

Just What Is Man?

Lesson 5

What IS Man?

The Bible is the FOUNDATION of knowledge. In it the Creator God has revealed much knowledge that is totally beyond man's ability to discover for himself—including the knowledge and understanding of what man is, as well as what he is to become.

Let's not assume. Let's look into the Bible to see what man really is.

1. Of What did Jesus Christ say man is composed? John 3:6, first part. And is that which is "born of spirit" of a totally different composition? Same verse.

COMMENT: Man is composed of flesh. Jesus plainly says that if one is born of (and therefore composed of) flesh, he cannot also at the same time be born of (composed of) spirit. He must be one or the other! So this verse alone is strong evidence that man is not an immortal spiritual "soul" that lives in a body of mortal flesh and blood. But let's continue.

2. Was the Apostle Paul an immortal soul clothed with a body of flesh—or did he speak of himself and his flesh as being synonymous? Rom. 7:18.

COMMENT: Paul did not distinguish between himself and his flesh in this verse. He indicated they were one and the same. (We will study some of Paul's other statements later.)

In order to understand whether man has an immortal soul, let's go back to the creation of the first man to see exactly what happened.

The Creation of Man

God created the first man. And He tells us what He made him from so there would be no doubt as to what We really are. Here is that account as revealed in the Bible!

1. Out of what did God form man? Gen. 2:7. Notice that it was the man—not just the body—that was formed.

2. Was it the whole that was composed of dust? Gen. 3:19.

COMMENT. Adam was made from, and therefore composed of, earth!

3. What would eventually happen to the conscious man? Same verse, last part.

4. After God had formed the man and made every cell in his body, what did He do to give him life? Gen 2:7.

COMMENT: God blew air, "the breath of life" containing oxygen, into the man's lungs through his nostrils, and the man began to live! The verse does not say that God breathed an immortal soul into the man.

5. Does the same "breath of life" also pass through the nostrils of animals? Gen. 7:21-22. Is it the breath of life that is cut when a human being or an animal drowns? Verse 23. Then the source of life in man and animals is the same, isn't it?

COMMENT: If the "breath of life" even remotely referred to an immortal soul, then animals, birds and even insects—gnats, mosquitoes, etc., would all have immortal souls!

What Kind of "Soul?"

1. When God had breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, what did the man become? Gen. 2:7, last part.

COMMENT: Man does not have a soul—man IS a "soul!" The original Hebrew word for "soul" is *nephesh*. Hagster's Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon defines it as "breath," and "anything that breathes, an animal." It can also refer to a "person," or even "one dead, a dead body." In Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16 and Leviticus 11:46, the same word *nephesh* is translated "creature" when referring to animals.

And so man is a SOUL! Notice that the word *nephesh* is translated as "dead body" or "the dead" in Leviticus 19:28; 21:1, 22:4; Numbers 5:2; 6:11 and 9:6, 7, 10. The "soul," then, is merely an air-breathing entity that is subject to death and decay. It is not immortal!

The soul is composed of the "dust of the ground" —it is material, not spiritual. It is matter. When man breathes, he is a "living soul." When man ceases to breathe, he becomes a nonliving or dead. That's what the Bible reveals.

2. Can the "soul" die? Ezek. 18:4, 20. If the soul were immortal, eternal, could it die? Is man plainly said to be "mortal"? Job 4:17.

COMMENT: Since man is a soul, and the soul is mortal—then man is mortal, subject to death. That is why the Scriptures refer to human beings as "mortal man."

3. Was Adam subject to death? Gen. 2:17, last part. Was it the body only that would die, or was it the whole conscious man—Adam— "thou"— that would die? Same verse.

4. What one thing befalls both man and beast? Eccl. 3:19. Is this because both have the same temporary source of life—the air we breathe? Same verse.

5. Do all men and animals alike go to the same place at death? Eccl. 3:20.

COMMENT: When an animal dies, it is dead. When man dies, he is completely dead, too. And all men and animals become dust once again.

6. Now what does Ecclesiastes 3:21 ask?

COMMENT: The Hebrew word *ruach*, translated "spirit" in this verse, also means air, wind, breath. It is translated 28 times as "breath" in the King James Version. Three examples are

Genesis 6: 17; 7:15 and Lamentations 4:20. It is also translated 90 times as "wind." Thus we can see that ruach has a very broad meaning, and may be applied to a wide variety of things whose common denominator is invisibility. It may mean "attitude" as well as "spirit," and with the word "holy" preceding, it means the Holy Spirit of God.

