

Soul

Tradition, misuse, and translation have greatly beclouded the concept of "soul." Among other things, most religions teach that man, unlike other animals, has an "immortal soul." The fact that "immortal soul" never occurs in the Bible doesn't seem to dissuade the teachers of this commonly held error. (See **IMMORTALITY.**)

THE FORMULA



Man became a "living soul."

The earliest Bible reference to man and soul is in Genesis 2:7. This text gives a wonderfully clear formula for understanding the nature of man. It teaches that man has a physical body formed from the "dust of the ground." It teaches that this body was animated, or brought to life, by the "breath of life." (It would be a mistake to think that this is merely respiration. The term "breath of life" encompasses the idea of that mysterious life-force which makes something "alive" instead of "dead." For clarity's sake, "breath of life" would be better expressed "spark of life.")

Note now the conclusion of the verse. Body plus "breath of life" made man "a living soul." Man was not GIVEN a soul; he BECAME a soul. The distinction is enormous! We must remember this formula as the basis for all other Scripture on the subject. Body plus "breath" makes a living soul. If we take away either the body or the breath, we have a dead soul.

SOULS DIE

This is the Biblical point. Souls die! The Lord, through the prophet Ezekiel (18:4) states the point so clearly that no doubt is left: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This, of course, leaves us all in a bit of a predicament since no one is righteous. (Romans 3:10) The Lord, however, provided a way out. It is called the RESURRECTION. (See [RESURRECTIONS.](#)) Understanding this most basic concept does away with all of the invented theories and lies which have been promoted over the centuries. If we do not have immortal souls, if we just "die," there is no need to have places for "departed souls" to go! There is no hell of eternal torment; nor is there any limbo, purgatory, reincarnation, or ANYTHING where souls "go." They DON'T "go." They die! In death they unconsciously await one of the resurrections. We ARE souls; we don't "have" them.

ANIMALS ARE SOULS, TOO

The best definition of "soul" is SENTIENT BEING (a being with senses—sense perception.) Thus, the Bible uses the word "soul" when referring to ALL sentient beings—animals. This is, unfortunately, almost always HIDDEN by the translators. Animals are called souls in Genesis 1, 2, and 9 as well as in later accounts and books. But the translators do not WANT us to see this. ONLY in Numbers 31:21 do they translate correctly where it says:

"And levy a tribute unto the LORD
of the men of war which went out
to battle: ONE SOUL of five hundred,
both of the persons, and of the beeves,
and of the asses, and of the sheep."

Now see how the translators have hidden this in the nine texts in Genesis which refer to animals as SOULS. In the listing below, the word in parentheses () is the word which is translated from the Hebrew word for "soul" (neh-phesh) which is used in Genesis 2:7 for man.

1. Genesis 1:20 (that hath life)
2. Genesis 1:21 (creature)
3. Genesis 1:24 (creature)
4. Genesis 1:30 (life)

5. Genesis 2:19 (creature)
6. Genesis 9: 3, 4 (life)
7. Genesis 9:9, 10 (creature)
8. Genesis 9:12 (creature)
9. Genesis 9:15 (creature)

No wonder understanding is so difficult! It is hidden from us from the very opening chapters of the Bible.

Animals, of course, are not promised resurrection. In this we differ from them. But understanding that "soul" is sense-perceptive being, virtually life itself, is so helpful in understanding what we are and how we will be dealt with in eternity. "Hell" in the Bible (see **HELL**) is where ALL SOULS "GO." It is not a place. It is not a state of consciousness or torment. It is a state of OBLIVION. All souls go into a state of oblivion when they die. From this state of oblivion, death, or non-existence, they will be awakened to enjoy the benefits of resurrection for an eternity. Hell will "deliver up the dead" that are in it. (Revelation 20:13)

DIFFICULT TEXTS

Because "soul" is such a common word in both Old and New Testament Scripture (regardless of how it is translated), there are any number of texts which might raise questions regarding the true definition of soul. All of these are treated in *The Atonement Between God and Man* (Volume 5 of *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*) available through this website. (See **Available Literature**.)

Note just one of these to see its marvelous consistency with the true definition as well as with God's plan for mankind.

Matthew 10:28 is a text in which Jesus speaks:

"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."

An analysis of this text when combined with the understanding of words like "soul" and "hell" reveals that Jesus was saying the following:

You do not have to have a paralyzing fear of man. He may be able to kill you. But your death is only a temporary thing. Man is not able to kill your BEING eternally, because he does not have that power or authority. By killing your body he IS temporarily consigning you to oblivion; but more than that he cannot do.

Let your reverential fear, rather, be of God. He has both the power and authority not only to send you to your grave now, but to refuse you any future resurrection. He can, like man, kill your body and, thus, take away the rest of this life; but He also can kill your being for all eternity in oblivion.

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The understanding of "Soul" is basic to the understanding of God's plans and purposes. Without knowing the truth about "soul," it is impossible to understand punishment, atonement, resurrection, and the future life.