

MAN AND MORTALITY

By

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“What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Psa. 8:4). Science, even with its recent seven-league strides, is unable to answer this question. Eminent scientists acknowledge that all theories of one species evolving from another by means of resident forces have failed to produce facts to sustain them. They are compelled to admit that man is a creation of God.

The question of man’s nature, purpose and destiny has puzzled men through the ages until in our present day there is a massive and grotesque accumulation of theories which range from Nirvana of Buddhism, through the medieval concept of purgatory down to the communist idea of a human controlled Utopia. Recent science-fiction has portrayed man’s “soul” as being transferable from one body to another, transcending time and space and passing into other planes of life.

Even the ideas in Christendom are varied, contradictory and for the most part mysterious. It is widely believed that the soul, to quote a famous evangelist, “is something down inside of you.” This “soul” is said to be indestructible, and that once a soul is born, it is eternal and must go on living in some kind of conscious existence forever. The physical nature of man is generally held to be of little one sequence in eternity, as it is the “soul” that one must save.

Does this belief come from Scripture? Since the Scripture asks the question, “What is man?” Let the Scripture answer: “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” (Genesis 2:7).

Note that while the thing formed was as yet not living, it was still called “man.” When life entered the man, he became a “living soul.” In other words, **you do not have a soul, you are a soul**. This is the way the term is used in both old and new testaments.

The assumption that every person is made up of a perishable physical body and an imperishable, indestructible soul grew out of Platonic philosophy and not from Scripture. The Bible, instead of teaching that every person is immortal, teaches that God is the only One Who, at the present time, is immortal. “Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: Who only has immortality” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

The Apostle Paul spoke of immortality, not as something everyone possesses, but a future hope of the believer to be “put on” at the resurrection. “The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass

the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory” (1 Cor. 15:52-54). Note that this does not occur until the day of resurrection when Christ returns.

The apostles viewed eternal life and immortality as a gift from God, not the natural and inherent right of every person. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). With this in mind Paul wrote that “God ... will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life” (Romans 2:6-7).

Jesus set forth in plain language the fact that those who “believe on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). If man already possessed such life that could not perish, these words of Jesus would be worse than meaning-less.

The assumption that man has a natural-born immortality has been the reason for the invention of many harmful innovations contrary to Christian faith. Among these is Mariolatry, purgatory, Limbo, prayers for the dead and to the dead, messages from the dead and fear of the dead. The belief in natural immortality of all men has changed the Scriptural picture of hell as a place of death to a place of life, where God roasts his victims forever in a chamber of horrors! Thus the ungodly never really die. The substitutionary death of Jesus is without any force if this be the meaning of death.

On the contrary, the whole idea of the Gospel is that man **IS** perishable, and that unless he repents and turns to God he will die! The Bible teaches that the eternal punishment of the ungodly consists in the direct antithesis of life; that is; death or destruction. The plain terms of Scripture are: “The soul that sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4) and “If any man destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy” (1 Cor. 3:17).

Such destruction is to take place at the return of Christ the Judge, when all the dead are raised up to life. The eternal punishment of the ungodly consists in their final and irrevocable death. The Scriptures say they shall **be slain** (Isa. 65:15, Luke 79:27), **be destroyed** (1 Cor. 3:17, Psa. 37:38; 92:7; Matt. 10:28), **suffer destruction** (Psa. 73:18, Matt. 7:13, Phil. 3:19, 2 Thess. 1:9), **perish** (Psa. 37:20, Luke 15:3, 2 Pet. 2:12) **be consumed** (Psa. 37:20, Isa. 1:28), **suffer death** (Rom. 6:2L,23, Rev. 21:8), **be burned up** (Heb. 6:8, Matt 3:12, Malachi 4:1, 2 Pet. 3:7,10).

Set against this background of death and destruction of man for his sin is the “Good News” that “Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). The Scripture teaches that Jesus became a flesh and blood man in order that he might take man’s place in a human death “that by the grace of God. He might taste death for every man.” “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage” Heb. 2:14-15).

Man is not endowed with perpetual life, neither by any natural possession of some eternal quality nor by any power within himself. Man, as a “living soul,” is mortal and death-

bound. The Bible views him as dead; dead in the trespasses and sins, dead in the sense of mortality, as well as dead judicially, under sentence of the second and final death.

Life and immortality is possible only through the One Who is the “way, the truth and the Life,” Who is the “resurrection and the Life,” Who came that we “may have life . . . abundantly.”

Therefore man is not by nature immortal. He was created for immortality, but lost the right to it through sin (Genesis 3:22-24). He is not immortal but rather a candidate for immortality. Eternal life is a gift which God (Who only hath immortality) will confer upon those who by faith willing receive it and accept the conditions God has given.

“Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” “Who has abolished death and has brought **LIFE** and **IMMORTALITY** to light through the gospel” (1 Cor. 15:57, 2 Timothy 1:10).

JUST FOR YOU–TH

“But they must know!” The young co-ed insisted. “After all, they have studied these things, and they must be right.” So ended the consideration as to whether or not the professor could be wrong about his teachings of evolution and other theories in conflict with revelation. “He has a degree; the authorities do not question him; his view is the majority view, and besides who am I, with so little knowledge of such things, to question those who have spent a lifetime in study?”

So the student buries his head in the sand of text-book and lecture notes and in the name of education accepts without proof or conclusive evidence that which is handed him. His mind becomes a blank blackboard upon which the professor can write his own inadequate and unbelieving views. After a few years of this kind of so-called “higher learning” the student is calling into question, not the professor, but the Bible, its miracles, the deity of Christ and prophetic statements about the world and its destiny.

But, is there any ground for assuming that because a person has “studied these things” he is therefore following the truth in them?

The fact is that the experts who have done such study have failed to come to agreement. Besides this many of them will insist that one cannot know the absolute truth about anything. Truth, they say, is relative. If this be true then it is also true that they have not arrived at the truth. So you have a perfect right to question them.

The idea that one must accept the theories of the learned is especially appealing to those who simply do not want to think for themselves. Question a person about some doctrine of his faith and he will admit his ignorance of the Bible, but quickly defend his faith on the basis that the priests and leaders of his church are highly educated men. The strange thing is that the leaders and preachers of every major religion are highly educated men,

whether Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Mormon or whatever you name. Even the leading atheists are advanced in learning.

What does it all mean? That nobody knows the truth? If this were so, that would be even better reason to question the all-knowing professor who is so sure that the Bible records are out of line with scientific discoveries. If nobody knows, then the scientist doesn't know either. So far science has not discovered anything as proven fact which is out of line with the Biblical record. Some scientists have advanced theories, but a theory is only a guess and not a fact. Whatever may be discovered in science from here on out, you can be sure of one thing; it will not contradict the record already revealed by God in the Bible.

Just take a look around, and you can see that despite all our colleges and universities the statement of Billy Graham is completely valid, "Our generation will go down in history as the generation of fools."

Is there any truth? Yes, Jesus said, "know the truth and the truth shall make you free" and. "Thy (God's) word is truth." When you know the truth of God, you are wiser than Socrates and you know more than all science has discovered thus far.

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