

# The Resurrection From The Dead

The idea of the immortality of the human soul is an ancient one. Its difficult to say how old this concept is, but the ancient Egyptians certainly believed it. The most ancient enduring things that man has ever built, the pyramids, were made to ensure that souls of Egyptian kings would live on after the body died. The Greek philosophers thought that the soul was immortal and was trapped in a physical body for a short time, to be liberated after death. These traditions and doctrines of the enduring force of the human soul has been preserved in mainstream Christianity. Most Christians believe that their soul will live on after they die, either in paradise or in a fiery place of eternal torment.

Perhaps you will be surprised to learn that the Bible does not teach this doctrine. It does not tell us that we are spirits encased in mortal bodies. The Bible does not promote the idea that there is a part of us that will live on independently after our bodies die. When the Bible talks about the soul, it is referring to a physical, breathing flesh-and-blood being:

GEN 2:7 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.

Man *is* a living soul. He is a physical being. The Hebrew word for soul is "Nephesh" and that word refers to a physical, living, breathing organism, not to an eternal spirit entity. In the New Testament the Greek word "Psoche" conveys the same meaning. When the Bible refers to the soul, it is talking about physical life. For example, Abraham asked his wife to lie to preserve his life:

GEN 12:13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

Lot asked an angel if he could take refuge in a small town so that his life would be saved from the destruction that was about to rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah:

GEN 19:20 Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

God told Ezekiel that the soul (living being, person) that committed sin would die.

EZE 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Paul told Timothy that only God has immortality:

1TI 6:16 Who only [God] has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

We see that the Bible regards the soul of man as something physical that has a temporary existence. This principle is taught consistently in both Testaments. The soul of man is only his physical life and it is very well able to be terminated. Man is not completely physical, however. There is a spiritual component in mankind that separates us from animals. The concept of the spirit of man is discussed in the Old and New Testaments. Job was aware of the non-physical component in man:

JOB 32:8 But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding.

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Paul elaborated on how the spirit of man elevated mankind above animals:

1CO 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.

It is the spirit of man in us that returns to God when we die. This spirit of man is not an entity that has independent life and consciousness. It is only the essence of our lives, personalities, experiences, memories and thoughts. It is a spiritual recording of all that we are. When we die, God retrieves it and keeps it safe until the resurrection:

ACT 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, *receive my spirit*. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Notice that the account says Stephen fell asleep. This is how the Bible describes death. The Bible consistently refers to death as sleep in both testaments, not life in a spiritual state. Here are some examples:

ACT 13:36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, *fell on sleep*, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

DAN 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that *sleep in the dust of the earth* shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

David died and is described as in a state of sleep. Daniel was told by an angel that there would be a resurrection at the end time of those who sleep in the dust of the earth. He was referring to those who are dead and buried. When a person dies, his human spirit becomes unconscious and returns to God. He is then in a state of total oblivion and unconsciousness like a profoundly deep sleep. He is unaware of the passage of time. He cannot act, experience, sense or learn:

ECC 9:5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

The Bible tells us that the ancient Egyptian and Greek concept of the soul's immortality is wrong. Our spirits do not live on after the death of our bodies. They become unconscious ...but only for a time.

Jesus gave us the promise of a resurrection from the oblivion and unconsciousness of death. He said that a day in the future, He would raise us up:

JOH 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Christ states four times in this chapter that He will resurrect His followers *at the last day*. There is a day in the future when Jesus Christ will return to earth and resurrect the saints (Rev 11:18). The dead, sleeping in the dust of the earth, will be resurrected and will rise up into the air to meet the descending Jesus Christ. Paul explains that those who remain alive in Christ will then be changed from physical to immortal;

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1TH 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Paul told the Corinthian church important detail about the nature of the bodies of those resurrected saints:

1CO 15:42 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*. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from 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.

It is only at the resurrection of the dead that we can be made into immortal spirits. God will have been keeping our human spirits in a place of safety and preservation (Rev 6:9) after our death. At the resurrection, He will put those human spirits into immortal bodies composed of spirit, like His own. We will retain all our memories, personalities, knowledge, skills and gifts, but we will be living in the spirit realm, immortal and impervious to injury or death. These important concepts and many other vital facts about the resurrection from the dead are covered in 1Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15. These chapters should be studied carefully to learn the truth of the resurrection from the dead.

The basic premise of this series of articles is that the foundation of all knowledge and truth is the Bible. It is not human tradition, Greek philosophy, myth or superstition. We must unlearn the error that has crept into Christianity over the past two thousand years and learn what the Bible says about man's soul, spirit and potential immortality. The inspiring truth of the resurrection of the dead is better than any fantasy of man's imagination! The next article, "After The Resurrection" will discuss how those saved by God will spend the eternal life that God will freely grant to them.