

## ***The Sure Word Bible Studies*** ***Lesson 7***

### **The Wages of Sin**

In our last lesson we read that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). But back in the beginning, when God's literal presence was here on the earth, death was something that had never been experienced. But even so, God warned Adam and Eve that it could become a reality.

*"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* (Genesis 2:17)

When God told Adam the consequences of eating of the tree of good and evil, it is important to note that He didn't say you will burn in hell, nor did He say I will put you to death. God was not threatening them for disobedience, but rather He was warning them of the consequences of that experience. He simply said, *"You will die"* which in the original Hebrew is actually, *"dying you will die."* God was warning them of a process that would begin working within them that will ultimately result in their death if they choose take that path.

Was God really telling them the truth? Remember, we read how Satan disguised as a serpent in the Garden of Eden questioned Eve about this.

*"And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."* (Genesis 3:1 - 4)

Satan's declaration to Eve that she would not die implied that they were immortal, that they could not die and therefore God cannot be trusted to tell them the truth!

Surprisingly, most of the world believes this to this day. Except the atheist, who believes there is nothing beyond death, most people believe that man is immortal and that life continues in one form or another after death. For example, the Hindu believes in re-incarnation and the Buddhist in nirvana. Most Christians and Muslims believe while a person's body does die, their soul is immortal and at death it leaves the body and immediately goes to heaven or hell for eternity.

If that is true it brings up some questions. For example: If immediately after death a person reaches their final destination – heaven or hell, then why have a resurrection? If at one's death they receive their just reward, then why have a great judgment day at the end of the world?

This view can present more questions than it answers. If we are to find the truth we must go to the Bible and examine the evidence there.

After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, God no longer allowed them access to the Tree of Life.

**Genesis 3:22,23** *"Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken."*

God could have allowed sin with its suffering to go on for eternity, but He would not do that, it's too painful. God is however, going to allow sin to run its course so that the universe can see beyond a shadow of a doubt what the consequences of sin are.

As the result of being banished from the *"Tree of Life"* (the symbol of the source of life, God Himself), Adam and Eve became mortal, which means they became subject to death and through their DNA mortality was then passed from them through their offspring to the rest the human race.

**Romans 5:12** *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"*

However, the death that comes to all people, good and bad, as the result of being cut-off from the Tree of Life is not eternal annihilation. Jesus said that everyone who dies this death will live again.

**John 5:28,29** *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*

Most religions, including Christianity, teach that humans have an *"immortal soul"* that lives on after the death of the physical body. But the Bible does not say that. The word *"immortal"* is used only once in most Bible translations and that is in the book of I Timothy -

**I Timothy 1:17** *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever."*

In some modern translations the word *"immortal"* may be used two or three times, but it is only used when referring to God. Just as the following verse:

**I Timothy 6:15,16** *"He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power."*

As you can see, the Bible says only God has immortality. This means only God possesses life within Himself. It is not given to Him by another. But, as we will see later, immortality is a gift God will bestow on the faithful at the appointed time.

However, the word "soul" is used more than 600 times in the King James Versions of the Bible and never is it said to be immortal but it does say it will die!

**Ezekiel 18:4** *"Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die."*

Contrary to popular teaching, the "soul" is not implanted into the body as a separate part of a man. Note the following:

*"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 KJV)

Now note how the New King James Version translates this verse:

**Genesis 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 being."*

Notice according to the KJV, man was not "given" a soul, but he "became a living soul" But in the NKJV, "man became a living being" which is more accurate to the original Hebrew where the word for soul is "nephesh" and it simply means "a living creature" or "living being." Nephesh is simply a living being, whether that of a man or an animal.

The "soul" or the living being is made up of two parts that can only exist together – body and breath. Take away the breath, and you no longer have a soul or living creature, but only a dead body. The "soul" simply no longer exists.

Many people speak of the soul and the spirit as though they were one and the same, but the "soul" is not the "spirit." These are two different words with different meanings. As we discussed, the word "soul" means a living creature including the body and breath. However, the word "spirit" is from Hebrew and Greek words that basically means "wind," "breath," "moving air." But, it can also mean "disposition." For example, you may hear someone say "that girl has such a sweet spirit."

If the air in you is moving as when you breathe, it implies a life force is present, thus it is called the "breath of life." The spirit, or the "breath of life" is given by God at the beginning of life and returns to God at death.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7** *"Then the dust (body) will return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (breath of life) will return to God who gave it."*

We see an example of this in the book of Luke -

**Luke 8:52 - 55** *"Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately."*

Notice, her "soul" did not return, but her "spirit," that is, her breath, or her life force did. Also note that Jesus said she was not dead, but "sleeping."

More than fifty times in the Bible death is referred to as sleep. The following are some examples:

**Psalms 13:3** *"Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: enlighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."*

**Daniel 12:2** *"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

**Matthew 27:51,52** *"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;"*

**John 11:11 - 14** *"These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."*

Sleep is the perfect illustration for death which the Lord used a number of times. The following texts help us better understand this concept.

