



MNI  
MAN'S NATURE



*"He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof is known no more" Psalm 103:14-16.*

One "key" to unlocking the true teachings of scripture is to understand what it reveals to us concerning human nature. If we do not grasp the proper scripture fundamentals relating to human nature, we will never understand the truth concerning the work and teaching of Christ, who came to open and show the way to attain to immortality, which is a promised gift of God.

The universal opinion and concept of human nature is that there is in it something that is undying. Something that will live on after the death of the body. The common term for this "something" is "soul", or "immortal soul".

We will see that while the words:

"immortal" and "soul"

are both found in the Bible, they are never once used together, or even in the same verse or chapter. In fact, "immortal" is found only once in all of scripture, and that is in relation to God (1 Timothy 1:17).

What, then, DOES the Bible say about the "soul"?

What is the scriptural definition of "soul"?

Let's look at the word "soul" in Strongs Concordance, where we will find that the original words from which it was translated was the Hebrew:

"nephesh" and the Greek "psuche".

Armed with this knowledge we can trace the terms "nephesh" and "psuche" in Strong's Hebrew and Greek concordances, which list together every occurrence of the original words in order. What is the point of such an exercise? We will confirm that nowhere in the whole of the Bible do we ever find such expressions as:

"never-dying soul"

"immortal soul"

"immortality of the soul".

Rather we will find that what is said about souls is always the very opposite.

We will find that the scriptures abound with references to the absolute mortality and brief existence of humankind. Bible usages of the word "soul," indisputably determine its basic meaning.

We find the word "soul" (Hebrew nephesh; Greek psuche) simply means a breathing creature, without any reference to how long it will exist.

#### **A) The Hebrew**

In Genesis 1 and 2, the original Hebrew words describing animals and humans are the SAME (chay nephesh). What is said of one is said also of the other.

For example:

*"God created ... every living creature (chay nephesh) that moveth" (Genesis 1:21).*

*"Let the earth bring forth the living creature (chay nephesh)" (Genesis 1:24).*

These verses are speaking exclusively of the animals, before man was created. The first 4 occurrences of nephesh (translated "creature" and "life") are applied to the animals. (Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 30)

Now please notice what is said concerning the creation of man:

*"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed (neshamah) into his nostrils the breath of life (neshamah chay), and man became a living soul (chay nephesh)". (Genesis 2:7).*

We see that exactly the same words are used to describe both animals and mankind... though translated respectively:

"living creature" and "living soul."

Both are living creatures, creatures of life. But nothing in the original Hebrew carries the idea of a creature of everlasting life. If it did, we would have to agree to the same condition for both men and animals. They are identical in basic physical constitution.

In Genesis 2:7, we are shown that Adam was formed of the dust of the ground; and when the breath of life entered his nostrils, HE (the inanimate dust form) "became a living creature," a creature of life. The dust-formed object itself became (not received!) a living soul or creature, just like all the rest of the animals.

The Bible tells us:

1) Souls can be hungry, and can be satisfied with food :

*"An idle soul (nephesh) shall suffer hunger" (Proverbs 19:15).*

*"They gave their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul (nephesh)" (Lamentations 1:11).*

2) Souls can go to the grave, and come up from the grave:

*"His soul (nephesh) draweth near unto the grave" (Job 33:22).*

*"He will deliver his soul (nephesh) from going into the pit (sheol is grave)" Job 33:28.*

*"Thou hast brought up my soul (nephesh) from the grave" (Psalm 30:3).*

3) This word "nephesh" occurs about 750 times.

It is rendered:

- "soul" 470 times,
- "life" 120 times,
- "person" 30 times.

It is applied to animals alone 22 times, and of men and animals together 7 times.  
It is also translated: man, person, self, beast, fish, creature, body, heart, appetite, etc.

4) It is never said to be immortal: always the very opposite!

It is over 300 times spoken of as being able:

- to die,
- naturally liable to death,
- being killed (32 times),
- actually dead (13 times),
- and going to the grave (13 times).

For example :

*"None can keep alive his own soul (nephesh)" (Psalm 22:29).*

*"Shall he deliver his soul (nephesh) from the hand of the grave?" (Psalm 89:48).*

*"He spared not their soul (nephesh) from death" (Psalm 78:50).*

Ezekiel says conclusively:

*"The soul (nephesh) that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).*

Leviticus 24:17-18 is very striking and revealing:

*"And he that killeth any man (nephesh) shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast (nephesh) shall make it good; beast (nephesh) for beast (nephesh)".*

5) And finally, the Bible speaks of souls as actually dead:

*"He shall come at no dead body (nephesh)" (Numbers 6:6).*

*"Neither go in to any dead body (nephesh)" (Leviticus 21:11).*

**B) The Greek**

And the New Testament picture is the same (where the Greek equivalent for "soul" is "psuche").

*"The third part of the creatures that were in the sea and had life (psuche), died" (Revelation 8:9).*

*"Every living soul (psuche) died in the sea" (Revelation 16:3).*

*"Men that hazarded their lives (psuche) for the Name of Jesus" (Acts 15:25).*

*"Neither count I my life (psuche) dear to myself" (Acts 20:24).*

*"For the work of Christ he was nigh to death, not regarding his life (psuche) (Philippians 2:30).*

To translate "psuche" by "immortal soul" in any of the above places would be wildly illogical. Paul makes it inescapably clear that a "living soul" is a "natural body" when he says:

*"There is a natural (psuchikon from psuche: soulish) body, and there is a spiritual (pneumatikon) body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul (psuche); the last Adam [Jesus] was made a quickening spirit (pneuma)" (1 Corinthians 15:44).*

The Scriptures show us clearly that, far from the common belief of man being an ever living portion of the divine essence, natural animal man, unguided by the commandments of God, is absolutely "nothing".

