life; "life" being used in no less than 41 places because "soul" — meaning by soul their idea of immortal — would in those places be inadmissible. We also remark that in the four Gospels, where our Lord Jesus Christ himself used the term *psuche*, it occurs 44 times, out of which our translators were compelled to translate it "life" in 24 places while they translated it "soul" in only 20 places. They sure didn't exhibit any consistency because of their Platonic schooling.

Just what is the force of these facts? The Greek term *psuche* occurs in the new Testament a certain number of times. Our translators had two different meanings of this word in their minds. One meaning was that it meant "animal type life", such as all breathing creatures, including man, have. The other meaning was of an "immortal principle" which they supposed existed within the body of man, and thus the word "soul". Their strong prejudice led them, as often as possible, to use this English word to express the immortal soul theory of Plato that they believed in. This was their dilemma: in spite of their beliefs they were compelled to confess by their translations that in almost half of the places where *psuche* occurs it cannot possibly mean the immortal principle, i.e., the immortality of a soul. Seeing as how Jesus himself used the term, they are compelled to confess that, in the majority of places, Jesus did not intend that *psuche* meant an immortal soul. Such a confession, by their translation of the term, is a very strong argument that the

term depicts the “animal life” of man —its whole human nature — and is the true and real sense of the Greek term *psuche*.

To believe that the Greek term *psuche* has two distinct senses, and that we are to think of it in one sense in one place, and a different sense in another place in the new Testament, is to almost think that God is the author of confusion. But it is not God that translated the Scriptures into the various languages of the world. It is our translators, with their bias which came to them from their Platonic schooling; a theological mind-set influenced by the ideas expressed through pagan philosophers who were admired for the strength of their arguments.

A translators job is to take the words of one language and put it into the words of another language. It is a job that has great responsibilities. If a translator puts a twist or a different sense on a word or phrase he is translating into another language he is in effect becoming a commentator. This can be dangerous in political dialogues for the meaning of one party would not be clear to the other party, and a breakdown of the dialogue could take place with disastrous results, even war.

But in translating the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into our English language, our translators, when any word is capable of two or more meanings to express what is being translated, and chooses one over the other, he is putting his comment on it. This concerns the Greek term *psuche* translated by “life” or “soul”. The English word “life” is understood by most people, but the word “soul” is seldom considered synonymous. “Life, to the great majority of mankind (in any language) means a living, breathing life, a creature, man included; and this “life” has a definite end when it dies. On the other hand, “soul”, supposedly synonymous because it is used to translate the same Greek term, does not have the same meaning; it means something that is not capable of dying, i.e., it is thought of as immortal, a thing “life” does not mean.

In reading an old book that incorporated the topic being examined herein, an example concerning the translation of Plato’s *Phaedo* was given. While this example of that author is not word for word, you should get the point he made. In Plato’s book the Greek word *psuche* appears in numerous places. He stated many things that the word means and doesn’t mean. For example he says that the *psuche* (soul) cannot be killed – *appolumi*; cannot die – *thanatos*; cannot be destroyed – *analisko*; cannot expire or cease to be – *apothnesko*: all terms that mean the extinction of the *psuche* (soul)! However, these and more terms are applied to the *psuche* by Jesus Himself and His Apostles; and are also applied to the *nephesh* in the Old Testament in hundreds of places (See list of these Greek terms at the end of this study). What would you think of a translator who would dare to give to this term, *psuche*, two completely different senses? What would you think of a translator who, in one sentence translated *psuche* by “life”, and in the next sentence translated the same word by “soul”? Especially when Plato never indicated that it had more than one sense, nor indicated that in his context. Plato proceeded in one unbroken line of argument. We would suggest that such a translator would be held in contempt, and should be fired for taking on a task he was unworthy of doing; for he is allowing his bias and preconceived ideas to surface instead of faithfully translating the word into another language. This is just what has taken place in many translations of the Bible (examples will be given shortly).

We will attempt to show you how our translators have treated the words of Jesus when he speaks of the *psuche* — the nature of a human being. Translators have done what we have just insinuated in that example on Plato’s book. Jesus speaks quite a number of times of the *psuche* of man. Not once do we see him apply it as something immortal inhabiting the human body. He tells us of how the life of man can be saved, and how it (that life) can be lost or destroyed eternally. This *psuche* of man was to be his prime thought in the gospel, **for it was to save it that he came into the world.**

However, our translators have, in the various warnings of Jesus concerning the *psuche* of man, used two different English words, which in their minds convey to us two different and opposite ideas — “life”, i.e., animal life; and “soul”, i.e., an immortal, ethereal something within the human body. In reading the Gospels we find that there is no indication at all that Jesus used the term *psuche* with two different senses attached to it. To ascribe two different senses to Jesus’ use of it would be the same as doing it to Plato’s *Phaedo*. We now are going to bring out a few instances where our translators have done this very thing, consciously or unconsciously; although no honest scholar would defend them.

