

Knowing the Truth 03

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32

Truth about Death

Now that we have established that the Bible can be relied upon when studied properly with an honest heart, we must consider the fact that some of the things it teaches differ from the generally accepted views held by most people. For one thing, we need to look honestly, and establish what the Bible really teaches about what happens when a person dies. Many people sincerely believe that when we die, we just turn to dust eventually and that is the end of everything.

Other folk believe that the good go straight to Heaven, and the bad go to a place called Limbo, others think it is Purgatory, and most people believe that they go to a place called Hell, where the person goes on living, and burning in flames forever. All of these opinions cannot be true. What is the truth of this important issue? What does the Bible teach? Our first text will come from the New Testament.

“Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen”. 1 Timothy 1:17

This is the only verse in the whole Bible that uses the word ‘Immortal’, (that surprises most folk), and it is clearly referring to God, and not man.

“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” 1 Timothy 6:14-16

These verses confirm that Jesus Christ is the only One who is human, who has “Immortality”, and can give Immortality to the Faithful.

“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and Immortality, Eternal Life”: Romans 2:7

The Christian has to seek for Immortality. “Seek”, means to search for, and is used in the context of Matthew 13:45, where the merchantman was seeking goodly pearls. The verse is saying that we have to “seek” to gain Immortality. That means then that Immortality is not something we have automatically, or naturally.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all 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 So when this corruptible 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 Corinthians 15:51-54

The Bible teaches that it is not until the Second Coming of Jesus that the faithful mortals are made Immortal. The fact that they have died proves that they are mortal; they have been sleeping in their graves until Jesus comes again and calls them forth to Immortality or Eternal Life. When we let the Bible interpret itself the truth must come out.

In fact, the word “cemetery” that we all use is an old English word which means, to lull to sleep. If you ever go through a cemetery and you look at the old tomb stones, what three letters do you find on many tomb stones? R.I.P. What does R.I.P, stand for? Rest in Peace; because originally all Christians believed that people, when they died, were resting in peace because they believed what the Bible says. That’s what the Bible teaches, that they rest in peace. But as the church got away from the Word of God, they began to copy the old pagan idea of

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

life in death. The letters R.I.P. have continued with churches even though the churches teach differently because the people who put those words on those tomb stones believe that they go to purgatory, but they put on their tomb stones R.I.P. because that is what the Bible teaches. What the Bible teaches is that when we close our eye in death we know nothing until the resurrection.

One of the things I love most about the Bible is that there are always a lot of texts and evidence about any subject that one could want to study. We will now look at what the Bible has to say in its first book, Genesis.

“And 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.

The day God created man; He formed the shape of man in the dust, then He breathed into the nostrils of that form, and man was made to live. He was now a Living Soul, a living person in other words:

DUST + BREATH = LIVING SOUL, or PERSON

That equation is a good way for us to remember just what did happen that day. If we were writing about this today we would more likely say “a Living Person”. We often say when discussing some aged person, “the poor old soul fell down the other day”, meaning the person fell.

“He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days”. Numbers 19:11

The word translated ‘man’ here, is sometimes translated ‘soul’ in other places. Some Bibles have a marginal reference, suggesting that “soul of man” would be better than “man”. If a man can die, then he must be mortal, not immortal. In fact, you may search the Bible through and through, but you will never find a verse which teaches that man is immortal, or that any part of man is immortal.

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Genesis 3:19

Notice how the Bible verifies itself? We come from dust, and we return to dust after we die.

Ezekiel 18:4, (last part), and verse 20 says: “..... the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The soul that sinneth it shall die”.

Both verses say the same thing; the soul can die. That means that the soul is not immortal, as some churches teach. The Bible teaches instead that the soul is mortal. Neither you nor I, have the right to teach contrary to what the Bible says. That false teaching originated in heathen Egypt, and Babylon; and not from the Bible, and that teaching is present in all heathen religions. It was also a part of the religion of heathen Greece. Why would a true Christian want to believe heathen teachings?

“All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again”. Ecclesiastes 3:20

That agrees with Genesis 3:19 and many other verses also.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”. Ecclesiastes 12:7.

Some say that this verse teaches that man has a spirit or soul (something immortal) that goes back to God at death. But does it teach that? The dust, which is the body goes back to earth, and the spirit, (not a soul), goes back to God. To find out what “the spirit that goes back to God” means, we will have to look at some more verses.

“All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils”; Job 27:3

Genesis 2:7 told us the same thing, the spirit of God refers to our breath. Notice the margin reference, the “breath” which God gave him”. That is what goes back to God when a man dies, - his “breath”. Does the New Testament confirm the same truth?

