

The Sure Word Bible Studies
Lesson 7

The Wages of Sin

At one time there was no such thing as death; it had never been experienced or heard of. But the Bible says: *“There is a way which seems right to a man but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Proverbs 16:25.* In the beginning, even though it had never been experienced, God warned Adam of the possibility of death.

Genesis 2:17: *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*

When God told Adam the consequences of eating of the tree of good and evil, He didn't say you will burn in hell. He didn't say I will put you to death. He simply said, *“You will die.”* The Hebrew word means “dying you will die.” In other words a process will begin working within you that will eventually result in your death the way leprosy or cancer does. Was God telling the truth? This is the question Satan asked of Eve.

Genesis 3:1-4: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die”*

Satan told Eve she would not die, implying 1) that mankind is immortal and 2) God cannot be trusted to tell them the truth. However, since Satan is the liar - are we to believe him? It might come as a surprise to you, but most of the world does believe Satan's lie about sin and death. The exception is the atheist, who believes there is nothing after this life ends. But most people believe that life continues in some form or another after death.

For example, the Hindu believes in re-incarnation and the Buddhists believe in nirvana. Most Christians and Muslims believe at death a person's soul separates from the body and immediately goes to heaven or hell for eternity.

If that is true – if immediately after death a person receives their just reward and reaches their final destination – then why have a resurrection? They have already arrived at their final destination. Why have a judgment day? They have already received their reward. As we think this through it does not make sense.

If we are to find the truth on this issue we must go to the Bible and examine the evidence. After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, death became a reality.

Genesis 3:22,23: *“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.”*

God could have allowed sin with its suffering to go on for eternity, but He wasn't going to do that, it's too painful. He is, however, going to allow the universe to see beyond a shadow of doubt what the consequences of sin are. The universe will see the terrible results of a world going its own way without God.

As the result of being banished from the *“tree of life”* (the symbol of the source of life), Adam and Eve became mortal, that means they became subject to death, and that will be passed from them to the rest the human race.

Romans 5:12: *“Wherefore, as by one man death entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”*

We must remember that the death that comes to all mankind, good and bad, as a result of being cut-off from the tree of life is not eternal annihilation. Everyone who dies will live again.

John 5:28,29 tells us there is to be a resurrection: *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done*

good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Today most religions teach that man has an “immortal soul” that lives on after the death of the physical body. The problem is, the Bible does not say that. The word “immortal” is used only once in the entire Bible and that is found in I Timothy 1:17 -

I Timothy 1:17: *“Now unto the King eternal, **immortal**, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

The Bible says only God has immortality, which means only He possesses life within Himself. It is not given to Him by another.

I Timothy 6:15,16 says, *“ Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; **Who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”*

The word “soul” is used more than 600 times in the Bible but never is it said to be immortal. However, it does say it will die!

Ezekiel 18:4: *“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die.**”*

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

Genesis 2:7 says, *“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.”*

Notice, man “became” a living soul – he was not “given” a soul. The word for soul in the original Hebrew is “nephesh” and it means simply “a living creature.” The “nephesh” or “living creature” is made up of two parts that can only exist together – a body and the breath of life. The two together become a living creature or “soul.”

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 entirely different meanings. The soul is the living creature including the body and breath. The word "spirit" is from Hebrew and Greek words that mean "wind", or "breath," "moving air." If the air in you is moving as when you breathe, it implies a life force is present, meaning the "breath of life." Therefore the soul is a *"living creature,"* that is, a body plus the breath or spirit. Spirit can also refer to the disposition or nature of a person as well. As in "that man has a mean spirit" or "that girl has a sweet spirit."

The spirit, the *"breath of life"* is given by God at the beginning of life and returns to God at death. At death the body returns to the ground, therefore it is no more a "soul," or living creature, it is now a dead body.

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

Luke 8:52-55 *"And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit (breath of life) came again, and she arose straightway"*

Notice, her "soul" did not return, but her "spirit," that is, her breath, or life force, did.

More than fifty times death is referred to in the Bible as "sleep." Here are three specific examples:

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

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

Matthew 27:51,52 *"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many **bodies of the saints which slept** arose,"*

Jesus used the term “sleep” for the first death as well.

John 11:11-14 *“He saith unto them, **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.”*

Why does the Bible use the term “sleep” for death? The following verses help with the answer.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 *“For the living know that they shall die: but **the dead know not anything**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.”*

Psalms 146:4 *“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”*

If *“the dead know not anything,”* and their *“thoughts perish,”* that implies a state of unconsciousness. Just as when a person is sound asleep, they are unconscious of anything going on around them, they have no awareness of the passage of time. Whether they sleep for one hour or ten, it is all the same to them. The *“sleep of death”* is a temporary unconsciousness while a person awaits the resurrection when all shall awake and come forth from the grave. According to the book of Acts, that is true even for *“saints”* like David – *“a man after God’s own heart.”*

Acts 2:29 *“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.”* **Verse 34** *“**For David is not ascended into the heavens**: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,”*

There are exceptions to this. For example Enoch, Elijah, and Moses who have been taken to heaven for a special purpose. In the following passages, other than those exceptions, the Bible makes it very clear that God does not bestow immortality to the faithful at death - but at the second coming of Jesus.