The New Testament use of the Greek term *PSUCHE*

The first instance we will examine is Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:25–26 from the NIV. (The same words of Jesus occur also in Mark 8:35–37.)

*“For whoever wants to save his **life** will lose it, but whoever loses his **life** for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his **soul**? Or what can a man give in exchange for his **soul**?”*

In these two verses Jesus is speaking in one consecutive train of thought. “Life” in the 25th verse is given by NIV translators as expressing a completely different meaning from what they give in verse 26 where they have used the English word “soul”. In verse 25 the word they give is expressive of *animal life*, and in verse 26 they give us a word, as thought by the average reader, which expresses the *Platonic idea of an immortal soul*, i.e., an immaterial and ethereal something inhabiting the body which can never die.

It is amazing that our translators of the NIV would do this; for in all four places in these two verses the same Greek term, *psuche*, is used. It is very apparent that our Lord meant the same thing by the word *psuche* in these two consecutive verses. **Why**, then, did the NIV translators choose to use two very different words that have very different meanings to the average readers of the Bible? (We must admit that in their note at the bottom of the page they say that “The Greek word means either *life* or *soul*.” — but that does not excuse making the choice they did.)

Let’s see if we can give a reasonable answer to that question asked above. We believe it is because of the miserable pagan philosophical theory they were schooled in that mentally caused them to do so. They could not give the true and natural translation without contradicting what they were taught — the immortal soul theory.

Follow along and we will attempt to show this. We will now suppose them to translate verse 25 using the word “soul” instead of “life”.

*“For whoever want to save his SOUL (**the immortal principle**) will lose it, but whoever loses his SOUL (**the immortal principle**) for me will find it.”*

Every reader will quickly see that such a translation would be impossible for anyone believing in the Platonic theory of an immortal soul. Why? Because, according to them, “to save a soul” is not to save it from destruction or extinction, because, according to the theory, the soul can never die and be no more — it is supposedly immortal, i.e., not subject to death. To “save a soul”, in their minds, is simply to “accept Jesus into your heart”, or to “turn to God” from sin (which is all well and good, but not the meaning of the word). Thusly the Scriptures and their knowledge of it forbids them to translate *psuche* by “soul” in verse 25 because they mean by “soul” *something* within the body that can never die.

But what about verse 26? We can also see why they would translate it with the word “soul”, but the reality comes to the foreground when translated with the word “life”. Their theory is that *psuche* means “soul” — the immaterial, ethereal entity embodied in man that is immortal. Thusly, they try to use it as often as possible, whenever and wherever possible, without making themselves expose their folly. Here is how verse 26 would read translated with the word “life”:

*“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his **LIFE**? Or what can a man give in exchange for his **LIFE**?”*

For those of the immortal soul theory, translating *psuche* with “life” instead of “soul” in verse 26 is forbidden by their own theory. Why? Because it would exhibit the folly of those that prolong their life by denying Christ, yet having gained everything that this world has to give them; – read verse 25 again, noticing Jesus saying “**for me!**” – yet, again, in the scene of the coming judgment they will lose their *life* (*psuche*) which they prolonged in this world (See Rev. 20:14–15). The Platonic theory of the immortal soul forbids the idea that life will be lost in the scene of future punishment in the lake of fire: “After all,” they say, “the soul is immortal and thusly not subject to death.” Notice that Jesus DID INDICATE in verse 26 that one would “lose his own *psuche* (soul)”.

We sincerely don’t believe that *psuche* should have two different meanings in these two verses. It is very plain that Jesus taught that man’s “life” can be terminated in verse 25 (and a lot of other verses in the Gospels). No one can honestly say that *psuche* in verse 25 has the sense of something immortal, but has to admit it refers to physical life. There is not a single insinuation by Jesus that his use of *psuche* in verse 26 has a different meaning from verse 25: that is something those with the Platonic theory in their minds would have to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt. Thusly these two verses should read as follows: (American Standard Version.)

*“For whosoever would save his **life** shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his **life** for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his **life**? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his **life**?”*

As you can see, the ASV of the Bible has translated the Greek word *psuche* as “life” for all occurrences in these two verses. We are not alone in our understanding of Jesus’ words, nor are we alone in denying that *psuche* has two very different and distinct meanings. In this preliminary study 23 different Bibles were referenced; the majority (16) translated *psuche* similar to the NIV that we quoted from in the beginning. The other 7 chose the English word life for all four occurrences in these two verses. These facts should show you that even translators can be at odds with one another when it comes to the Greek word *psuche*. In checking the background of who translated the various versions we find that almost, but not all of them, held to the Platonic theory of an immortal soul within the body of man.

