



The Truth about Life after Death

by Alan Hayward

You have probably noticed that people don't like to look at unpleasant facts.

Take Arthur Smith as an example. One day he noticed a small, hard lump in his chest. He told his wife about it, and she felt it with the tips of her fingers.

"Arthur, you had better go and see the doctor", said Mrs. Smith. "This could be something serious".

"All right," said Arthur to his wife, "I'll go and see him as soon as I can. I can't go for a day or two — I'm too busy just now. Anyway, I'm not worried. It's probably only a bee sting."

But Arthur was not telling the truth. He had no intention of going to the doctor. He was scared to go. It occurred to him that the doctor might give him some bad news; the doctor might even say, "Mr. Smith, you need to go into hospital for an operation."

So Arthur Smith stayed away from the doctor. He refused to look at the facts.

Poor Arthur. A year later he collapsed in the market place, with blood trickling out of his mouth. A friend lifted him into the back of his car and took him to hospital.

There the doctor put his unconscious body on a table and removed his shirt. As soon as he examined Arthur's chest he guessed what was wrong. During the past year Arthur's little lump had grown into a big lump. The doctor frowned as he ran his fingers over Arthur's chest.

"Looks like cancer", he said. "I shall have to operate on this man's chest."

But when they opened him up, they found that cancer had spread all over Arthur's body. There was nothing the doctors could do for him. Within a week Arthur Smith was dead.

"What a pity that man didn't come to us a year ago", said a young doctor as he watched Arthur's dead body being taken away for burial. "We could have saved him, if only he had come to us when he first noticed that **lump**."

The Truth about the Soul

Because Arthur Smith was afraid to look at the facts about the lump in his chest, he lost his life. And if we refuse to look at certain facts about ourselves, we may lose our only hope of everlasting life!

The place where we find these facts is the Bible. This is the Book of Truth, the Word of God, and God wants us to look at His Book, the Bible, and to believe what it says. Some of the things it tells us are very pleasant, but unfortunately, it also tells us some very painful facts.

You will not like to accept these unpleasant facts. But if you are wise you will look at them, because you will never be able to understand the "Good News" of the Bible unless you first understand its "Bad News".

Perhaps you believe that there is something inside you called an "immortal soul", which will go on living when your body dies. Most Christian churches teach this. It is a very comforting thing to believe.

There is only one thing wrong with this happy thought.

It is not true!

The Bible mentions the soul several hundred times. But it never says that it is immortal — not once.

We can soon see the facts about the soul if we go back to the very beginning of the Bible. The first place where the Bible mentions the soul is in its first chapter:

"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and the fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." (Genesis 1:20)

No doubt you will say, "But there is nothing about the soul there." That's right, there

isn't — not in the English Bible.

But the Bible was not written in English. The Book of Genesis, like many other books of the Bible, was written in Hebrew, the ancient language of the Jews. And in the Hebrew Bible it does not say “let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath **life**”; it says, “let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath a **soul**.”

So the first souls that God created were not the souls of men and women. They were the souls of fishes.

A Poor Translation

Evidently the translators of the Hebrew Bible into our language did not want us to look at this fact. They covered it up with a poor translation.

But it is a fact, nevertheless. The word translated “life” in Genesis 1:20 is exactly the same word as is translated soul in **six hundred** other places. These include Psalm 23:3, “He restoreth my soul”, and Isaiah 55:3, “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

This same Hebrew word “soul” appears in three other verses in the first chapter of Genesis. In verse 21 it is translated “creature” and it refers to fishes, as it did in verse 20. In verse 24 it is again translated “creature”, but this time it is applied to animals. In verse 30 it is translated “life”, and in this place it refers to both animals and birds.

In chapter 2 it is applied to man for the first time. This verse tells us:

“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.**”
(Genesis 2:7)

There is no mention of any “immortal soul” here! A human body was made from dust.

“Breath of life” was put into its nostrils. And the result was a living man, a living soul.

Now we have a very important fact. According to the Bible, fishes are souls. So are animals. So are birds. **And so are men.**

That first human being was named Adam. God called him a soul, but not an immortal soul. God told him that if he disobeyed his Creator, he would die. This is what God said to Adam:

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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.**” (Genesis 2:16 & 17)

Notice that God did **not** say that if Adam sinned, “Your body will die, while your spirit lives on.” He said “**You** will die.” If he sinned, Adam himself was to die — all that there was of him.

