



A Traveler's Guide to the Afterlife

A Bible Literacy Study Guide on the Eternal Destiny of the Individual
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The (Im)mortality of the Soul

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The Afterlife

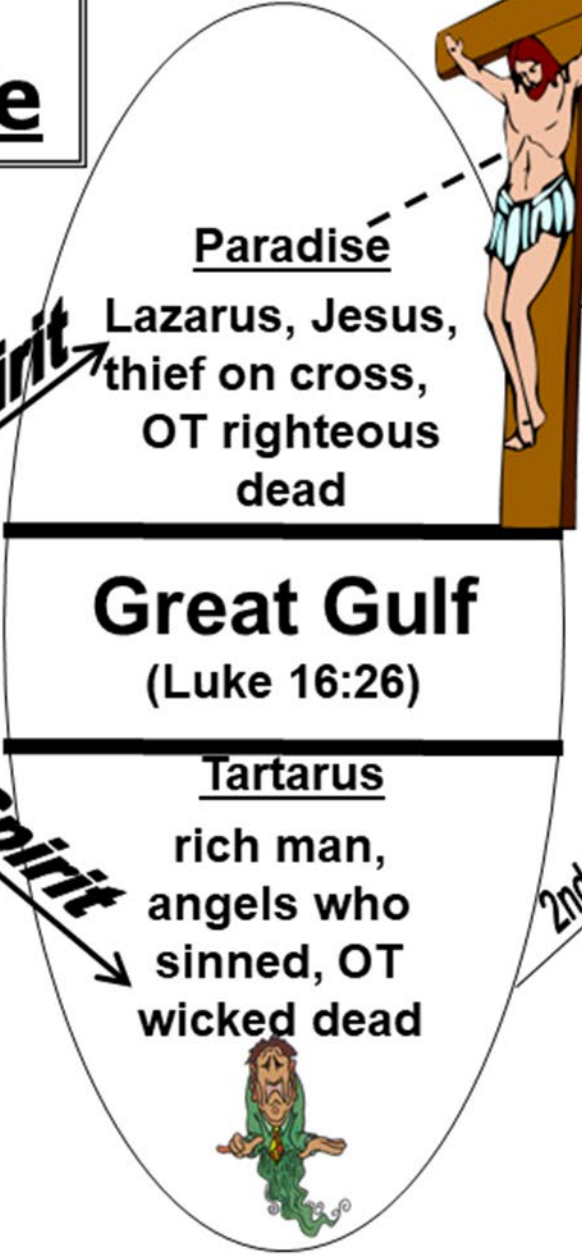
Hades (NT)

Paradise

New Heaven & New Earth
(Rev. 21:27)



Spirit ↑
Body Dies
(Eccl. 12:7)



Paradise
Lazarus, Jesus,
thief on cross,
OT righteous
dead

Great Gulf
(Luke 16:26)

Tartarus
rich man,
angels who
sinned, OT
wicked dead

Sheol (OT)

Eph. 4:8-9

1 Thess. 4:13-18

2nd Coming & Resurrection

2nd Coming & Resurrection

Judgment
2 Cor. 5:10

Mt. 25:46

Mt. 25:41

Hell
(Rev. 21:8)

Significant Scriptures



- Romans 2:7—to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and **immortality**, he will give eternal life;
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-4—1 For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, **we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.** 2 For in this tent we groan, **longing to put on our heavenly dwelling**, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that **what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.**
- 1 Timothy 1:16-17—To the King of ages, **immortal**, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
- 1 Timothy 6:15-16—15 ... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has **immortality**, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54



- 50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the **imperishable**.
- 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be **raised imperishable**, and we shall be changed.
- 53 For this perishable body must put on the **imperishable**, and this mortal body must put on **immortality**.
- 54 When the perishable puts on the **imperishable**, and the mortal puts on **immortality**, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Immortality Defined



- The quality or state of being immortal. The concept of immortality is expressed directly in the Bible only in the NT.
- *Athanasia* is the exact equivalent of the English immortality, and it is used in 1 Cor 15:53-54 where it describes the resurrection body as one which is not subject to death: and in 1 Tim 6:16, where God is said to be the one who alone has immortality. He alone in his essence is deathless.
- *Aphtharsia* has the basic meaning of indestructibility and, by derivation, of incorruption (1 Cor 15:42 ff).
- Immortality in the biblical sense is a condition in which the individual is not subject to death or to any influence which might lead to death.
- God is uniquely immortal in that he is without beginning or end of life and is not in any way affected by change or reduction.

