

fathers, and was buried.”

Jesus Himself spoke of death as a sleep. When His beloved friend Lazarus grew very sick in a nearby town, the Master said in **John 11:11-14, RSV**, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep. . . . Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’” **Psalm 115:17**,

**KJV** couldn’t be any plainer: “The dead praise *not* the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” Yet if you died and immediately went to heaven, you’d praise the Lord, wouldn’t you? The Bible says, “The dead know nothing.” The Bible says, “The dead praise not the Lord.” Death is *not* the end of the road—it’s a dreamless SLEEP in the arms of Jesus. **R**



by Mark Finley

The death of a loved one shakes us up. The question haunts us: “Can I find hope beyond the grave?” Have you looked death squarely in the face and wondered, “What happens five minutes after death?” Is it heaven, hell, or nothingness? It’s confusing—there are so many varied beliefs on the subject of death. Suppose we take a survey with just one question: What happens when you die? Hindus may say your immortal soul is reincarnated as something else—as a cow, a servant, a wealthy businessman, or an insect depending on how you lived this life. Catholics may say there’s an immortal soul that leaves the body and ascends to *heaven* if you’ve been good, *purgatory* if you’re not so good, and *hell* if you’ve been really bad. Protestants may say something similar but leave out the idea about purgatory. Secular humanists may say death is THE END—period. Other Bible-believing Christians believe death is merely a *sleep* till the resurrection day when Christ returns. Ask ten people about death—and you’ll get *eleven* different answers!

But there *are* rock-solid answers. The Bible provides sane, sensible information revealing not only what happens when you die but also how to face death with hope and confidence. **Revelation 1:18** introduces us to Jesus Christ, who says: “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” Jesus has the key that unlocks death’s door. **Revelation 20:6** says, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power.” The first resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous. The second death refers to final death, eternal death. In other words, this is a resurrection that leads to eternal life. God promises in **Revelation 21:4**: “There shall be no more death.” God will bring about a final, permanent solution. That’s the great hope of the book of Revelation. Let’s see exactly what this hope is based on— and what it’s *not* based on! It’s vital that we understand what the Bible teaches on the subject.

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## SOUL Is a Key Word:

In **Genesis 2:7**, we read: “God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living being.” It doesn’t say God *put* a soul *into* man but man *became* a living soul—a living BEING, a living PERSON, as modern translations put it, for that’s what the text means. The Bible never says a person “has” a soul—as if it were a separate entity we possess. I don’t *have* a soul, I *am* a soul, a living creature, a person—and so are you.

But someone says, “Wait a minute—I don’t want to get caught up in mere words! Just answer me one thing: Our physical *bodies* die, but our *souls* can never, ever die, can they?” Well, **Ezekiel 18:4** says quite plainly that they can and do: “The soul who sins shall die”—repeated for emphasis in **verse 20**.

*Soul* may also mean “life.” For instance, Jesus taught that “Whosoever will save his *life* shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his *life* for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul*? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*?” **Matthew 16:25-26, KJV**—(similarly translated in **Mark 8:35-37**). Here Matthew wrote the same Greek word *psyche* four times, but the translators twice rendered it “life” and twice “soul.” The two words are interchangeable. Note also: “life” is not something irrevoca-

bly ours—we can lose it, for we’re *not* inherently immortal.

## Only GOD Is Immortal:

The word *mortal* means “subject to death,” and *immortal* means the opposite—imperishable. You don’t find the term “immortal soul” or “immortality of the soul” even once in the entire Bible! The Word of God doesn’t teach such a concept. The Bible often uses the expressions “soul” and “spirit” but never attaches the term “immortal” to either word. We have the *promise* of immortality—as a gift bestowed when Jesus returns. **1 Corinthians 15:51-53** says, “We shall all be CHANGED, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

at the last trumpet: for the trumpet will sound . . . and this *mortal* must PUT ON immortality.” So we’re *not* inherently or naturally immortal now. In

fact, the very word *immortal* is used only once in Scripture, and that sole instance—**1 Timothy 1:17, KJV**—applies the word not to man but to “the only wise *God*.” The same epistle clinches this point in **1 Timothy 6:15-16**—where the inspired theologian Paul explicitly declares that: “The King of kings and Lord of lords . . . ALONE has immortality.”

## SPIRIT Is a Key Word:

When God made Adam, He breathed the spirit or breath of life into his nostrils, and he became a living soul. **Ecclesiastes 12:7** says the exact opposite occurs at death: “Then the dust will

return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” What goes back to God? The spirit or breath. The Bible never says the soul goes back to God. And the spirits of *all* mankind—good or bad, saint or sinner, Hitler or Mother Teresa—go back to God in the death process.

Since the dust returns to earth “as it was,” presumably the breath or spirit returns to God “as it was.”