Interestingly, the Latin Vulgate Bible, as Jerome translated it from the Greek manuscripts, used the Latin term “*anima*” when translating both the Old and New Testament from the Hebrew term “*nephesh*” and the Greek term “*psuche*” — which shows us that all three of these languages had synonymous meanings. However, when the translators of the Latin Vulgate put it into our English language — the Douay-Rheims Bible; both the 1609 and 1989 versions — they, because the Platonic theory of an immortal, ethereal entity within the body of man was ingrained in their minds, did the same thing as many other translators did in their translations; they used the word “soul” in verse 26, ignoring the Latin Vulgates use of *anima* in all four occurrences where Jesus used *psuche*, and in verse 25 they used the word “life” because they were forced to do so by the context. The influence of Plato’s theory was instrumental in confusing God’s revelation of the nature of man He created from the dust of the ground. God said that man **IS** a “soul” (*nephesh*), not that he **HAS** a “soul” (see Genesis 2:7).

But things are looking up! God works in mysterious ways, and His words will accomplish His Will. Realizing that the largest Church organization, and the oldest, other than the Greek Orthodox Church which shares in being oldest, is Roman Catholicism. Back in the 17th century we find Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) opening the Vatican secret archives to all scholars, and he reminded Catholic historians that **nothing but the whole truth must be expressed in their works**. No longer was the Bible shut to Catholics, but was encouraged to be read. In 1902 he organized the permanent Biblical Commission, and sponsored many faculties and universities, including the Catholic University at Washington, D.C. Thusly, we see that eventually many of that organizations scholars and translators of the Bible realized that the Bible doesn’t quite say what it is made to say. It took many years before these men had the courage to speak out for what was in their minds. So, we find them examining the very topic we are engaged in — the idea behind the use of the word “soul” in the Bible. Consider what *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* has to say about the Hebrew word *nephesh* (or *napes*) and the Greek word *psuche* as it appears in the manuscripts of the Bible:

“*Nepes* comes from an original root...to breathe, and...thence, breath of life. Since breath distinguishes the living from the dead, *nepes* is used in regard to both animals and humans... After death, the *nepes* goes to *sheol* [Hebrew word for grave]. The above summary indicates that there is no dichotomy of body and soul in the Old Testament...other words in the Old Testament such as spirit, flesh, and heart also signify the human person and differ only as various aspects of the same being. **The notion of the soul surviving after death is not readily discernible in the Bible.** The concept of the human soul itself is not the same in the Old Testament as it is in Greek and modern philosophy...The soul in the Old Testament means not a part of man, but the whole man—man as a living being” (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, art. "Soul, Human, Immortality of").

And in another place:

“The soul in the OT means not a part of man, but the whole—man as a living being. Similarly in the NT, it signifies human life: the life of an individual conscious object (Matt 2:20; 6:25; Luke 12:22-23; 14:26; John 10:11,15,17; John 13:37; Acts 27:10, 22; Phil 2:30; 1Thess 2:8). Recent exegetes...have maintained that the NT does not teach the immortality of the soul in the Hellenistic sense of survival of an immortal principle after death (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. "Soul, Human, Immortality of, In The Bible.").

We wholeheartedly agree and go along with what we quoted above. Truth is hard to cover up, and thankfully is realized by some of those belonging to a religious organization such as the Papacy's. However, much more is said in that encyclopedia's articles that delves into a philosophical reasoning to justify a belief in an immortal *something* with the nature of man — and none of it is based on the sure word of Scripture. But, anyway, it is encouraging to know that not all scholars and translators, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, ignore the true teachings of the Bible. We ask you, the reader of this study, to examine what we say and compare it to what the Bible has to say — the honest approach to grow in the knowledge of God and His Christ, Jesus.

Let's now give another example of our translators leading astray the readers of the Bible by their inconsistency in choice of words concerning the term *psuche*. In Luke 12:19–23, in the New KJV, because it is the closest to a literal translation of the Greek manuscripts in these verses, we read Jesus saying this in his parable:

“*And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.’”*

The bold print in these verses are the Greek term *psuche*. Notice how the translators of the NKJV — which is the same as the Authorized Version (AV) — treat Jesus' words. In verse 19 and 20 it is translated “soul” three times, and in verses 22 and 23 it is translated “life”. No honest person can assume or even suppose that when Jesus speaks of the *psuche* three times in verses 19 and 20, and then speaks twice of this same *psuche* in verses 22 and 23, he is using it in two opposite senses — three times as something immortal and then two times as animal (physical) life that can and does die. In these verses the NIV translates what Jesus means correctly, so all is not lost for those who study to learn the truth of the matter.

These two examples should be sufficient to show you the folly of most translators. They also show the devious influence that the Platonic theory of a person having an ethereal, immortal *something* within the body had upon the majority of translators. One should also be able to see that the Old Testament term *nephesh*, the New Testament term *psuche*, and the Latin term *anima* all had a single uniform meaning — a living being or animal life, in other words, the whole person.