Immortality Defined



- Man, on the other hand, is immortal only by derivation and when his mortal body has been replaced by one which is immortal.
- The biblical idea of immortality differs from others in certain important respects.
 - In nonbiblical teaching man is inherently immortal (Greek philosophy).
 - It is the spiritual aspect of human nature only which is thought to be immortal. The human soul or spirit survives death.
- A corollary of these two is that the human body is usually thought of as a kind of prison house of the spirit, or, at best, as a very transitory part of the human personality.
- In biblical thought man is not inherently immortal; it is the whole man, body and soul, that is immortal even though the body must undergo a transformation in order to achieve immortality.

Glorification Defined



- This refers especially to the time when, at the second coming, those who died in Christ and the living believers will be given the resurrection of the body -- a final and full "redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23), preparatory for and suited to the final state of the Christian believer.
- As a theological term it is a synonym of immortality -- when immortality is thought of as the glorification which believers will receive, and not, as erroneously thought of, as simply the continued existence of both the believers and the finally impenitent.
- Glorification, therefore, is only for believers, and it consists of the redemption of the body.
- At that time "this perishable" will "put on the imperishable," and "this mortal," the body, will "put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:53).

Glorification Defined



- Then death, the Christian's last enemy (1 Cor 15:26), will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:54).
- Our special glory seems to consist, in part, in the hope we hold to: that we will be glorified.
- Paul also seems to teach that after the believers are glorified, the whole created world will undergo a fundamental renewal: "*For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its corruption into the freedom of the glory of [or glorification of] the children of God*" (Rom 8:19-21 NASB).

Immortality in the OT



- In the OT as well as in the NT, man is a complete being only as his body and spirit are in union.
- He is then a living being, or whole person (Gen 2:7).
- While some have understood the Genesis narrative as teaching that man was created immortal and that sin brought mortality, it would seem better to interpret the account as teaching that man would have gained immortality through a period of testing in which he would be obedient to the divine commands.
- Had Adam and Eve eaten of the Tree of Life they would have lived forever (become immortal) in their sin (Gen. 3:22-24).

Immortality in the OT



- If death was the penalty for sin, life was to be the reward for obedience.
- Throughout the OT the dead are described as going down to *Sheol*, a place of obscurity, forgetfulness, and relative inactivity (Job 10:20-22, 14:13 ff.; Ps 88:10-12; et al.).
- *Sheol*, however, was not outside the Lord's purview (Ps 139:8; Amos 9:2), and it was indicated through some OT writers that there would be a deliverance from it (Job 19:25-27; Ps 16:10; 49:14 ff.)
- This deliverance would take the form of a resurrection, though this climax of OT hope finds expression only in Dan 12:2.

Immortality in the NT



- In the NT it is implied that OT believers did not have a full knowledge of the meaning of immortality, since our Lord Jesus Christ brought life and immortality (*aphtharsia*) to light through the gospel (2 Tim 1:10).
- Christians have been begotten in Christ to an immortal (*aphtharton*) inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-4).
- The inheritance is described as one of glory, honor, incorruption (*aphtharsia*), and eternal life.
- To be without the life in Christ is **not** to have immortality, in the biblical sense of the term.

Immortality in the NT



- Immortality, for the Christian, involves the resurrection and may be fully attained only after it.
- While it is said that believers who have died are present with the Lord when they are absent from the body (2 Cor 5:8), they are nevertheless to be changed at Christ's appearing.
- Both those who have died and those who are alive upon earth will receive a body like the resurrection body of Jesus Christ (Phil 3:21).
- Those who are the children of God will be like Christ (1 John 3:2), perfected in righteousness (Phil 1:6), and they will serve God continually.

Traditional Immortality



- Exemption from death; the state of living forever.
- Thus, immortality is the opposite of mortality, or being subject to death.
- In the Bible, the word immortality refers primarily to the spirit, but is also used of the resurrected or transformed body.
- The pagan Greeks had no concept of a bodily resurrection.
- Plato taught that spirit is everything and that matter is nothing. He believed the spirit lives on but the body returns to dust.
- In 1 Cor 15, Paul answered this idea. Paul also spoke of immortality and the resurrection in his sermon to the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill.
- The traditional concept of immortality is rooted in man's creation in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27).

Traditional Immortality



- God is spirit. So the reference in Genesis is not to bodily form but to spiritual nature.
- As the Eternal, God is also immortal (1 Tim 6:16). God made man to live forever, physically and spiritually.
- At death the body returns to dust (Gen 3:19), but the spirit lives on.
- The ancient Hebrews believed in the survival of the spirit, although they thought of the afterlife as a shadowy existence.
- But the idea of a bodily resurrection gradually evolved (Job 19:26; Ps 16:8-11; Dan 12:2).

Traditional Immortality



- In Jesus' time the Sadducees denied a bodily resurrection, while the Pharisees believed in it.
- However, at least the tone of a hope of immortality pervades the entire Old Testament.
- Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22) is interpreted in Heb 11:17-19 as an act that involved faith in a resurrection.
- In Jesus Christ we have God's full revelation about immortality of both body and spirit (John 11:23-26; Rom 2:6-7; 2 Tim 1:10).
- His bodily resurrection is proof of our future immortality (1 Cor 15:12-16).