Chapter 3 tells the sad story. Adam did sin, and God sentenced him to death. He said:

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for **dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.**” (Genesis 3:19)

Again, you will see that God did **not** say to him, “Your body is dust. Your body was taken from the ground. Your body will return to the ground.”

What God told him was, “**You** are dust. **You** were taken from the ground. **You** will go back to the ground.”

Is there anything in Genesis to suggest that, when Adam’s body went into the ground, his soul lived on and went to heaven? No! The Bible says no such thing. It teaches that Adam was wiped out of existence, as a punishment for his sin.

Facts about Death

We must not imagine that we are any different from Adam. A later book of the Bible tells us that we, too, die, just like Adam. This is because we, like Adam, are sinners.

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

As we read on through the Bible, we find many other verses that tell us the truth about death. Here are a few of them:

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

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; **in that very day his thoughts perish.**” (Psalm 146:3 & 4)

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.” (Ecclesiastes 3:19 & 20)

“For the living know that they shall die: but **the dead know not any thing**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished: neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 6)

“For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.” (Isaiah 38:18)

If we allow the Bible to teach us, we shall believe the facts about death. The Bible says that when we die we are dead — really dead, absolutely unconscious, like men in a deep deep sleep. This is not a pleasant thing to believe. But it is a fact. The Lord Jesus Christ said that death was like a sleep (John 11: 11-14). So did His apostle, Paul (1 Corinthians 15:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13).

What happens to a man's soul when he is asleep? Does it leave the body and go to heaven for a few hours? Of course not! Sometimes we might meet a man who claims that his soul travels about while he is asleep — but he is never able to prove it. Usually we think such people are slightly mad.

But there are also men who will tell you that your soul will go on living in another world, when your body is dead. Many men say this, including the ministers of many churches. What shall we think of them?

First of all, we must remember that they have no proof for what they say. It is a nice idea, but they cannot prove it to be true. And what is worse, their teaching contradicts the teaching of the Bible.

Let us therefore turn away from these false ideas. Let us believe the Bible, which tells us that death is just what it seems to be: the end of life.

And then we can go back to the Bible and ask a vital question Is there any hope that a dead man or woman can ever live again?

Facts about Resurrection

Jesus Christ had a friend called Lazarus. One day Lazarus died. So Jesus said to His disciples,

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.”
(John 11:11)

Jesus had to travel a long way to reach the burial place. By the time He arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days. The people were afraid to open the tomb where the body lay, because they knew it would already have begun to rot.

But Jesus made them open it. Then He spoke to the dead body in the tomb,

“Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43).

Immediately a great miracle occurred. The dead body of Lazarus came back to life. He stood up and walked out of the tomb.

This miracle showed, in a small way, what Jesus the Son of God is able to do. But a far greater miracle will occur when Jesus comes back to the earth again. This is what He said:

“I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were

dead, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25)

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave 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.” (John 5:28 & 29)

This is a wonderful promise. Jesus brought His dead friend, Lazarus, back to life again. And when He comes back to the earth, Jesus will bring all His dead friends back to life. He will do this even if they have been dead for hundreds, or thousands, of years.

When dead people are brought back to life by the Power of God, the Bible calls it “resurrection”. The promise of a great Day of Resurrection was first made long before Jesus was born. We find it in several books of the Old Testament. Here are extracts from two of them:

“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.” (Daniel 12:2)

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” (Isaiah 26:19)

When Jesus had finished His work upon earth, He was put to death by wicked men. But God raised Him to life again. Thus Jesus Himself experienced death, and conquered it by resurrection.

Then He went up to heaven. He is now waiting there until the time comes for Him to return to this earth and raise His dead followers from their graves. His apostle, Paul, spoke about this:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also the resurrection of the dead. 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.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

The Bible passage is every interesting. It says that all those “in Christ” — that is to say, all Christ’s true followers — will be brought to life again. But it clearly says that this will not happen until Christ’s second coming.

Facts about the Life to Come

So there is a life to come after all. It is not for everybody, but only for those who truly believe what Jesus taught, and who obey Him.

And it does not begin as soon as we die. It will only begin when Jesus comes back to the earth again, which He will do very soon.

But there really is a life to come, that you and I can share, if we want to. What will this life be like?

First, we know that this new life will go on for ever. It will never end. That is why several of the Bible passages quoted above spoke of “everlasting life”. Read them again, and see for yourself this wonderful fact.

Also, we know that this new life will be spent on earth. Here are two Bible passages that tell us so.

