

Have I An Immortal Soul?

FINGER POST No. 5

IF I ask this question of almost any minister or clergyman, he will reply, "Yes". If I listen to sermons I gather the same answer. If I consult religious literature, I am assured that I have

A never-dying soul to save

And fit it for the sky.

I have met with a man who tells me it is all a mistake. You say, "Oh, he must be an infidel!" No: he is no infidel: he believes in God and in the Bible as His inspired word: and yet he tells me that there is no foundation for the idea of having an immortal soul. This has made me open my eyes and think. I have looked into the matter, and find that what he told me is right.

1. I cannot find anything about "immortal soul" in the Bible. I read about "soul" often enough, and I read the word "immortal", but I do not find the two words joined as in popular preaching; and what the Bible says about the two things separately, is out of keeping with the idea that a soul is an immaterial thing as I have been taught, or that immortality belongs to anybody now.

"The soul of every living thing" (Job 12:10). "Satisfy his soul when he is hungry" (Prov. 6:30). "Levy a tribute . . . one soul of five hundred . . . asses . . . sheep" (Num. 31:28). "Smote all the souls" (Josh. 11:11). "In thy skirts is found the blood of the souls" (Jer. 11:34). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 15:20). "Seek for glory, honour, and immortality" (Rom. 2:7). "This mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:54). "God only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16).

If every living thing has a soul, and a soul can eat, and be handled and can die, and if immortality be some thing that men have to seek for now, and to put on when Christ comes, it follows that the notion I have been brought up in -- that the soul is an invisible thing that cannot die -- must be a mistake.

2. I read that man is mortal now; that death has entered the world by sin; that where sin is death must be, and that death will only be destroyed with Christ's final triumph upon earth..

"Mortal man" (Job 4:17). "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "The end of those things is death" (Rom. 6:21). "To be carnally minded is

death" (Rom. 8:6). "He (Christ) must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26), "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away ... Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:4-5).

If all this be so, how can the doctrine of the immortality of the soul be true? Because if man is mortal, then he is not immortal; and if death has passed upon all men, then it must be wrong to say that he is never-dying and cannot die. And if death be not a fact, how can Christ take it away?

3. I read that the hope of immortality is to be realized by a change of the mortal body if alive when Christ comes, or by a resurrection of that body if in the grave for a similar change.

"He shall change our vile body" (Phil. 3:21). "This mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (verse 51). "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16). "They shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life" (John 5:29). "Clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:4).

How could this be if I were already immortal, and if that immortality resided in an invisible spirit which goes away from my body when I die?

4. I read that the dead are to be judged at the coming of Christ; that the righteous are to be rewarded, and the wicked punished at that time.

"He shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:1). "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father ... and then shall he reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). "The time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets" (Rev. 11:18). "Those that know not God shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:8).

How am I to understand this, if I am to believe that when men die they "go to judgment", and if accepted enter heaven to be rewarded, or descend to hell to be punished? What is the meaning of a day of judgment if it is all settled before the day arrive?

5. Then I read that in the death state men are without feeling, or memory, or consciousness, and that they are incapable of exercising any faculty or rendering any praise; that in fact, they "know not anything".

"In death, there is no remembrance of thee" (Psa. 6:5). "The dead know not anything; their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished" (Eccl. 9:5). "He returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:4). "The dead praise not the Lord" (Psa. 115:17). "The grave cannot praise thee" (Isa. 38:18).

I can understand this if man is a poor mortal, whose being dissolves in death, and who, when dead, is really dead; and then I can understand the need for resurrection, and the suitableness of its happening at Christ's re-appearing. But how am I to reconcile such teaching with the idea that when I die, I shall not be dead, but more alive, and know more than I now do? I cannot reconcile the two things; and as one must be right and the other wrong, I conclude that the Bible is right, and popular teaching wrong, and that therefore

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