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”. James 2:26

Again the margin comes to our rescue, “Spirit or Breath”. The word translated “Spirit” here comes from the Greek word “pneuma” meaning “Breath”. We get our word “Pneumonia”, from the same word, because it is a respiratory, or breath related disease.

Now we need to reverse our equation: which is creation in reverse.

LIVING PERSON or BODY - SPIRIT or BREATH = DEAD SOUL or PERSON.

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing ..., as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again”. Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20.

Animals and humans breathe the same air or breath, they both die, and they both return to dust again. Psalm 104:26-29, tells how “leviathan”, or the whale, when it ceases to breathe, dies, and returns to dust. Doctors consider a person dead when they can no longer breathe. In the early days of medicine, the evidence that the doctors sought for as to whether a person was dead, was whether a mirror clouded when held in front of the person’s mouth.

“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish”. Psalm 146:4

The Bible teaching is, that the “very day we die”, we cease to think, or have thoughts.

Yet many of the traditional churches teach that we go on thinking in heaven or in hell, whichever place we individually go to at death. This is a belief of Paganism.

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun”. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6

The Bible is very consistent on this point, the dead know not anything, their memory ceases to function, their hatred and love and envy, dies with them. Can God put it any plainer? When we die we do not remember anything.

“The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence”. Psalm 115:17.

I'm sure that if the good people went straight to heaven when they died; they would be “Praising the Lord”, Wouldn't they? All through the book of Revelation the saints depicted as being in heaven in the future are praising Jesus for His goodness. In Revelation 15:3 for instance, they sing a song of praise, “Great and Marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints”.

What did Jesus teach about death? I'm sure He would know all about what happens when someone dies, and what happens to their bodies.

“....., Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Howbeit, Jesus spake of his death: Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead”. John 11:11-14

Jesus referred to death as a “sleep”, as does the Old Testament many times, “And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers”. 1 Kings 14:31. He died and was buried. We don't go around burying people when they just go to sleep, do we?

“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished”. 1 Corinthians 15:16-18

So in the New Testament, Paul calls death a “sleep”, and also says, that if we believe in Jesus Christ, and we die, we have fallen asleep in Christ. The good news is, we know that Jesus was raised from the dead, and because of that, the faithful saints will be raised from the dead also. Otherwise there would be no point in being a Christian.

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

I'm so glad for verses like this, because they teach that for the faithful everything does not end at death, but that Jesus will raise His people from their dust, from their graves; when He comes again, so He can take His people home to Heaven with Him.

"But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just". Luke 14:13, 14.

Luke calls this resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, "the Resurrection of the just". He also informs us that God will recompense, or reward, those who put others first and care for the poor, and the unfortunate. I'm not implying that salvation is by "works": but it is a fact, that over and over in the Bible, God says that we are going to be "Judged by our Works". See Revelation 20:12, 13 & 22:12, also Matthew 25:31-46, just to mention only a few. These "Works" are a natural outpouring of the Christian's love for their God and their fellow man.

So many of us have been taught a "False Gospel" by those whom we should be able to trust; ministers of the gospel who should better know the truth but don't. Of course everything we learn should come right out of the Bible and the Bible only. Now what have we learned so far about what happens when a person dies?

1. Only God is immortal.
2. Man is mortal and subject to death.
3. When God created Adam, He made him from the dust of the earth.
4. When God created Adam, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and, Adam became a "Living Soul", or Person.
5. When we stop breathing; we die.
6. When we die, we return to dust.
7. When people die, they know nothing; all their emotions and senses, and their thoughts, cease to function. No one can talk to the dead; they cannot communicate with them in any way.
8. When we die we go into the grave, not to heaven, and not to some hot place to frizzle and fry forever.
9. The Bible often calls death, a "sleep".
10. The Bible teaches that there will be a resurrection of God's faithful people at the Second Coming of Christ. Praise the Lord!

TRUTH ABOUT 'SOUL' AND 'SPIRIT':

We still have to explain what the original writers of the Bible meant when they referred to "The Soul", or "The Spirit", as it is sometimes called. Are they the same or different things? Do we have "a soul" or "a spirit"? If the Bible teaches that we do have one, does it flit away when we die? What many churches teach on these subjects does not come from the Bible, but from the heathen, sun-worshipping religions of Egypt and ancient Babylon, and has been spread by the Church of Rome. Now, what does the Bible teach on the matter?