**Ecclesiastes 9:5** *"For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing,"*

In the KJV Psalms 146:4 says: *"His (mans) breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."* (KJV)

The KJV is quoted here because most modern translations will use the word "plans" instead of "thoughts" as does the NKJV which says: *"His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish."*

This is an excellent example of why word studies are important. The Hebrew word translated in the KJV as "thoughts" and the modern versions as "plans" is "eshtonah" and it has only one definition and that is "thoughts." It is a mystery why the translators chose "plans" instead as it can be misleading.

If the dead *"know not anything,"* and the very day they die their *"thoughts perish,"* that implies a state of mental unconsciousness. Just as when a person is sound

asleep, they are unconscious of anything going on around them and have no awareness of the passage of time. Whether they sleep for one hour or ten, it is the same to them. In the same way, the "sleep of death" is only a temporary unconsciousness while a person awaits the resurrection when all shall awake and come forth from the grave. And according to the book of Acts, that is true even for "saints" like King David -

**Acts 2:29** *"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day."*

**Verse 34** *"For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"*

King David has not gone to heaven yet, he sleeps in the tomb awaiting the resurrection. There are a few exceptions to this, like Enoch, Elijah, and Moses as well as those saints mentioned in Matthew 27:52 who arose at Christ's death on the cross.

Another illustration of death being like sleep is a computer. You connect it to a power source and it comes to life. The screen lights up and all kinds of information are fed into it. All that information is "saved" in the computer's memory. When it is disconnected from its power source it goes to "sleep." It may remain idle for a long period, but once re-connected to the power source it lights up and all that information stored in its memory can be called back up.

When we sleep the sleep of death, our bodies turn back to earth, but our spirit, the breath of life, returns to God. Our character or nature is stored in God's memory bank in an unconscious state until Jesus comes again and gives us a new body, reconnects us to the power source and we come back to life. We come back to life with the same spirit or nature as we had before we died, but with new, glorified bodies.

**Philippians 3:20, 21** *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

When will that take place? In the following passages, the Bible makes it very clear that God does not bestow immortality to the faithful at death - but rather at the resurrection at the second coming of Jesus.

**I Corinthians 15:22, 23** *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*

**I Corinthians 15:51 - 54** *"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. (this is the second coming of Christ) For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

The Bible refers to the body, soul and spirit. The following will help us understand these terms more clearly:

**Body** – Refers only to the flesh and bone, the physical being of man or animal. At death it returns to earth.

**Soul** – Refers to the physical body *including* the breath of life, in other words, the entire living being. When the body dies, the soul or living being no longer exist, because in the Bible “soul” only refers to a living body.

**Spirit** – Refers primarily to the life force or breath of life itself. It returns to God at the death of the person. But it also refers to the nature or character of a person, which upon death, is preserved in an unconscious state until the resurrection.

Having studied this issue thus far, there still remains the question about the thief on the cross; didn't Jesus say to him, *"Today you will be with me in paradise"*?

Before we look at that, remember there was no punctuation in the original languages of the Bible. That was added when it was translated into English. In the King James Version clearly a mistake was made in the punctuation of Acts 19:12:

*"So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."* (Acts 19:12 KJV)

There is no such thing as a *"sick handkerchief."* Obviously a comma should have been placed after the word "sick." Then it would read: *"So that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them."* Modern translations as the NKJV have corrected some punctuation but there some errors that remain as we will see.

But now let's examine the verse in the KJV used to support the idea that when a person dies they immediately go to heaven or hell.

*"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, **To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**"* (Luke 23:43 KJV)

Now move the comma putting it after the word "today" and read it again:

*"And Jesus said unto him, **Verily I say unto thee today**, shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Structured this way, Jesus was making the thief the promise that day, the day they were there on the cross that he would be with Him in paradise at a future time. The undeniable evidence for this conclusion is found in the gospel of John.

**John 20:1** *"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."*

**Verses 16,17** *"Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"*

Jesus died Friday evening, this was Sunday morning. The thief could not be with Jesus in paradise that Friday because Jesus did not go to heaven himself until Sunday morning! Jesus slept the "sleep of death" in the tomb from Friday evening until Sunday morning. Jesus as the "Son of man" lived the entire human experience "from the cradle to the grave" and then the resurrection.

Finally there's the verse that is so often quoted when this subject comes up: *"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."* The problem is this verse is misquoted. Look closely at the verse as it is written.

**II Corinthians 5:8** *"We are confident, I say, and **willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.** (KJV)*

Paul does not say *"is to be,"* but *"willing rather to be..."* Many people probably feel that way, willing to be with the Lord rather than going through the trials of this life. Paul knew that when a person died, *to them*, it would seem only a second until they were with the Lord. He is not saying that when a person dies they immediately go to heaven, and thus contradicting all the other things the Bible says about death. Remember, don't say "The Bible says," until you've looked at everything the Bible says!