Solomon asks, therefore, since the same event—death—occurs to both man and beast, "Who knows whether a man's *ruach* goes up or whether a beast's goes downward?"

Although the same death befalls both, the Bible reveals there is a vast difference_ between man and beast, as we will shortly see—and that difference does not have to do with any "immortal soul."

What Is the Life of Man?

Man IS a living, breathing MORTAL creature—a *nephesh*, or living soul, in whose nostrils is air. Have you ever wondered what happens to the breath or air that goes into your lungs?

When you take a breath of air, it passes through your trachea into the lungs and into little pockets or sacs called alveoli. There oxygen is absorbed from the air and goes into the bloodstream. As the blood flows through the blood vessels from the lungs on the way back to the heart, and then is pumped again throughout the body, the oxygen is carried by the red blood cells throughout the body to the individual cells. Each of your 60 trillion cells uses oxygen to "burn" the food you eat to create the energy needed to power your organs and muscles and to maintain body heat. The life of man clearly depends on the blood, and the blood needs the breath of life to keep the body alive.

1. According to the Bible, is the life of man and animals found in the bloodstream or in an immortal soul? Lev. 17:11, 14. Does Deuteronomy 12:23 corroborate this?

COMMENT: In these verses. the Hebrew word *nephesh* is translated "life." Thus *nephesh* (or soul) can refer either to the fleshly man or the life of man which depends on his blood.

2. Did Christ make His "soul" an offering for sin? Isa. 53:10. How did He accomplish this? Verse 12.

COMMENT: Christ voluntarily offered up His body to be crucified and allowed His life's blood ("soul") to be poured out!

How clear that when a man ceases to breathe the breath of life, his heart stops beating and circulating his life's blood, and he dies. But then what happens?

Is There Life After Death?

1. After a person dies—becomes lifeless—does he still have a conscious existence because of an immortal soul? Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 146:4.

COMMENT: Since the Bible states plainly that the dead are conscious of anything, we can logically conclude that man does not have an immortal soul which is conscious and aware of things happening around it after death!

2. Are the dead able to praise God? Ps. 115:17.

COMMENT: If dead Christians had immortal souls, wouldn't they be praising God after they died, thankful to be with Him in paradise? Here, then, is more concrete evidence that human beings do not have immortal souls.

3. Is there any remembrance of God in death? Ps. 6:5.

COMMENT. Death is the opposite of life. Death is the CESSATION of all activity—the end of life! That is the reason dead people remember or do nothing. How clear!

4. Is the "soul" something which can be destroyed? Matt. 10:28. Then didn't Jesus plainly show that the soul of man is not immortal? Let's understand exactly what Jesus was talking about.

COMMENT: There are those who use this scripture to support the widespread belief of immortality of the soul. Yet this verse plainly says the soul is something that can be destroyed in hell! Thus, whatever this "soul" is, it could NOT be immortal!

The New Testament Greek word here translated "soul" is *psuche*. The Greek *psuche* simply means "life," "existence," just as does the Old Testament Hebrew word *nephesh*.

In Matthew 10:28. the word soul refers to life man cannot permanently destroy—but, which God can. What kind of life could this be? Obviously life which God RESTORES by a resurrection!

Man cannot permanently destroy a life that God renews by a resurrection. Although men may kill their physical bodies, said Jesus, true Christians know that men cannot take from them eternal life which God has promised to give them at the resurrection_ But GOD can permanently destroy all possibility of eternal life. How? By casting a physically resurrected person into the "lake of fire" to be utterly consumed—never to be resurrected again. This is the ultimate penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23)—eternal death!

The book of Luke makes the meaning plainer: "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which AFTER he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. (Luke 12:5). God not only has the power to take our present physical life, but also has the power to resurrect us and —if we have proven to be disobedient and incorrigible—to cast us into the lake of fire from which there will be NO future resurrection! (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8.)

Is Man Merely an Animal?

Since man does not have an immortal soul, does this mean he is just an animal—here today and gone tomorrow? Not at all!

What is it that makes man different from the animals? Let's understand the amazing truth!

1. Were animals created in God's image -or were they created each after its own kind? Gen. 1:21, 24, 25. But was man created in the "image" and "likeness" of God? Verses 26-27. Was man to rule over all other creatures? Verse 26.

COMMENT: The Hebrew words of Genesis 1:26-27 reveal God's great plan and ultimate purpose for mankind! When God molded Adam of the dust, he was shaped in the outward form and shape of God Himself. God didn't form any of the other creatures to be clay replicas of Himself. This unique form and shape was given to humans alone!

