

Monday Morning Rewind – February 2, 2009

Good morning! On Sabbath we became crime scene investigators examining the truth about the grave and immortality of the soul. For many, even a majority of Bible-believing Christians, death is the door to the next life. The popular belief is that each person is a body in which an immortal soul dwells. Upon a person's death the soul or spirit is thought to separate from the body to continue a conscious existence either in heaven or in hell.

But is this belief Biblical? Does man possess an immortal soul that nothing can destroy? Where did this idea come from? We start at the crime scene.

Crime scene discovery

Genesis 2:7 shows how the first human was created. God did not put a living soul into Adam. Adam became a living soul as a result of the combination of the body plus the breath or spirit from God. The formula looks like this: Dust + breath = soul ("living being") This process is reversed at death. Soul ("living being") – breath = dust (corpse) (See Psalm 104:29). Man came from the ground, and to the ground man returns at death (Gen. 3:19). Sin has made the entire earth a crime scene. Daniel Knauft says, "Every bloody battlefield and every silent cemetery testifies that our world, speeding 67,000 miles an hour around the sun, is a vast graveyard in space."

Analysis

Death is a sleep. (See Job 14:10-12; Psalm 13:3; Dan. 12:2; Mark 5:39.)

Death has no consciousness. (See Psalm 146:3, 4; Eccl. 9:5, 6.)

Souls are not immortal. (Ezek. 18:20)

The Bible teaches that a soul is simply a living being—one who breathes. Because of sin, souls die. The dead do not praise the Lord (Psalm 115:17). The dead do not haunt houses (Job 7:9, 10).

So where did the idea of an immortal soul come from?

Questioning the Suspects

"We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness and is nowhere found in the Old Testament." (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 2, p. 812)

Nowhere in Scripture is the soul spoken of as a conscious entity imprisoned within the body shell and released into the presence of God or the punishment of hell at death.

But the fingerprints belonging to the true perpetrator of this philosophy goes back to the garden (Gen. 3:1-6). At the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Satan deceived Eve with four lies:

- 1) Question God; don't trust what He says;
- 2) There are no consequences if you disobey God—you will not die;
- 3) God is irrelevant; you can get along without Him; The serpent led Adam and Eve to believe that they were independently eternal, ("like God") who alone is eternal.
- 4) Only you can determine what is right and wrong for yourself.

This lie is the foundation for every form of spiritualism and the occult today. If the dead are not really dead, and in fact the soul lives on eternally in heaven or in hell, then God is proved to be the liar and Satan was the one telling the truth! To believe that humans possess an immortal soul is to agree with Satan and call God a liar.

Rewind to Genesis 3:22 to see the Achilles heel of the Immortal Soul doctrine. "And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He *must not* be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and *live forever*."

The fallen humans were cut off from the Source of life so they would not live forever. This not only proves that they didn't possess an inherent immortal soul, but that God mercifully, wouldn't allow His creatures to live in everlasting misery as sinners. And that's why hell doesn't burn forever, too!

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 6:23) Eternal life is a gift wrapped up in Jesus. To say that the soul is immortal, is to declare that eternal life is obtained independently of Christ. There are other belief systems that deny Christ but accept the immortality of the soul. But Jesus is the eternal life of God and that life is only available to those who believe in Him. That's why He is the Way, the truth, and The Life. We must come to Him—not Buddah,

Krishna, or mediums. Only the Author of Life has the power and right to give it. Anything else makes God to be a liar.

Supporting Evidence

In Jesus' own words, He says where persons go when they die. "All...are in the grave"--both good and evil. The reward of eternal life is given "at the resurrection of the righteous" (John 5:28, 29; Luke 14:14). If we go to heaven when we die, it makes Jesus' promise to return (John 14:1-3) unnecessary. But look again at His words in verse 3. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me *that you also may be where I am.*" (John 14:3) Jesus coming back to take us with Him is the *only* way we can be where He is.

The good news about death is that it is a state from which it is possible to awaken (1 Cor. 15:51, 52, 54). Resurrection, not immortality of the soul, is the Biblical and sure hope of the Christian. Death is the ultimate weapon of the enemy, but resurrection is the ultimate answer of the risen Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

Those who live and believe in Jesus need not fear death. Believers may sleep, but they will never truly die. Spiritual life from Jesus ensures that death is merely a pause, not a permanent end. It's like the rest symbol in music. When you encounter a rest, you stop singing, but only for a moment. The song is not over, there's more music yet to sing.

Does it matter what you believe about life after death? Only if it matters whether God is truthful or not, and if the cross accomplished anything or not. Faith that matters is faith that is supported by the Word of God and not the words or philosophies of men. The serpent's lie has done enough damage and caused enough confusion. I choose to place my trust in God. How about you? –Pastor Randy

p.s. Join us Wednesday night at 7:00 PM to go deeper on this week's topic of life after death. There's much more to talk about! Next Sabbath's topic: "A Pause for Peace." Keep telling your friends.