The two examples just discussed are not the only scriptures that undermine the idea that the Greek term *psuche* has two distinct and opposing meanings. Translators of the Platonic philosophy dare not translate *psuche* as “soul” in many verses spoken by Jesus. In Mark 3:4, when Jesus asked the Pharisees a question, they remained quiet. Jesus had asked them, “*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil? To save **psuche**, or to kill (it)?*” They should have responded that one should do good, but they couldn't bring themselves to admit it: that is why they remained silent. Read the passages in Mark 2:23–27 and 3:1–6. The Jewish leaders were intent on trying to find something to use to condemn and kill Jesus.

Platonic translators in this verse have chosen the word “life” instead of “soul” for the simple reason that their belief on that word is that it has two meanings: one means physical life and the other one means a “life that cannot be killed”, i.e., an immortal “soul” or *something* within man that is immortal. In any case, in their minds, to prolong life is to save it, to end life is to kill it; but the other word, “soul”, is something that cannot be killed. So, in what Jesus said, to prolong one's *psuche* is to save it and to end one's *psuche* is to kill it, they had to translate it as “life”. However, the term *psuche* is translated either with “life” or “soul” which makes them synonymous, i.e., both having the same meaning. So, **to save a “life” is to save a “soul”!**

In the four Gospels we find the term *psuche*, or its plural, *psuches*, translated in most Bible versions into our English language some 50 times. Of these, 29 times it is translated life or lives, and 21 times as soul or souls. Around 45 of these instances were spoken by Jesus himself. We could ask, “Did Jesus use the word *psuche* with two different meanings in his mind; one meaning a mortal being and the other meaning an immortal ethereal *something* inhabiting the body?” If he did, why didn't he let his apostles know that, or at least give them a hint? In Matt. 26:38 Jesus said: “*My soul (psuche) is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*” Did he really mean that his “soul” could die, or did he mean his life was approaching the point of dying? In many places Jesus said he came “*to give his **psuche** a ransom for many*” (Matt. 20:28, Mark

10:45), and “*I lay down my psuche for the sheep*” (John 10:11, 15, 17). If Jesus had two separate meanings for the term *psuche*, which meaning did he mean? Actually, the context in which Jesus spoke leads us to the understanding that he was to give up his whole *psuche* — life or being — for our sins.

There is much we could bring out to show that Jesus was to shed his blood and die for us. It was not just his body that would die, but his whole being (*psuche*). For, “...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (of sin)” (Heb. 9:22). In Leviticus 17:11 it says, “For the life (**nephesh** = **psuche**) of the flesh is in the blood:” (LXX); and we know that if the body were deprived of its blood it would be dead and return to the dust of the ground from which it came. We already have examined Genesis 2:7 where it says that Adam “became a living nephesh” — the term translated with the Greek term *psuche*, which was then translated into our English with “being, life, or soul”. Now, seeing as how *nephesh* = *psuche*, and *psuche* = life, being or soul, then life, being and soul are all words equaling the Hebrew *nephesh* and Greek *psuche*.

Another example we want to bring up concerns Jesus when he was born. In Matthew 2:13 we read that an angel of God told Joseph to “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.” And to “Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” Joseph obeyed the angel. Then in verse 20 we read that “After Herod died” this angel appeared again to Joseph and said that “those who were trying to take the child’s life (*psuche*) are dead,” so he could take the child back to Israel. Again, we find that a *psuche* could be killed! This is not this author’s idea, but the idea expressed by the context of scripture passages in multiple places. *Psuche* is the Greek term for the Hebrew *nephesh* in the Old Testament. What we have so far brought out from the New Testament on this term is the same as what is taught us in over 300 places in the Old Testament. A *psuche*, translated by whatever word you may choose, be it soul, life, being or creature, is always spoken of as mortal and subject to death, be it natural or from some other cause.

Bringing up the word “natural” turns us to what the Apostle Paul has to say in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 42–54.

(42) *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: (43) it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (44) it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*
(45) *So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* (46) *Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual.* (47) *The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven.* (48) *As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.* (49) *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* (50) *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

(51) *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and **this mortal** shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

Paul makes many important contrasts in verses 42 and 43, then in verse 44 he tells us that “*there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.*” The word “natural” is the Greek term “*psuchikos*”, from the term *psuche*, which ties the word “natural” to whatever we translate *psuche* by —life, soul, being or creature; the same as the word “spiritual” (*pneumatikos*) ties it to the word “spirit” (*pneuma*). Paul then continues by quoting a part of Genesis 2:7 — “*And so it is written: ‘the first man Adam became a living psuche’* (soul, life, being or creature).” **Christ**, “*the last Adam, (became) a life-giving spirit.*”

It should be very apparent that “natural” man is far from any part of him being immortal. It is only after the resurrection that man can be called an “immortal *psuche* (soul)”, and at that time has a **spiritual body** as Jesus had at his resurrection. Notice that Paul tells us that Adam was “earthy” — “*of the dust of the earth*”, as are all of God’s creatures. All are “**mortal**” and need to be resurrected in order to put on “immortality”. There is no getting around this, unless, of course, one doesn’t accept what Jesus Christ and His Apostles teach us on this subject we are examining.