Notice again that God said, "Let us make man in our image." The Hebrew indicates far more than merely the outward form and shape of God. "Image" also refers to mind and character! God intended for man—to whom He gave a thinking, reasoning mind—to develop the very mind and character of GOD!

Each animal was created with a brain suited for its animal kind. But animals do not have the potential of MIND and CHARACTER which God gave only to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power!

It is this very special attribute of MIND AND CHARACTER that separates men from animals!

Animals do not have reasoning, self-conscious minds. Animals follow instinctive habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration and reproduction. God has "programmed" their brains, so to speak, with particular instinctive aptitudes. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests, etc. These aptitudes are inherited—they are not the result of logical cognitive processes.

Consider the thousands of birds that flock south each year as winter approaches in the northern hemisphere. They don't stop to "reason" why, they don't ask themselves whether they should, they don't "plan" an itinerary for the trip! At the appropriate time—as if signaled by the preset alarm of a clock—they leave their summer feeding grounds in the north and travel many thousands of miles south. Scientists don't fully understand how or why—they merely observe the operation of this amazing animal instinct.

Each species or kind of bird builds a different type of nest, feeds on different foods, and many migrate at different times to different places. But none of these actions is planned by the birds. They are merely the capability and proclivity which Almighty God built into the instinct Of these birds at creation.

But man is vastly different. Man is able to perceive and understand various ways to do any one thing. Man reasons from knowledge, draws conclusions, makes decisions, can act according to a thought-out plan.

Each man may build a different house, eat many different foods—live an entirely different way of life from other men. If a man wants to change his way of life, he can! Man is not subject to instinct.

He is not governed by a set of pre-determined habit patterns as animals are.

Man can choose—he has free moral agency. He can devise codes of conduct and exercise self-discipline. Man can originate ideas and evaluate material knowledge because he has a MIND which is patterned after God's own mind! Man can devise, plan, and bring his plans to fruition because he has been given some of the very creative powers of God!

Man alone can wonder, "Why was I born? What is life? What is death? Is there a purpose in human existence?" Man, unlike the animals, not only "knows" how to do certain things, but he

also KNOWS he knows—that is, he is aware that he has "knowledge." He is conscious of the fact. He is self-conscious, aware of his own existence as a unique being.

The attributes of mind and character make man God's UNIQUE physical creation. God has shared some of His own qualities with mankind and intends that man develop the "image" of GOD's perfect mind and holy character!

What Makes Man's Mind unique?

Many animals have physical brains as large or even larger than man's brain, and with similar cerebral cortex complexity—but none has the powers of intellect, logic, self-consciousness and creativity as man does.

What gives man's brain these unique abilities?

And what will God use, after the death and complete dissolution of the physical body and brain, to reproduce each individual at the resurrection?

I. Since man has no immortal soul within him which enables him to live on apart from his body after death (remember man is a MORTAL soul), does the Bible speak of a "spirit IN man"? Job 32:8; Zech. 12:1; I Cor. 2:9-14. Notice especially verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 2. Is this spirit "in" man clearly distinguished from the Holy Spirit of God? Same verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

COMMENT: This spirit is not the man—it is spirit essence from God that is IN the man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms the human MIND. It imparts to man's brain his unique powers of intellect and personality—the ability to think rationally and make free will decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or other types of physical knowledge.

But that is all! The spirit that is IN man has no consciousness of itself. It is not an "immortal soul." The spirit is not "the man."

Because of this spiritual element, the Bible often uses the word "spirit" simply to mean man's mind, intelligence and attitude. To distinguish this "spirit in man" from mere physical breath, the book of Job continues in context to use two separate Hebrew words—*ruach* for spirit, *neshamah* for breath (Job 33:4; 34:14).

2. When a person dies, does this totally non-conscious "spirit in man" return to God who gave it? Eccl. 12:7.

COMMENT: This spirit in each individual, of necessity, does more than merely impart the power of intellect to the physical brain. It becomes a spiritual "recording" and "mold" of the entire person—even to preserving memory, knowledge, character and outward appearance. And so when a person dies, that spirit "recording" returns to God and is "filed" away until the time God will "replay" it to bring about the resurrection of the identical personality to life and consciousness. Yet while filed away, it has no consciousness of its own.

Why haven't you heard this truth before? Simply because the whole world has been DECEIVED!