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and **we shall reign on the earth.**” (Revelation 5:9 & 10)

“Blessed are the meek: for **they shall inherit the earth.**” (Matthew 5:5)

The meek do not “inherit the earth” nowadays. The men who get to the top in the present world are usually proud and strong. But the meek certainly will inherit the earth in God’s New Age, when Jesus comes back to raise them from the dead and give them everlasting life.

In the Bible, this New Age is called the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ will be a great king, and the **whole world** will form His Kingdom. He will reign over the world from the city of Jerusalem, where His ancestor, the great king David, used to reign over the little nation of Israel.

Here are some of the passages in the Bible that say so:

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever’.” (Revelation 11:15)

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:31-33)

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13 & 14)

“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

Israel.” (Matthew 19:28)

When Jesus is its King, the world will be a far better place than it is today. Nobody will go hungry. People will not hurt each other. There will be no war. Everybody will be taught to serve God perfectly, and they will find great happiness in doing so.

Get yourself a Bible and read the following chapters. They will help you to see what a wonderful place the earth will be when Jesus comes again. Psalm 72; Isaiah 11; Isaiah 35; Isaiah 65:17-25; Micah 4:1-4; Revelation 21:1-8.

What we must do to gain everlasting life

Do you want to be raised from the dead when Jesus comes again? Do you want to be given immortality on that day, and to live for ever in perfect happiness, in God’s Kingdom upon the earth?

Of course you do! Who wouldn’t.

Well, then, you must do something about it. Most people will **not** receive this great blessing. Jesus warns us:

“Enter ye in at the strait (narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait (narrow) is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13, & 14)

The Bible tells us what we have to do. Unless we do three things we shall not go through that “narrow door” into God’s Everlasting Kingdom.

First of all, we must **believe** the teaching of the Bible. This teaching is called “the gospel”, which means “the good news”. God tells us that we cannot find salvation unless we believe it.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one **that** believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

Unfortunately, many churches have altered the gospel of the Bible. They have introduced false teaching of their own, such as the belief that we can go to heaven when we die.

It is not good enough to believe these half-true gospels. God wants us to believe the true gospel. He says we must believe the true teaching of the Bible, and nothing else. This is what the Bible says about people who try to change God’s gospel:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again,

If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6-9)

The second thing we must do is to be baptized. Many Bible passages tell us this. Here are two of them.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16)

“And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

Baptism is essential. But please do not try to be baptized too soon. Baptism is only meant for true believers. So true belief must come first; then baptism must follow.

But belief and baptism on their own are not enough. There is a third thing we must also do. We must also obey God’s commandments. We may not be strong enough to keep these perfectly. But we must try very hard to keep them. Unless we do so, God will not give us eternal life. Jesus said so:

“And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Matthew 19:16 & 17)

There are two kinds of commandment in the Bible. There are commandments that tell us what we must **not** do, and those that tell us what we must do.

Here are some of the “must not” commandments.

We must not steal, or cheat, or lie. We must not give or take bribes. We must not be proud. We must not strive to become rich. We must not get angry, or fight, or do harm to anybody. (Ephesians 4:25-31; Proverbs 17:23; 1 Peter 5:5; 1 Timothy 6:9 & 10; 2 Timothy 2:24).

We must not commit fornication or adultery. We must not take more than one wife, or put away one wife in order to take another wife. (Galatians 5:19-21; Mark 10:1-12).

And here are some of the commandments that tell us what we must do:

We must pray to God and read His Book, the Bible, every day. We must frequently meet together for worship, with people who share our beliefs. (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3: 14-17; Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:25).

We must be kind to everybody, and do good to those who need our help. We must tell other people what we believe, and teach them the wonderful message of the Bible. (James 2:8, 15 & 16; 1 John 3:14-17; 2 Timothy 4:2).

Happiness can be Yours

The life of a true Christian is a happy life. Because God made us, He knows what is good for us. His commandments are well worth keeping. If we break them, we shall not find the happiness we are looking for. Instead, we shall only bring sadness upon ourselves and our families.

But if we try to build our lives upon the teaching of God's Book, the Bible, we shall find satisfaction and happiness. We shall become part of a wonderful fellowship of true believers. We shall find that God will care for us and bless us, and help us to do His will.

And we shall know that we are travelling towards God's Kingdom, and everlasting life.

All this happiness can be yours, if you wish it. Why not begin today to study God's Book, and to pray that He will help you to find the way of life?

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