Why did Paul go to this length, contrasting a natural body with a spiritual body? The prevailing Greek views of his day rejected the resurrection of the body. This led Paul to pen chapter fifteen in this letter to the Corinthians. In verses 17–19 Paul says:

*(16) For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised: (17) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain; you are yet in your sins. (18) **Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** (19) **If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.***

Our blessed hope is in “*the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*” As the Apostle John tells us, “*Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is*” (I John 3:2). The resurrection of Jesus gave him a “spiritual body” that was capable of appearing in a closed room without going through a door and over 500 people saw him after his resurrection. Jesus promised that every one who “*believes on him may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day*” (John 6:40). When a person dies he no longer exists — his *psuche* is dead. **How** God is going to be able to raise a body that has decomposed into the dust of the ground, is beyond man’s comprehension. Trust in God’s promise to resurrect the body is all the hope one can have.

There are many objections to what is said in this study. Most of them are based upon the pagan originated concept of Plato that there is something in man that is immortal. This is a concept that is foreign to the whole of the Bible. Our hope of being

resurrected to immortality is not based upon man's philosophical concepts or ideas, but is based upon what God has chosen to reveal to us through His inspired prophets and finally through His one and only Son, Jesus, whom He made the Christ, the Messiah — His **anointed** one. (See Hebrews, chapter one.)

One of the hardest objections to overcome is the traditionalist teaching that when one dies the “soul” goes either to heaven or to a “hell”. This tradition goes all the way back into antiquity, and, although agreed by all religious scholars to have been started by Socrates and carried on by Plato and the Platonic schools of philosophy right up to our days, it cannot be traced back to the Old or New Testament writings. However, early on in Christianity, around the middle to late second century it started to gain headway into the churches through some early Christian philosophers: this has been investigated by many scholars and all agree that one cannot find it taught by the earliest Christian fathers; such as the writings of Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, The Didache, the Shepherd of Hermas, Polycarp, Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus. All of these writings occurred before the year 200 AD.

But there were a few early writers who did believe in the immortal soul theory put forth by Socrates and his student Plato. Many scholars try to make Justin Martyr and his student Tatian (d. 172 AD) to be solid believers in the immortal soul theory, but the works of these two men contain such contradictions that the question sometimes arises whether the texts have not suffered interpolations by later writers adding their ideas and words into them. Then there was Athenagoras who died around 186 AD who advocated Plato's theory. These are the only three of the early writers who could be said to be advocates of Plato's theory.

However, around 200 AD we find Minucius Felix, followed by Tertullian and Hippolytus, to definitely be followers of Plato's theory, in part, for they at least believed in the resurrection of the body. Of all these men it was Tertullian who had the most influence to perpetuate Plato's theory of an immortal soul within the body of man.

About 20 years after Tertullian died (c. 235 AD), another man, Origen (d. c255 AD), introduced a new view about the immortal soul theory — universalism, i.e., all men will eventually be saved. Origen lived during the life of Cyprian who held to Plato's basic theory; other than that, Origen's viewpoint became the main view of man's immortal soul until around the end of the fourth century. However, during this time there were two prominent church fathers who maintained that immortality was only to be given to man by Christ at the resurrection on the last day. These two men were Arnobius and Lactantius.

Arnobius lived at the beginning of the fourth century. He is the one man who was most verbal in opposition to Platonism. It is surprising, at the least, that his writings were preserved by the Church, which were against the opinions that were prevailing on the immortal soul theory. Here is some of what he says:

“None but the Almighty can preserve souls (animam), give them length of days, and a spirit that shall never die, for God alone is immortal. As for souls

(*animam*), they are of an intermediate quality, even as Christ has taught us. They may, on the one hand, perish (die) through not having known God, and on the other hand be delivered from death if they give heed to his threatenings and profit by his offered favors.... **Let it be understood that in man's true death there is nothing left behind** (*haec nihil residuum faciens*). But the true death is when souls (*animam*) that know not God shall be given over **to be consumed** in protracted torment.... **Let us, then, avoid the vain hope of this new category of individuals who in their own insolent presumption assure us that souls (*animams*) are naturally immortal, of divine rank, offspring of God, inspired by him, exempt from the defilement of matter. In fact, souls (*animams*) are born at the very gates of the empire of death; but as the result of the divine generosity they are allowed to prolong their existence on condition that they earnestly seek to know God.. That knowledge is for them like salt, which, permeating their substance, protects them from corruption, or like the cement which serves to connect the stones of a building.... by putting off their insolence and cultivating sentiments of greater humility, your souls will prepare themselves for a new destiny. But God does not constrain anyone. The maintenance of our existence is by no means a necessity for Him. He will not enrich himself by making us like gods; he will not impoverish himself by leaving us to fall back into nothingness.**" (Treatise Against the Gentiles, Book 2, chapter 14–16, *passim*.)