*"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing" (Daniel 4:35).*

*"Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away" (Psalm 144:4).*

*"What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).*

There is nothing anywhere in the Bible that makes a distinction between a man and his body, or indicates that a man can exist apart from his body.

We have seen that God made man (himself) of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and "HE (the man) became a living soul" or creature. The dust-formed being itself became a living creature. This certainly refers to the body formed out of the dust. God did not breathe into it a "living soul". That is not what it says. It says the breath of life, breathed in, made the dust-formed man a living soul.

Because of disobedience to God's law, Adam (this dust-formed man) was sentenced to return to the earth (Genesis 3:17-19):

*"Till thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust THOU art, and unto dust shalt THOU return" (v.19).*

The man himself was referred to as "thou":  
the conscious, guilty "thou".

Similarly Abraham said of himself:

*"I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27).*

Mankind dies as the animals of the field. In constitution they are both alike. We have seen that they were created alike, so we find they die in the same manner:

*"I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy ALL flesh wherein is the breath of life (ruach chaiyim)" Genesis 6:17.*

*"ALL flesh died that moved upon the earth: of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life on the dry land, died" (Genesis 7:21-22).*

Solomon adds the conclusive statement of God:

*"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 (ruach: spirit, same word). So that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast . . . all go to one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes 3:18-20).*

*"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (ruach, breath, animating power, that which was breathed in to make the dust-formed soul live) shall return to God Who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).*

This is God's own universal spirit, (see "What About My Spirit" below) and not a personal conscious entity that ascends to God at death. It is positively proven the same, as that said of the animals in Psalm 104 (see the whole context).

*"Things creeping innumerable, small and great beasts . . . all wait on Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season . . . Thou takest away their breath (ruach: spirit), they die and return to their dust" (vs. 25-29).*

In the book of Job we read:

*"If God set His heart upon man, if He gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh shall perish together, and MAN shall return again unto his dust" (Job 34:14-15).*

Here again, it is clear that the spirit withdrawn is God's, and it is man himself who in consequence returns to dust.

If it were true that man has an immortal soul and at death ascends up to be with God forever, this statement would lose all its force; because it would then mean that when God withdraws His Spirit, all flesh would not totally perish, and man would not totally return to dust in the absolute and final sense that the context of the passage requires.

In Solomon, we saw, said that:

*"man hath no pre-eminence above a beast"  
(as to his natural life and physical constitution).*

David also says:

*"Man, being in honor, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:12).*

*"Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish"  
(Psalm 49:20).*

#### WHAT ABOUT MY SPIRIT?

I was taught that a man was born with inherent mortality and that “third” part of his “triune” constitution was a personal conscious entity that ascended into heaven after death.

As we can see from above, this does not square with the scriptural record. It is a doctrine that came from greek mythology and pagan philosophy, but never belonged to Apostolic Christianity. Search and see. You will not find it in the Bible anywhere. (You can refer to our other resources for a more indepth look into this matter.)

For now, let’s look at one example where this doctrine seems to be supported.

Stephen's dying prayer (Acts 7:59):

*"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit".*

This is understood to mean that Stephen expected the Lord to receive his immortal soul. That this cannot be the meaning becomes clear on a consideration of the Scripture doctrine of "spirit".

Stephen's “pneuma”, spirit or breath, was not himself; it was merely the principle or energy that give him life, as it gives all other men and animals life. This principle does not constitute the man or the animal. It is necessary to give them existence, but it does not belong to them, except during the short term of their existence. Stephen's spirit was not Stephen, though essential to his existence. The individual Stephen consisted of that combination of power and organism scripturally defined as "body and soul and spirit". His spirit, not belonging to him, was God's and proceeded from God, as with the spirits of all flesh.

We read in Job 33:4:

*"The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life". So:*

*"If He (God) set His heart upon man-if He gather unto Himself HIS spirit, and HIS breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust".*

*(Job 34:14, 15)*

The spirit is indispensable as the basis of a living man, consisting of bodily organism. It is the life principle of all living creatures. When this life principle, emanating from God, is withdrawn, it reverts to its original owner, and the created being dies. This is the idea expressed in Solomon's words:

*"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God,*

*WHO GAVE IT." (Eccl. 12:7)*

But, why should Stephen be anxious about his spirit in this sense? It must be remembered that Stephen looked forward to a renewing of life at the resurrection. This was his hope. He hoped to

get his life back. Consequently, when he came to die, he trusted it to the keeping of the Saviour till that day, and, as the narrative adds:

"He fell asleep".

If Stephen's personality, expressed in the pronoun "he" refers to Stephen's spirit, and not to the bodily Stephen, then this statement would prove that the spirit fell asleep; and this is just what those who quote this passage deny.

If man is a mortal, whose being dissolves in death, and who, when dead, is really dead; I can then understand the need for resurrection, and the logic 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.

There is much more in God's word confirming this great biblical truth. My prayer is that you will look into these things and see if they be true or not.

Remember the words of the "pattern son":

"Things are hidden temporarily only as a means to revelation. For there is nothing hidden except to be revealed, nor is anything temporarily kept secret except in order that it may be made known.

If any man has ears to hear, let him be listening and let him perceive and comprehend" (Mark 4:22-23 amplified).