3. Can the human mind—having only this "spirit of man" understand the spiritual things of God? 1 Cor. 2:11. What must be added before a man can comprehend spiritually-revealed knowledge? Same verse.

COMMENT: The spiritual cannot be seen with the eye, heard with the ear, felt with the hands. The human mind, which can receive knowledge only through the physical senses, can never really comprehend spiritual concepts and principles without the Holy Spirit of God. Your Bible shows that the greatest minds cannot really come to know and understand SPIRITUAL truths with their natural minds.

Just as surely as no animal brain—such as that of a cow, for example—can comprehend or understand human affairs, so no human mind can have comprehension of spiritual things on the divine plane unless and until it has received the Holy Spirit of God! (More about the function and receiving Of the Holy Spirit will be covered in a forthcoming lesson.)

Origin Of the "Big Lie"

The truth about the "spirit in man" is so important that Satan tried to twist, warp and pervert it long ago. He clouded the minds of men and deceived them into believing his "big lie" as far back as the time of Adam and Eve.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived Eve. Notice what happened:

1. What did Satan tell Eve? Gen. 3:4.

COMMENT: Here was the origin of the "immortality of the soul" doctrine believed by so many today! Satan told Eve she would "not surely die:"—in other words, she had an "immortal soul" that would live forever. Eve swallowed this lie—hook, line and sinker!

2. Has Satan deceived the WHOLE world? Rev. 12:9.

COMMENT: The devil has deceived the whole world on nearly every point of God's truth! And virtually the entire world today believes some variation of the ancient "big lie." Millions have been deluded into believing in reincarnation or the transmigration of souls as a result of the false doctrine Of an ever-living soul.

Satan has deceived the world with a COUNTERFEIT doctrine—a doctrine which perverts the truth about the "spirit in man." With his cunning counterfeit, Satan has withheld from the minds of BILLIONS the truth about the "spirit in man," and the need for a resurrection from the dead!

Not Yet Immortal!

We have clearly seen that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul. What, then, does the Bible teach about immortality?

1. According to 1 Timothy 6:15-16, who has immortality inherently?

2. Is God also incorruptible? 1 Tim. 1:17.

COMMENT: The Greek Word translated "immortal" here is *aphthartos*, meaning "incorruptible." God is incorruptible. Man is not.

3. Now turn to 1 Corinthians 15:53 and 54. Do these, verses say that man is already immortal? What must man put on? Verse 53. When will man be "clothed" with immortality? Verse 52. Does this happen at the time of the resurrection when Christ returns to earth? 1 Thes. 4:16.

4. Who brought to mankind the knowledge of how to receive eternal life and immortality (incorruption)? 2 Tim. 1:10. Doesn't this verse plainly show that immortality is something man does not already have? Then is the Gospel also the good news about how to receive immortality? Same verse.

5. Is immortality to be sought for? Rom. 2:7. Is eternal life a free gift bestowed on those who seek immortality? Same verse and Romans 6:23.

6. Was David, King of Israel, still alive as an immortal soul after he died? Acts 2:29, 34. Will he be raised from the dead? Jer. 30:9.

Why a Resurrection?

If man were an immortal soul in a material body—and if the death of the body released the soul—then there would be no need for a resurrection to immortal life. Man would merely continue living after death. But the very fact that the Bible teaches the resurrection from the dead is further proof that man does not have an immortal soul!

1. If Christ had not risen from the dead, would faith in a future life by a resurrection be all in vain? I Cor. 15:14-17. If there will be no resurrection, have those who are dead in their graves perished forever? Verse 18.

2. However, did Christ Himself warn that the unregenerate—unrepentant—man is to perish? Luke 13:3, 5. If man were an immortal soul, could he actually "perish?" (See in your dictionary that the word "perish" means to CEASE living.)

3. Who will hear the voice of the Son of God at the resurrection? John 5:25. Do they then "rise?" 1 Thes. 4:16.

COMMENT: The dead cannot "hear" unless they are first restored to life! The dead are pictured throughout the Bible as being asleep in their graves, awaiting the day of the resurrection. Notice Jesus' words when describing the death of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha:

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.' Then said his disciples, 'Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.' Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead'" (John 11:11-14).

Death is pictured as a sleep. Death, like sleep, is a condition in which people are not conscious and from which they can be "awakened!" Notice the plain evidence of Scripture: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dan. 12:2). "And the graves

were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (Matt. 27:52). "And when thy days be fulfilled," said God to David, "and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers (2 Sam. 7:12).

