



Does Mankind Possess A Soul?

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Does mankind possess a soul? There are some who say that mankind does not possess a spiritual component to his existence that will continue to exist after his earthly death. But, upon examination of the Scriptures, we learn of the fact that man is a dual-natured being. There is a physical element to man's existence. And, there is a spiritual element to man's existence. Let's investigate.

Genesis 1:26-27

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

The Scriptures do not *just* teach that mankind has been created by God with a physical existence. Instead, the Scriptures teach that God also gave mankind a spiritual element to his existence. Mankind has been created in the image of God! What image is that? What does this possibly help us to understand about the nature of man? Consider John 4:24 – and a statement Jesus makes about God's nature. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” “God is Spirit.” He is not a physical being with a physical body (although Jesus did exist for a short time in human form). Therefore, whenever the Genesis record says that man has been made in the image of God, this cannot refer to a physical resemblance. Instead, it must refer to the fact that mankind has been created with a spiritual element to his existence!

In fact, as we will continue to see, the Scriptures plainly demonstrate the truth that mankind has been created with a spiritual element (a soul) that will survive physical death and will continue to exist beyond this physical life on earth. However, before moving on to consider some other passages that further demonstrate this fact, look back at the Genesis 1 record of creation and observe that *only* mankind has been created with this spiritual element to his existence! You simply

never read about God creating any of the other physical things (i.e. plants and animals) with a spiritual element to their existence. It was only mankind who was created in the image of God – and was given dominion over all of the other physical things on this earth!

Luke 20:37-38

“But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

In this text, Jesus points to the burning bush passage in Exodus 3 to answer the question identified in Luke 20:27-33. The Sadducees (a sect of Jews who denied the resurrection and the existence of the spirit, see also Acts 23:8) asked Jesus a question concerning the resurrection. Their question involved a complicated scenario concerning a series of seven brothers, each taking the same woman as wife after a brother would die and bear no children. Then, they ask, “in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife.”

Jesus begins to answer their question by responding that marriage is a physical relationship that only exists here on this earth. After the resurrection, there will be no more marriage or giving in marriage – nor is there any more death. Then, Jesus makes reference (in verses 37-38) to the burning bush passage to prove that the dead are raised. He said that there is evidence that the dead are raised in the statement the Lord made to Moses – when He identified Himself as, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Now, Jesus said, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living! Therefore, whenever God claims to *be* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob years after these individuals had experienced physical death, this is proof that these individuals still continue to exist!

Luke 16:22-23

“So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

This passage finds itself in the context of Jesus' teaching concerning two individuals – a rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus. Jesus' teaching begins by describing how these two individuals lived very different physical lives. One man had all the things he desired to have; while the other man was full of sores and desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. However, Jesus' statement in verses 22 and 23 concerning these two individuals indicate that both men experienced physical death.

Then, please notice that both of these individuals continued to exist after the point of their physical deaths. The beggar (Lazarus) was “carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom” and the rich man found himself “in torments in Hades.” The text, then, goes on to record a conversation

between the rich man and Abraham, detailing the great torment the rich man was experiencing after his physical death. Therefore, this passage demonstrates the basic fact that there is something we will experience after death – that our souls do in fact survive physical death. The physical element was not the only part of their existence!

Luke 23:43

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

This passage comes in the context of Jesus’ crucifixion. At the time of His crucifixion, Jesus was crucified between two thieves. During this time, one of the two thieves demonstrated a penitent heart, rebuking the other thief who was blaspheming Jesus. He said, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we have received the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:40-41). Then, this man continued and said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42).

Then, Jesus told this man that he would be with Him in Paradise that day (verse 43). Now, from a physical perspective, all three of these men would die (as they were all hanging on their crosses, experiencing physical deaths). However, Jesus’ statement indicates that both the thief and Jesus would continue to exist beyond their physical deaths! There was more to their existence than just the physical existence. For Jesus and this penitent thief, their physical deaths marked the point at which they would go to Paradise.

2 Corinthians 5:1-8

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

Just prior to making these statements, Paul wrote concerning his great hope in that which is unseen and eternal (in 4:16-18). In that passage, he speaks of both the “outward man” and the “inward man.” The outward man was perishing due to the affliction he was experiencing and the natural aging process. However, his inward man was “being renewed day by day” as he was looking for the eternal things God has promised to reveal!

In this context, Paul makes some further observations to the Corinthians concerning his outward man and inward man (in 5:1-8). Paul plainly identifies a time when his physical existence (his “earthly house”) would be “destroyed.” He even references this physical existence as a “tent” (note that a tent is only a temporary structure). However, Paul does not begrudge the thought of this time when his physical existence would end. He does not say that physical death would be the end. Instead, he said that he groaned while in this “tent” – looking for the time when he could be further clothed with the heavenly body God has promised (see also 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)! Again, Paul is eagerly anticipating this time when he could be “absent from the body” and be “present with the Lord.” Clearly, Paul was looking forward to a continued spiritual existence after his physical death!

The Importance Of Man’s Soul

Each one of these passages help us to understand that the physical element to our existence is not all that God has created us to have. Instead, these passages all demonstrate that mankind continues to exist *somewhere* after our lives on earth come to an end. But, what should these important truths mean for us today?

(1) They have implications for how we live our physical lives. We should know that this earthly life is not all there is! We should know that we will all continue to exist *somewhere* after our earthly lives end. This, then, should cause us to evaluate whether there is any connection between the way in which we live our lives and where our souls will continue to exist. If so, we should desire to live in the way that will result in the best possible outcome. Therefore, the truths we have just established have the potential to completely transform the ways in which we choose to live our earthly lives!

(2) They have implications for what happens to us after we die. The truths we have been establishing also have great implications for us as we seek the answer to the question, “What happens after death?” We can know that we will not cease to exist at the point of physical death. Therefore, we can search for the truth about what God says *will* happen to us after we die.

Conclusion

Mankind *does* possess a soul. This soul *does* survive physical death. Not only do you need to recognize that you possess a soul. But, you need to recognize that your soul is your greatest possession – even greater than your earthly existence (see Matthew 16:26). Jesus said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

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