The declaration of Satan to Eve in the Garden of Eden, *"You shall not surely die,"* was the first teaching on the immortality of the soul and it was a lie! Yet this teaching, based solely upon the authority of Satan is taught in most churches today. This lie continued through the false teachings of paganism and Greek philosophy and then was *"Christianized"* in the church during the dark ages. Note the following quote under the heading of "Greek Philosophy" in Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia by Readers Digest Books Inc., published 1958.

"The philosophical concepts developed by the Greeks, particularly during the flowering of Greek civilization between the years 600 and 200 B.C., lie at the root of all later

philosophical speculation in the western world. The intuitive hypotheses of the ancient Greeks foreshadowed many of the theories of modern science, and many of the moral ideas of pagan Greek philosophers have been incorporated into the body of Christian moral doctrine.”

One of the “*moral ideas of pagan Greek philosophers that was incorporated into Christian moral doctrine*” was the immortality of the soul as taught by the famous Greek philosophers such as Plato and Socrates. This is a verifiable part of church history.

You may ask – OK, but why is this important anyway? What difference does it make whether I believe one immediately goes to “a better place” at death or sleeps in the tomb until the resurrection? The answer is that it is through the teaching that the dead are not really dead that men are enabled to have direct communication with the spirit world. A biblical example is seen in the story of King Saul and the Witch of Endor.

**1 Samuel 28:3 - 19** *“Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land. Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And **when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.** Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor.” So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you.” Then the woman said to him, “Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?” And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.” Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” And he said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman spoke to Saul, saying, “Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!” And the king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What did you see?” And the woman said to Saul, **“I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.”** So he said to her, “What is his form?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is covered with a mantle.” And **Saul perceived that it was Samuel**, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed down. Now Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by **bringing me up?**” And Saul answered, “I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do.” Then Samuel said: “Why then do you ask me, **seeing the LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy?** And the LORD has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor,*



*David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."*

Note verse 6 said that the Lord would not speak to Saul by prophets making it unlikely this would actually be Samuel because Samuel was a prophet.

Note verse 14 said Saul "*perceived*" it was Samuel; Saul just thought it was Samuel, he did not actually see him.

Note in verse 15 the so-called Samuel said, "*Why have you called me up?*" The Bible says a man's spirit (breath of life) goes up to God, not down in the tomb.

Note in verse 16 the "*spirit*" said, "*the Lord is departed from you and has become your enemy.*" The Lord did not leave Saul, Saul turned away from the Lord and could have come back if he had only repented. But because of the discouraging words of this demonic spirit impersonating Samuel, Saul was driven to despair and finally suicide. (One of the likely reasons God forbids people to consult mediums who claim to communicate with the dead).

There are at least three other reasons why this could not have been Samuel come back from the dead to speak to King Saul.

1) The Bible makes it clear the dead cannot come back to communicate with us.

**Job 7:9,10** *"As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, So he who goes down to the grave does not come up. He shall never return to his house, Nor shall his place know him anymore."*

2) Being aware of Satan's ability to deceive men in this way, God condemned calling up the dead. The people who did this were said to have a "*familiar spirit.*"

**Leviticus 20:6** *"And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people."*

3) If we seek answers about life we should go to God's Word, and not to the dead to find the answers!

**Isaiah 8:19,20** *"And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."*

One important lesson to be learned from this study is that back in the beginning when God told Adam that sin leads to death He was telling the truth. God's word can be trusted!

The following text makes it clear that the spiritual warfare between God and Satan becomes more intense as we get closer to the battle of Armageddon and the coming of Jesus so we need to be clear on this issue.

**Revelation 16:14** *"For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."*

There will be "*spirits of demons*," that will go to the "*whole world*." Some of the signs that these demonic spirits perform will be the impersonation of dead loved ones as well as prophets such as Peter and Paul who will seem to have miraculously returned from heaven to communicate with us. Some believe they are already doing this with the impersonations of the Virgin Mary seen by some prominent members of the Catholic Church. These will be "lying spirits" and the deception will be overwhelming! But if we know the dead are "asleep" in the grave awaiting the resurrection, then we can't be deceived by a demon impersonating someone who has supposedly returned from heaven to tell us lies about God and the Bible. Today, let us decide that whether we live to see Jesus come, or whether we die and sleep until resurrection day that we will be ready to meet Jesus!

In this lesson we have studied only the "*sleep of death*," the death which all people are subject to. But in the book of Revelation the Bible also speaks of some who will die a second death. This is also a topic we need to understand clearly. But we will be better prepared to do that after we have studied the second coming of Christ and the Millennium which we will do in the next two lessons.

### **Response questions:**

1. It is clear to me from the Bible that the dead are asleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. If someone were to appear to me from the dead, I know it would be a demonic imposter. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
3. I know my only safeguard against Satan's subtle deceptions is to trust the Word of God. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

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