Conditional Immortality



- "Immortality" means deathlessness, and anyone who is "immortal" is incapable of dying.
- According to the Bible, God "alone possesses immortality" inherently or in his own nature (1 Tim. 6:16).
- Human beings are not naturally "deathless" or "immortal."
- We are mortal human creatures who owe our existence every moment to God who made us (Gen. 2:7; Acts 17:25, 28). Our immortality is conditional on God who gives it.

Conditional Immortality



- Despite this grim and humbling reality, humans seemingly have always tried to discover or to obtain immortality apart from God.
- Greek philosophers theorized that every human possesses a mortal body but also an immortal or deathless "soul," which has always existed and will never cease to be.
- During the second and third centuries after Jesus, certain converted Greek philosophers brought a form of this pagan notion into the church.
- The church fathers concluded that the human "soul" cannot die but will live somewhere forever and the wicked will suffer everlasting conscious torment.

Conditional Immortality



- This teaching, which makes God the supreme torturer of the universe, overlooks the fact that whenever Scripture ascribes immortality or incorruptibility to humans it always refers:
 - o to the saved, never to the lost;
 - o to the body, never to a disembodied soul or spirit;
 - o to the Resurrection state, never to the present order
- In the end, the phrase "conditional immortality" is nothing but a shorthand way of saying that God is God and we are not; that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23); and that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Annihilationism



- From Latin *nihil* (nothing), annihilationism expresses the position of those who hold that some, if not all, human souls will cease to exist after death.
- B. B. Warfield observes three main forms of this view:
 - all human beings inevitably cease to exist altogether at death (materialist);
 - while human beings are naturally mortal, God imparts to the redeemed the gift of immortality and allows the rest of humanity to sink into nothingness (conditional immortality);
 - humankind, being created immortal, fulfills its destiny in salvation, while reprobates fall into nonexistence either through a direct act of God or through the corrosive effect of evil (annihilationism proper).
- The view of historic orthodoxy has always maintained both that human souls will eternally endure and that their destiny is irrevocably sealed at death.

Annihilationism



- It is freely granted that in all such passages life and immortality are represented as the privileged possession of the redeemed, but it is claimed that in these connections these terms do not represent merely continued existence, but rather connote existence in joyful fulfillment of humankind's high destiny in true fellowship with God (John 17:3).
- Cessation of existence, it is urged, is implied in various scriptural terms applied to the destiny of the wicked, such as death (Rom 6:23; James 5:20; Rev 20:14), destruction (Matt 7:13; 10:28; 1 Thess 1:9), and perishing (John 3:16).
- In the biblical record, those who spoke most about future punishment in its irrevocable finality are Jesus and the apostle John, the very ones who also represented most glowingly the supreme glory of God's love and the unshakable certainty of his ultimate triumph.

GracEmail—The Hope of Immortality



- **Someone asks the biblical basis for hoping to live forever, that is, of enjoying "immortality" or deathlessness.**

- According to the Bible, humans who will live forever will do so because God gives them immortality, not because they possess it already.
- The Bible says that only God possesses immortality -- that is, has it by his own nature (1 Tim. 6:16). By his own perfect life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection, Jesus Christ "conquered" Death and provided assurance to his people of life beyond the grave.
- Whenever Scripture mentions "immortality" in connection with human beings, three things are always true:
 - o immortality is always attributed to the saved, never to the lost;
 - o immortality always applies to the whole (embodied) person, never to a disembodied "soul" or "spirit"; and
 - o immortality is always God's gift in the Resurrection, never a characteristic of humans in their natural, created state. For examples, read Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 and 2 Timothy 1:10.

GracEmail—The Hope of Immortality



- **Someone asks the biblical basis for hoping to live forever, that is, of enjoying "immortality" or deathlessness.**

- Biblical scholars today generally acknowledge the pagan origins of the "immortal soul" concept. It sprang from Socrates and Plato, not from Moses or Jesus or Paul.
- The biblical hope for life after death is the resurrection of the body, not some "death-proof" substance inside human beings. That simple recognition, after 1,500 years of nonbiblical tradition, has finally freed evangelicals and other Christians to take at face value the Bible's clearest language about the ultimate destiny of those who persistently refuse to be saved -- that they finally will "die," "perish" and be "destroyed" in hell, forever (Rom. 6:23; John 3:16; 2 Thes. 1:9).

Questions for Discussion



1. What is the nature of man's immortality? Discuss Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:53-54; 1 Tim. 6:16.
2. What kind of resurrection body will Christians have? Discuss Matt. 22:30; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; 1 John 3:2.
3. Discuss the distinctions between traditional and conditional immortality.

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