Lactantius, a disciple of Arnobius, was a believer in conditional immortality. He says, according to Hagenbach in his work, *Dogmengeschichte*, page 106:

"Man, says he, stands upright with eyes raised to heaven because immortality is offered to him. Yet he does not possess it otherwise than as a gift of God, for there would be no difference between the just and the unjust if every man born into the world should become immortal. Immortality is, then, the wages and reward of virtue; it is not inherent in our nature."

The teaching of the Platonic immortality of a soul within man was made to triumph in the Church by the false Clementines, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Jerome, and especially Augustine. Jesus and His Apostles never taught this in their Gospel messages. It was up to men such as the above, through the philosophy they were educated in, to propagate Plato's theory, in part, to the Church by their influence among the populace.

While Tertullian plainly rejected a part of Plato's teaching on the nature of the *psuche* (soul), he accepted its inherent immortality just as strongly as Plato did. And he rejected the idea of Plato that *psuches* (souls) are unborn and uncreated, and thusly existed from eternity. About two hundred years later, the fifth century, Augustine took over the immortal soul theory of Plato and, because of his great influence, set the stage for this doctrine to become the backbone of the Latin (Catholic) Church. Immortal life of the soul took the place of the resurrection of the body in the minds of Western Christianity, until, in the sixteenth century, upon the words of Pope Leo X at the Lateran Council in 1513 AD, it was officially adopted as a doctrine that must be believed by

Church members. This doctrine was made in contradiction to Martin Luther's belief that the immortal soul theory was unbiblical and should be expunged from Christian thinking.

To close this objection, we now quote some statements made by Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue With Typo the Jew*, chapter 80. In this chapter Justin is discussing the Christians hope of being reunited with Christ in the New Jerusalem. Here is a part of what he says:

"I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians...who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians..."

The next objection that we hear a little less often than the one above is taken from Matthew 10:28.

"...fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul (psuche - life): but rather fear Him which is able to DESTROY both soul (psuche - life) and body in Gehenna."

However, those who bring this verse of Matthew's up seem unwilling to bring up what Luke records about this same saying of Jesus. (Luke 12:4–5.) **Fear Him, God!**

"...Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he has killed has power to cast into Gehenna (Hell); yes, I say unto you, fear him."

Jesus is here speaking of the extinction of one's life in the future, i.e., after the resurrection of the dead that he promised in John 5:28–29. What is not really considered when one objects via this verse of Scripture is that God does not consider the life and body of man to be extinguished by another man as permanent, for He has the power to recreate the body and life when called from the dead. One must remember that God considers the dead to be alive in His eyes and He alone can either DESTROY, permanently, or give immortality to those He chooses to live endlessly. We are but clay in the hands of the Potter, and the Potter can do what He wants with the clay.

The Scriptures, as a whole, teach us that the *psuche* (soul or life) of man can die and "be no more". It is rather odd that the one passage most often quoted to support the indestructible soul theory of Plato is the very same one that speaks of the "soul" being able to be **destroyed**, but we also find that these objectors to not regard "destroyed" as meaning destroyed, but just the opposite — "life" in a "hell" of Grecian mythology. Along with this we also find these objectors denying that "death" means death, instead

they say it means an endless “life in misery” that will never end! With such thinking we can see that they could make anything mean anything.

The apostle Paul in Romans 11:3 quotes Elijah as saying, “...*I am left alone, and they seek my psuche (life or soul).*” What is meant here other than saying that man can kill the soul or life of another man? Is God a god of confusion, meaning two separate things with the same word? Of course not! It takes the philosophy of man to do that type of thinking. If we really seek to find a scriptural explanation, we must come to an understanding of what God has seen fit to reveal to us, and not change the meanings of words to back up a philosophical theory. Man can kill the body but this has no permanence concerning our ultimate existence at the end.

When man dies the Scriptures tell us that it is to be looked upon as a temporary sleep. (See Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 9:24, 27:52; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52; John 11:11–14; Acts 7:60; I Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51; I Thess. 4:13–15, 5:10; II Peter 3:4; Deut. 31:16; II Sam. 7:12; I Kings 1:21; Job 7:21, 14:12; Psalms 13:3; Jer. 51:39, 57; Acts 13:36; I Kings 2:10, 11:21, 43, 14:20, 31, 15:8, 24, 16:6, 28, 22:40, 50; II Kings 8:24, 10:35, 13:9, 13, 14:16, 22, 29, 15:7, 22, 38, 16:20, 20:21, 212:18, 24:6; II Chron. 9:31, 12:16, 14:1, 16:13, 21:1, 26:2, 23, 27:9, 28:27, 32:33, 33:20; Job 3:13; Matt. 25:5). In this understanding, the future sense, man cannot kill the soul or life. But God on the other hand is able to blot us out of existence to be no more, and make all our memory non-existent. (See Deut. 32:39; I Sam. 2:6; Eccl. 9:4–6; Psalms 31:12, 88:5; Isa. 26:14; and Eccl. 8:10).