"And 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

When God made man, He formed the shape of a man out of the dust of the earth, then He breathed the Breath of Life into that shape, and man became a living soul, a living person. There is no intimation of an "Immortal" something being part of a man; man himself is the living soul. I'm sure you have heard someone say, or said yourself, "I feel sorry for the poor old soul". What were they meaning? The poor old person weren't they?

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

The Hebrew word translated soul here is “nephesh” which has been translated as “person” - 29 times. Genesis 14:21, says “And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons (nephesh), and take the goods to thyself”. That same “nephesh” is translated also as “mind” - 15 times, and “life” - 101 times. In fact, that same word has been translated into at least 27 different words including breath, and mortal, but never as “Immortal”.

Let us again use an equation to will help us understand the sequence of life as the verse has just taught us. Later on we will reverse this equation to understand another truth.

BODY + BREATH = LIVING SOUL.

“All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils”; Job 27:3

Many Bibles have a central reference margin and the marginal reference says, “That is the breath which God gave him”. Now that means that the original writer, (believed to be Moses), intended us to understand that “the spirit of God” [in this instance, and must not be confused with God’s Holy Spirit] is our “breath”, because that is what is in our nostrils. I can think of many better places than in our nostrils, for God to have chosen to store our soul, or spirit, if it was something Immortal that went to Heaven or Hell at death, couldn’t you?

The Hebrew word translated here as “spirit” is “ruach” which is translated 19 different ways, - 232 times as “Spirit”, 5 times as “Mind”, and 28 times as “Breath”. Both the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated “Soul” and “Spirit” are also translated as “Breath”.

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”. James 2:26

Again the margin informs us that spirit means, or would have been better translated as “Breath”. So this verse is really creation in reverse; BODY – SPIRIT or BREATH = DEAD SOUL (Person, Body)

That’s very simple isn’t it? And it is accurate as well. That’s how I like things, don’t you?

“And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.” Genesis 6:17

God takes away the breath, and the person or creature is dead.

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; ... as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; all go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again”. Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

Just as man dies when he stops breathing, so do the animals; likewise, they both turn to dust.

PERSON – BREATH = DUST. Also, ANIMAL – BREATH = DEAD ANIMAL.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it”. Ecclesiastes 12:7

The Hebrew word used for “spirit” here is “ruach”, and that is the same word translated, “breath” in our earlier verse, (Ecclesiastes 3:19), and that bears out what we learned from Job 27:3 about “the spirit of God being in our nostrils”. This verse teaches that it is our “breath” that “returns to God who gave it”, and not some ethereal something that leaves our body at death, as is taught by most mainline churches. We must let the Bible teach us, and not church tradition.

“And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.”. Ezekiel 37:13, 14.

When Jesus resurrects His faithful, He will cause them to “Breathe” again, they shall “live” once more, this time it will be for eternity. The “Faithful” of every time and age, will see the righteous coming from their

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

graves when Jesus comes. That's when the Bible teaches that the dead will live again, at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

"For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit,". Hebrews 4:12

This verse seems to be saying that the soul and spirit are divided, or different. The Greek word translated "soul" in this text, is "psuche" and it is often translated "life" as in Matthew 6:25. "... Take no thought for your life,"

The Greek word for "spirit" is "pneuma" which is often translated "breath", so the text could be translated as, "dividing asunder of "Life and Breath", which makes sense, because when we cease to breathe, we die. Remember our equation?

LIFE - BREATH = DEAD SOUL (person, body).

"..... when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah,, few, that is, eight souls were saved by water". 1 Peter 3:20

Eight souls, that is, eight lives or eight humans were saved in the flood of Noah's day.

"... Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life,". Genesis 1:20.

Both "creature" & "life", are translated from the Hebrew word. "Nephesh", meaning "living", or "life" or "breath", and is translated as "breath" in Job 41:21.

"..... wherein there is life." Genesis 1:30 margin, "or a living soul". So we see that "life" and "soul" are really interchangeable.

"... the soul that sinneth, it shall die. - "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. ". Ezekiel 18:4, 20

If a soul can die, then it cannot be "Immortal", as so many churches teach. We must be consistent in understanding the Bible. Because of the truths we have discovered so far, these verses are saying, "The "mortal person who sins will die".

When we let the Bible explain, or, interpret itself, we have no problem understanding what the Bible means.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell". [The grave]. Matthew 10:28

Jesus Himself says here that the "soul" can be "killed" or "destroyed". This is therefore, contrary to what many churches teach, and to what many people believe. The Bible teaches that the soul is "mortal", not "immortal". Anything, or anyone that is "immortal" cannot die. That is the reason why Jesus had to be made, "as man", as "mortal", so that He could die for our sins.