I Corinthians 15:22, 23 “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; **afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.**”

I Corinthians 15:51-54 “Behold, I shew 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 trump**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, **and this mortal shall have put on immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

One way to illustrate death as a type of sleep is to think of a computer. You turn it on and it comes to life. The screen lights up and you type all kinds of information into it. When you are done you press the “enter” key and all that information is “saved” in the computer’s memory. Then you turn it off, unplug its power source. Now you may wait for years before turning it back on, but when you reconnect it to the power source, turn it on, it lights up again and you can type in certain key words and press the enter key and all that information you stored in its memory will come back up.

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

Philippians 3:20, 21 “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

The Bible refers to the body, soul and spirit. The following will help us understand these terms as they are meant to be:

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

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

Spirit. – Refers first to the life force or breath of life itself. It returns to God at the death of the living being. It also refers to the nature or character of a person which is preserved until the resurrection.

Having studied this issue thus far, the question may still linger in the minds of some - but what about the thief on the cross, didn't Jesus say, *“Today you will be with me in paradise.”*?

Before we look at that, we must remember that punctuation was added to the Bible when the English translation was done. The original languages of the Bible have no punctuation. Note a missing comma in the following verse.

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.”*

Have you ever seen a *“sick handkerchief?”* A comma should have been placed after the word “sick”, and then it would make sense. Note the following - *“So that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them.”*

Now re-examine the verse in Luke.

Luke 23:43 - *“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, **To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**”*

Now let's 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 him the promise that day that they were on the cross, that he would be with Him in paradise in the future. Evidence for this is found in the gospel of John.

John 20:1,16,17 – verse 1 *“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.”* **Verse 16,17** *“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”*

Jesus could not be with the thief in paradise that Friday when He did not go to heaven himself until Sunday (John 20:17). Jesus slept the sleep of death in the tomb from Friday evening until Sunday morning.

Now what about the verse that is often quoted - *“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”* The problem is, it is misquoted. Look at it closely.

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.”*

Paul does not say *“is to be,”* but *“willing rather to be...”* Most of us probably feel that way, we are willing to be with the Lord rather than going through the trials of this life, but that does not say that when we die we will immediately go to heaven. Remember - don't say, *“The Bible says”* until you've looked at *everything* the Bible says.

The words 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 of Satan came through the false teachings of paganism and Greek philosophy then it was *“christianized”* in the church during the dark ages.

Note the following quote under the heading of Greek Philosophy from 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 taught by the famous Greek philosopher Plato.

You may ask - why is this so important anyway? The answer is that it is through the teaching that the dead are not really dead that men have direct communication with the spirit world – that is, with Satan’s angels. An example is the story of King Saul and the Witch of Endor in **1 Samuel 28:3-20**.

³ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

⁴ And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. ⁵ And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. ⁶ **And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.** ⁷ Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

⁸ And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. ⁹ And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? ¹⁰ And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. ¹¹ Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. ¹² And when the

woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, *Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.* ¹³ *And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.* ¹⁴ *And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh 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 himself.* ¹⁵ *And Samuel said to Saul, **Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?** And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.* ¹⁶ *Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing **the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?*** ¹⁷ *And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:* ¹⁸ *Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.* ¹⁹ *Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.* ²⁰ *Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.*

Note in verse 6 it said that the Lord would not speak to Saul by prophets, so this couldn't be Samuel because he was a prophet. Note in verse 14 it says Saul "*perceived*" it was Samuel; he did not actually see him. In addition, in verse 15, the so-called Samuel said, "*Why have you called me up?*" We have seen the Bible says a man's spirit goes up to God, not down. And note verse 16, "*the Lord is departed from thee and has become thine enemy.*" The Lord did not leave Saul, Saul turned away from him and could have come back if he had only repented and turned to the Lord with all his heart. But because of the discouraging words of this demon impersonating Samuel, Saul was driven to despair and finally suicide by the words of the evil spirit (one of the reasons God forbid His people to consult mediums).

There are at least three more reasons for why this could not have been Samuel come back from heaven or the dead, to speak to King Saul.

First - The Bible makes it clear the dead cannot come back to communicate with us.

Job 7:9,10 *“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”*

Second – Being aware of Satan’s ability to deceive men in this way, God had condemned calling up the dead.

Leviticus 20:6,27. Verse 6 *“And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.”* **Verse 27** *“A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.”*

I Chronicles 10:13 *“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;”*

Third - If we seek answers we should go the “law and the testimony,” in other words we should go to God’s Word, and not to the dead to find the answers!

Isaiah 8:19,20 *“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”*

If I know the dead are “asleep” in the grave awaiting the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection, then I can’t be deceived by a demon impersonating someone who has supposedly returned from heaven to tell me lies about God.

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

II Thessalonians 2:8–10 *“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”*

Revelation 16:14 *“For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*

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 spoken only of the death of sleep, the first death - but many will experience the “*second death*.” (Revelation 20:14) What is the second death? This question will be answered in lessons # 10 and 11.

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 ___