A few closing remarks are now needed. Let me lead them off by saying that **Christ did NOT come to save an immortal sinner, but to give a mortal sinner the offer of immortality.** And I do not see that Christ ever taught or stated that the whole man could not be killed, either by man or by God. The immortality or continued conscious existence of man’s *psuche* is assumed by those caught up in the immortal soul theory to be in the Scriptures, but never proved. However, the divinity of Christ is proven. In the New Testament we find decisive evidence that Christ had a unique and close relationship to the Father involving, in contrast to all created mankind, a share of the Divine mind. But throughout the whole of the New Testament we have no proof, direct or indirect, or even any clear suggestion, of the endless permanence of any part of mankind.

Man is appointed once to die, and then the judgment comes at resurrection: a judgment that condemns the ones who did not seek the salvation offered by Christ; a judgment that God has revealed will result in their second death as stated in Revelation 20:11–15. That is what the apostle Paul told the Philippians (3:19) — “*whose end is destruction.*” Which, in Hebrews 6:8 says, “*whose end is to be burnt*” up. John the Baptist said in Matt. 3:12 that “*the chaff He will burn-up with unquenchable fire.*” So too did Jesus give the same warning of in Matt. 13:30, “*collect first the tares, and bind them into bundles, to **burn them up**;*” and in verse 40, “*just as then the tares are gathered together and **burnt-up** with fire, so shall it be at the completion of the age.*” This metaphor implies finality. No one who had any hope or thought of their ultimate restoration could compare the doom of the wicked to chaff or weeds cast into the fire and there **burnt-up**. All this is talk of the future of man, after the resurrection. The good to

receive the blessing of immortality, the wicked or unbelievers to die a second time — by being **burned up**. These metaphors imply finality; the extinction of those who did not believe and obey the Gospel of Christ Jesus. (See II Peter, chapter three about this time.)

The most precious thing to anyone is LIFE. One will do almost anything to prolong their life, even to the cutting off a leg or an arm to save it. A criminal accused of murder, found guilty and condemned to pay the penalty put forth by law, will do his best to escape being executed, thinking that life imprisonment is an easier penalty to pay than to loose his life. Being deprived of life is the most serious thing anyone can imagine.

In John 3:16, the most quoted verse of scripture today, most people don't realize exactly what they are reading. They look and see that "*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*" The "*shall not perish*" doesn't mean death to them, for they were taught all their lives that man has an immortal soul — and that means that it can never die. John 3:36 reveals that "*He that believes on the son has everlasting life: and he that does not believe shall not see that life; but the wrath of God remains on him.*" Believers "*shall not perish*", John 3:16 says, but unbelievers "*shall not see that life*" says John 3:36. As anyone can easily understand, the message is about LIFE and not having LIFE. If one does not have the LIFE Jesus offered, which is immortal life, how can one say that those who do not believe will have **that life** in the age to come, howbeit, in endless suffering in a hell? It is conditional — believe and receive immortality in the age to come, or disbelieve and receive the wages of disbelief which is to face the judgment of death a second time in the age to come. The Scriptures are very plain in saying this, providing that one doesn't let the Grecian philosophical theory of everyone having an immortal soul inhabiting their bodies override what God has revealed to us.

Do I believe that everyone reading this study will heed its findings? Absolutely not! The pagan teachings of Plato and those who follow them are ingrained deep into the minds of the great majority of Christians today. It has become a doctrine of organized religion, a Tradition that is repeated so often that almost everyone believes it is found on every page of the Bible: a teaching that cannot be found in the Scriptures, much to their studied surprise.

My sincere hope is that this subject, the "immortal soul theory", is taken up by someone doing a thesis for a masters degree, or even a doctorate degree in their Bible Colleges and Seminaries. My aim in writing this article has been to be biblical and fair in bringing to the forefront things that never seem to be questioned. Examine the statements made, weigh them with an open Bible and mind, measure them by every proper standard of exegesis and hermeneutical method — all that matters is that God's truth shines forth!

Let's now summarize the points we have tried to make.

1. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is, even to those believing in it, admittedly traced to heathen Greek philosophers, and many of its followers even agree that the Biblical meaning of "soul" is not what people think it is.

2. The Hebrew word “*nephesh*” and the Greek word “*psuche*”, both translated by the English word “soul”, occurs 850 times in the Bible and one cannot find in any place a suggestion that it is immortal.
3. Translators use over 40 words in translating the Hebrew word “*nephesh*” in the Old Testament, and anyone studying the context of all passages using them can see how far current teachings are from what is really said of the word soul.
4. In the New Testament the Greek word “*psuche*” is translated either with the English word “soul” or “life” in almost all cases. It is synonymous with the Hebrew word “*nephesh*”.
5. The first time one runs across the word “*nephesh*” in the Old Testament it is used of animals, and only after being used 4 times does it get used to describe what man **becomes** when God breathed into the nostrils of the body of the man He made from the dust of the ground.
6. 300 times the Hebrew and Greek terms translated “soul” or “life” speak of it in plain words to indicate that it is mortal and subject to death.
7. The soul or life is spoken in many places as being killed by man, and the corpse is spoken as being a “dead soul”.
8. Man is compared to the “*beasts that perish*” (Psa. 49:12, 20), and “*like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed upon them; ...and their beauty shall consume in the grave...*” (Psa. 49:14).
9. Man is mortal and must put on immortality; is corruptible and must put on the incorruptible; is perishable, and must put on the imperishable; is born a natural (soul) body, and must be raised in a spiritual (soul) body, for “*...as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*” (I Cor. 15:42–55).