Now we will look at another use of the word "soul" in a different "context"; where it is used very differently.

"Now is my soul troubled; ...". John 12:27

What did Jesus mean? This is another instance where the same Greek word is translated as two seemingly different words, "psuche", is translated as "soul" in this instance. And is translated in Philippians 1:27, "..., that ye stand fast in one "spirit", with one "mind", striving together for the faith of the gospel"; Jesus was saying, "that He was troubled in His mind". Simple to understand, isn't it? Especially when we use the "mind" that God has given us.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: ...". Acts 4:32

"Of one heart and one mind". These Christians were united in their belief (something that involves the mind) that Jesus was their Saviour, and that Jesus wanted them to show their love for one another by the fact that those who were well off could share their possessions with their fellow believers.

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

“But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, [died], and where is he?, So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep (death)., hide me in the grave, If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I shall answer thee:”. Job 14:10 -15

These verses bear out the truth of everything we have been studying together. A “faithful”, living person stops breathing and dies, the body then returns to dust in the grave; there it [“the dust”] waits till Jesus returns on the resurrection morning and calls him from the grave.

John 5:28, 29, tells us that there will be two resurrections, one for the righteous, and one for the wicked. And now we understand that, Revelation 20, indicates that these two events will be a thousand years apart.

“His sons come to honour and he knoweth it not; they are brought low but he perceiveth it not of them”. Job 14:21

This verse confirms that when someone dies they know absolutely nothing about what happens to their living family members; be they honoured or degraded. Who would want to be able to look down from Heaven and see their family members going astray, or suffering pain and loss of loved ones?

Could God be a God of love, if those faithful people whom Jesus takes home to Heaven with Him when He comes again, were able to look down from Heaven, and see and hear those whom they had loved on earth, but who had not been saved, writhing and screaming in agony in the flames of an eternally burning Hell?

I’m so glad that the Bible does not teach such a monstrous lie as that. I for one would not want to go to Heaven if that was the case. The true Bible teachings bring a great deal of comfort to many lovely people who learn this truth for the first time, and who then see God as the God of love that He is.

Now to review what we have learned today:

1. When man was created, it was, BODY + BREATH = LIVING SOUL (living person.)
2. When man dies it is - BODY - BREATH = DEAD SOUL = (dead person.)
3. The “spirit of God” in the Hebrew and in the context of Job 27:3 is “breath”.
4. The same Greek word translated “spirit”, is also translated as “breath”, so we need to look into the “context” of the verse to determine the way the verse is to be understood and translated.
5. The same Hebrew & Greek words translated as “spirit” are also translated as “soul”, so the same rule applies.
6. Humans and animals have the same “breath”, therefore, they have the same “soul”, and “spirit”.
7. When we die we return to dust, and know absolutely nothing.
8. The same Greek word translated as “soul” is also translated as “life”.
9. The same Greek word translated as “Soul” - can be translated as “mind”.
10. Both the “soul” and the “spirit” are “mortal” and can, and do die, therefore they are not and cannot be “immortal”.

Knowing the Truth: Lesson 03

HOW READEST THOU?

“It is one thing to read the Bible through, Another thing to read and learn and do.
Some read it with design to learn to read, But to the subject pay but little heed.
Some read it as their duty once a week, But no instruction from the Bible seek.
While others read it with but little care, With no regard to how they read, nor where.
Some read it as a history to know, How people lived three thousand years ago.

Some read to bring themselves into repute, By showing others how they can dispute.
While others read because their neighbours do, to see how long 'twill take to read it through.
Some read it for the wonders that are there, - How David killed a Lion and a bear.
While others read it with uncommon care, Hoping to find some contradictions there.
Some read as though it did not speak to them, But to the people of Jerusalem.

One reads it as a book of mysteries, And won't believe the very things he sees.
One reads with father's specs upon his head, And sees the thing just as his father said.
Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed, Hence understand but little that they read.
For every passage in the Book they bend, To make it suit that all-important end.
Some people read, as I have often thought, To teach the Book instead of being taught.

And some there are who read it out of spite – I fear there are but few who read it right.
So, many people in these latter days have read the Bible in so many ways.
That few can tell which system is the best, For every party contradicts the rest.
But read it “prayerfully”, and you will see, although men contradict, God's Words agree.
For what the early prophets wrote, We find that Christ and His disciples quote.
So trust no creed that trembles to recall, What has been penned by one, and verified by all”.