Adam’s breath was not conscious before creation—why assume it’s conscious after death? The Word of God precludes any idea of consciousness after death. **Psalm 146:4, KJV** says when



The living know that they shall die;  
but the dead know not anything.  
Ecclesiastes 9:5, KJV

The word “spirit” comes from the same root as other words pertaining to “breath” or “breathing” such as *inspire* or *respiration*. The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*, which gives us words like *pneumonia*, the respiratory disease, and *pneumatic*, the tires we blow up with air. **Job 27:3, KJV** tells us *where* the spirit is: “All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils.” When a man dies, the breath of God, or the power of God—that spark of life—returns to Him. **James 2:26** says, “The body without the spirit is dead.” Even today when we mean “He’s dead,” we say “He expired” or “He breathed his last.” The body without God’s breath is dead, because at death God’s spirit or His breath goes back to Him.

## The Dead Cannot Think:

But that breath is NOT a thinking, conscious entity that survives death.

a man dies, “His breath [his spirit] goeth forth, he [his body] returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” So can a dead man think? No! On the day he dies, his THOUGHTS PERISH! **Ecclesiastes 9:5-6** says plainly, “The living know that they will die; but *the dead know nothing*. . . . Also their love, their hatred, and their envy, is now perished.” Friends, no matter what we’ve been taught in the past, no matter what the Devil told Eve in that first lie, the dead know nothing!

## Death Is a Dreamless Sleep:

The Bible teaches that death is but a sleep that lasts until Christ’s second coming. More than fifty times, Bible writers consistently describe death as a sleep. In **Psalm 13:3** David prayed to God lest he “*sleep* the *sleep* of death.” Later, **1 Kings 2:1, 10, KJV** say: “Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die. . . . So David *slept* with his

Our heavenly Father has so much He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

1.  T  F Since Jesus called the Devil “the father” of lies and lying, it’s interesting to note that Satan’s first lie on this earth—to Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden—was about death and dying. (JOHN 8:44, GENESIS 3:1-4)
2. If God alone is immortal, then neither man nor angels are. And the inspired Apostle Paul says it’s “the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who \_\_\_\_\_ has \_\_\_\_\_.” (1 TIMOTHY 6:15-16)
3. The Bible teaches that when a man dies, “His \_\_\_\_\_ goeth forth, he returneth to his \_\_\_\_\_; in that very day his \_\_\_\_\_.” (PSALMS 146:4, KJV)
4. God settles the matter that man is MORTAL—subject to death—and that he does NOT possess a so-called “immortal soul” when He repeats plainly: “The \_\_\_\_\_ who sins shall \_\_\_\_\_.” (EZEKIEL 18:4, 20)
5.  T  F The Bible says that when we die, our *body* returns as dust to the earth as it was, and our *spirit* returns to God in heaven. (ECCLESIASTES 12:7 AND JAMES 2:26)
6. Bible writers consistently refer to death as a dreamless, unconscious sleep. The Psalmist David prayed, “Hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.” (PSALM 13:3)
7. The Bible asks, “Shall \_\_\_\_\_ man be more just than God?” And when Jesus comes, “We shall all be CHANGED, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this \_\_\_\_\_ must \_\_\_\_\_ immortality.” (JOB 4:17, 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-53, KJV)

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCES**

- John 11:11-14** Jesus compares death to sleep. The Bible compares death to sleep over 50 times, in texts such as Psalm 13:3, Acts 7:59-60, Ephesians 5:14, etc.
- 1 Thess.4:15-16** Those asleep in Jesus rise at His Second Coming.
- John 5:28-29** There are two resurrections—to life and to damnation. (Daniel 12:2)
- Genesis 2:7(KJV)** “God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul,” a living being, a living person, as modern versions say. God did not *put* a soul into man.
- Ecclesiastes 12:7** The body returns to the dust, and the spirit returns to God. The Bible does not say the soul returns to God, but the spirit.
- Job 27:3** The spirit is the same as God’s breath of life or His power.
- Psalms 146:3-4 (KJV)** When the breath or Spirit returns to God, the “thoughts perish.”
- 1 Timothy 6:16** Human beings do *not* have immortality now—only God does.
- Romans 2:7** We “seek for” immortality, for we don’t have it now. The Bible uses the word “soul” 1600 times, but *never once* speaks of an “immortal soul.”
- Ezekiel 18:4, 20** The *soul*, which means *being or person* (1 Peter 3:20, for example), is not immortal but can die. Ezekiel repeats: “The soul (person) who sins shall *die*.”
- 1 Cor. 15:51-54** We *receive* immortality for the first time when Jesus comes again.
- Acts 2:29, 34** David is “both dead and buried.” He did *not* ascend to heaven at death, but awaits the coming of Jesus and the first resurrection.
- Psalms 115:17** “The dead do not praise the Lord.”
- Psalms 6:5** “In death there is *no remembrance* of [God].”
- Ecclesiastes 9:5** “The living know that they will die, but the *dead* know *nothing*.”
- Job 7:9-10, 14:10, 12, 21** The Bible says the dead *cannot* return to their homes or observe or communicate with their loved ones. (2 Samuel 12:22-23)
- Job 19:25-27** The righteous will be resurrected to see God at the Last Day.
- Romans 6:23** “The wages of sin is *death*,” not *life in some other place*. Death is the *absence* of life. “The GIFT of God is eternal life”—which He’ll give us *when He comes*.
- 2 Timothy 4: 7-8** The apostle Paul awaits the Coming of the Lord for his final reward.
- Revelation 22:12** When Jesus comes, His reward of eternal life will be with Him.