Final words to encourage further study on this subject seem appropriate. The life promised by Christ to those who put faith in Him and obey Him is absolutely endless, and is still further removed from all the possibility of doubt by the immortal life of Christ Himself which all who believe in Him will share: See John 14:19, Rom. 8:17, 35–39 and Rev 3:21. You may have noticed that we have italicized the word “*something*” in various places in this study. That “*something*” IS IMMORTAL! It is in everyone who has “*the spirit of Christ*” in them. It is the guarantee given us that will be experienced on the last day when we actually “*put on immortality*” in our new “*spiritual body*”. This “*something*” is **not** the *something* of Platonic philosophical teachings believed by most Christians today!

This promise of “*life in Christ Jesus*” and the hope of endless blessedness thereby promised to us rests securely on the words of Christ confirmed by The Father who gave His only-begotten Son in order that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life, and raised Him from the dead so that our faith and hope (I Peter 1:21) may be in God. For no historic fact is more certain than that Jesus of Nazareth promised to all who put faith in Him a new life of devotion to God on earth, and an endless life beyond the grave.

However, in awful contrast to this blessed LIFE stands, throughout the New Testament, the destruction of the unbeliever: *olethros*, *apoleia*, and *apollumi*. These words, along with a few others, are found in the New Testament in a technical sense more

than thirty times. They are rendered in most translations as *death, destruction* and *destroy, perdition* and *perish, lose* and *lost*; and convey in the Greek language the combined significance of these English words the meaning of the punishment the unbelievers will experience when cast into the Lake of Fire spoken of in Revelation 20:11–15 as the second death of their resurrected, but temporary life. These words do not convey to us any idea of prolonged suffering, but of death.

If God had intended us to understand something other than total death for the unbeliever, he could have used other words to express it in the Scriptures. Instead he inspired select men to use the plainest and most powerful words in the Greek language that indicate the destruction of the whole man. Following is a list of these powerful words:

1. **Apollumi:** To destroy utterly (used 23 times); come to an end, to lose utterly, to be finally destroyed, to end life, put to death, cause to perish (used 33 times), See Matt. 10:28, 21:41, 22:7; Luke 17:27, 29; John 3:16; Rom. 2:12; II Cor. 4:3. In all the New Testament there is no word that is more distinctly fixed than that of *apollumi*.
2. Ollumi: To perish, as *apollumi* above, which is the stronger form of the word.
3. Apoleia: Death, especially by violence; loss of things, ruin, waste. See Phil. 3:19 and I Tim. 6:9.
4. Analisko: To consume, destroy. See II Thess. 2:8).
5. Apothnesko: To die out, expire, cease to be. See John 11:16, 26; Rom. 8:13, 34; Rev. 9:6, 16:3.
6. Diaphtheiro: To spoil throughout, corrupt utterly. See Rev. 11:18.
7. Exolothreuo: To destroy utterly, slay wholly, dissolve. In the LXX it is used 80 times as the Hebrew *karath*, i.e., “cut off” See Acts 3:23 and compare with Gen. 17:14; also see Exodus 30:33, 31:14.
8. Katakaio: To burn up, or burn down. See Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17.
9. Katargeo: To render inactive, idle, bring to nothing, make void, abolish (II Thess. 2:8) In I Cor. 15:26 death itself is destroyed (*katargeo*).
10. Katalisko: To consume wholly or thoroughly (the intensive form of *analisko*). See II Thess. 2:8 and Heb. 12:39.
11. Kolasis: Punishment, cut off. A result, not a process. Compare Matt. 3:10 and Luke 3:17.
12. Olothros (*olothreutes*): Death, ruin, that which cause death. See II Thess. 1:9.
13. Phtheiro (*kataphtheiro*): To deprave, mar, spoil, corrupt. See I Cor. 3:17
14. Phthora (*diaphthora*): Corruption, spoiling, destruction. See Acts 2:27, 31; Gal. 6:8.
15. Thanatos: Extinction of life; death by judgment of court, or judgment of God against sin (the second death). See Rev. 20:6, 14, 21:8; Rom 6:21, 23.

These words are used frequently by Jesus, Paul and John, yet, not one term in the entire list above implies the idea of endless torment (especially in a fire). They all mean an end to life, or cause life to cease to be. In the mouth of Dr. Weymouth, a master of the Greek language and manuscripts of the Bible, and a translator of it, had this to say: “My