Death is described as a sleep dozens of times in the Bible when referring to the kings of Israel and Judah! "David slept with his fathers..." (I Kings 2:10). Notice that it does not say "the body slept while the soul was conscious." It plainly says, "David slept." It was the conscious person who fell "asleep" in death!

In the following verses the same expression is used to describe death. Look up each one and see for yourself that death is compared to a sleep: 1 Kings 11:21, 43; 14:20, 31; 15:8, 24; 16:6, 28; 22:40, 50; 2 Kings 8:24; 10:35; 13:9, 13; 14:16, 22, 29; 15:7, 22, 38; 16:20; 20:21; 21:18; 24:6; 2 Chronicles 9:31; 12:16; 14:13 16:13; 21:1; 26:2; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20.

Certainly here is conclusive evidence that the dead are not conscious—and that man does not have an "immortal soul!"

Man to BECOME Spirit

1. Job once asked the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" What was Job's answer to his own question? Job 14:14, What is the change Job spoke of, and when will it take place? 1 Cor. 15:51-53.

2. Will Job, David and all those in the resurrection be like God? Ps. 17:15. Is God spirit? John 4:24, Are they therefore to be composed of spirit then? I Cor. 15:42-49. Compare this with 1 John 3:2.

3. Why were Adam and Eve not permitted to eat the fruit of the "tree of [eternal] life" after they sinned? Gen. 3:22-24. Note last part of verse 22.

COMMENT: This plainly shows that Adam and Eve did not have immortality inherent in themselves!

The "tree of life" symbolized the Holy Spirit—the way to eternal life. Adam was created incomplete. He was created to need the Holy Spirit of God in order to live forever. Adam, however, had to choose whether or not he would accept the free gift of the Holy Spirit. He, chose (I Tim. 2:14, first part), by disobeying God, not to receive the Holy Spirit and was consequently cut off from access to the tree of life! Here is yet another proof that no man has eternal life inherent within himself!

When Did Paul Expect to Be With Christ?

Some who believe that humans have immortal souls use Philippians 1:23-24 as proof. Do these verses overthrow all of the plain scriptures we have studied? Let's understand what the Apostle Paul meant.

1. Did Paul have a desire to be with Christ? Phil. 1:23.

COMMENT: All Christians should have the same desire. But does this verse state when Paul would be with Christ? Absolutely not! But people try to read certain ideas into this verse! Let's

notice when Paul expected to be with Christ.

2. Did Paul expect to receive something from Christ when he met Him? 2 Tim. 4:6-8. And when would that be—the time when Jesus returns and all the saints are resurrected? Verse 8. Notice the word's "at that day."

3. When Christ returns, what will He bring with Him? Isa. 40:10; Rev. 22:12. When will all (both dead and living) Christians "meet the Lord"? 1 Thes. 4:16-17.

COMMENT: Those who are dead in their graves are not conscious; they have no knowledge of passing time. The very next moment of their consciousness will be the time of the resurrection! That is why Paul wrote what he did in 2 Corinthians 5:9: "Wherefore we labour while yet alive, that, whether present. (alive in the flesh) or absent (dead in the grave), we may be accepted of him."

The Apostle Paul often wrote about the resurrection of Christians at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and about the rewards they will receive at that time. Paul expected to receive the reward of his labors and to be with Christ at the resurrection from the dead—the awesome event to which every true Christian eagerly looks forward!

"Body, Soul and Spirit"

There are also some who claim that man is "body, soul and spirit." misunderstanding 1 Thessalonians 5:23. But they never seem quite sure which of the two—the soul or the spirit—is immortal. Let's understand this expression.

1. What does the Bible reveal about "body, soul and spirit"? 1 Thes. 5:23.

COMMENT: Does this verse really prove the "immortality of the soul?" Of course not! It does not contradict all the plain verses we have already studied. Paul here referred to the MIND in man when he used the word "spirit." And to the PHYSICAL LIFE when he used the word "soul." And to the flesh when he used the word "body."

What's wrong with having your whole mind, your life, and your body preserved blameless—preserved from the penalty of sin- in anticipation of the coming of Christ? (See also 2 Corinthians 7:1) That is something we should all fervently desire!

How plain the Bible really is! Man is MORTAL, corruptible flesh-organic matter with a temporary life. He does not have eternal life inherent within himself. He does not have an "immortal soul"! He is a physical, fleshly creature destined to die and turn to dust and remain that way— except for the intervention of the Almighty—except for the resurrection from the dead!