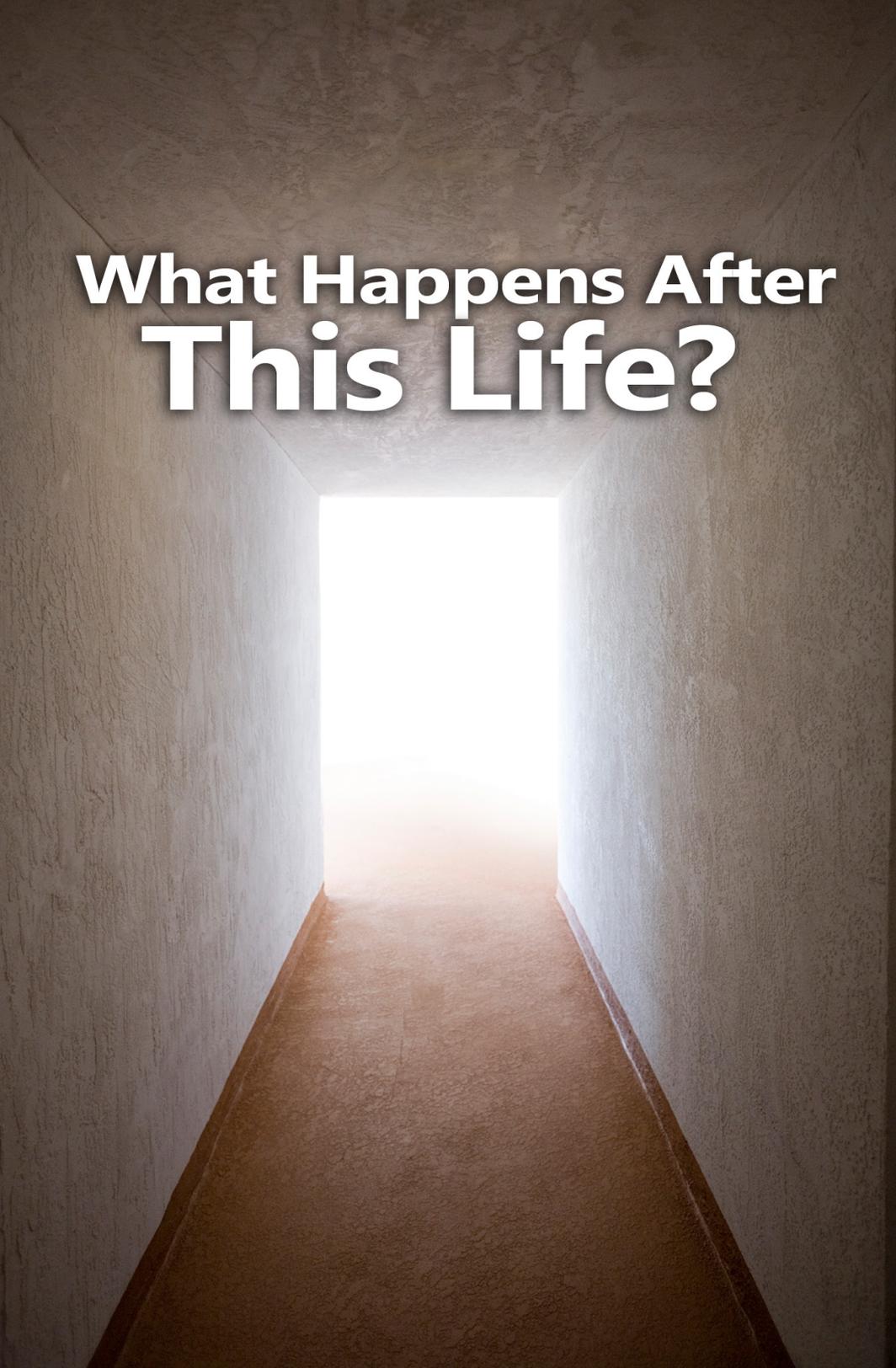


What Happens After This Life?



What Happens After This Life?

As Ed sat in his pew listening to his minister explain the afterlife, he was baffled as to why there was such a discrepancy between what he was hearing and what he was reading in the Bible. Is it possible that his minister and so many others were wrong about what follows death? he wondered.

Even though he did not fully comprehend the afterlife, he saw numerous contradictions when he compared the Scriptures with common teachings. If you're like Ed and are looking for the scriptural truth about what happens at death, and have found many discrepancies in nominal teachings, you are not alone.

The majority of what we hear today about the afterlife simply does not agree with Scripture. Many of these teachings are the result of Greek philosophy and centuries of tradition embraced by the church.

In this inquiry we will examine exactly what the Bible says about death, what it means to die, how long death lasts and where we go when we die. For example, does Scripture really say that the righteous go to heaven while the ignorant or sinners burn forever in a relentless hell-fire? You might be surprised by what your Heavenly Father reveals in His Word. Get out your Bible and let's begin an honest inquiry.

No Man Has Ascended

Possibly the most eye-opening discovery at the start of our investigation is what our Savior, Yahshua the Messiah plainly says in John 3:13, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man



which is in heaven.”

The Messiah Himself verifies that only He has been to heaven. The word “ascended” comes from the Greek *anabaino* and means “to go up” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*). *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* adds, “to rise, to mount, to be borne up, to spring up.”

Peter confirms this truth in his dynamic sermon on the day of Pentecost: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day...For David is not ascended into the heavens” (Acts 2:29, 34).

If anyone would have been found worthy of heaven it would have been David. After all, he had a heart after Yahweh’s own and is guaranteed the position of prince in the coming millennial Kingdom, Ezekiel 37:24. If the believer is immediately wafted off to heaven at death it would seem certain that David of all people would have ascended to heaven when he died. Based on what Peter and other Scriptures tell us, however, it never happened. David is still dead and awaiting the resurrection.

But what about Yahshua’s description of heavenly mansions in the book of John? Did He not promise that a heavenly paradise awaits the saved? Let’s investigate. We read in John 14:2-3, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

At first blush this passage seems to describe a heavenly paradise. However, as we often must do when digging out the truth, we need to look below the surface. Yahshua here is not speaking of places of eternal dwelling but of positions of authority in His governing family.

The word “house” is from the Greek *oikia*, which by extension refers to a family, and the word “mansions” is derived from the Greek root *meno*, meaning “to stay in a given place, state, relation or expectancy” (*Strong’s Concordance*). This passage would be better rendered, “In my Father’s [family] are many [positions]: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a [position] for you.” When the Messiah returns the saints will receive offices as priests in Yahweh’s Kingdom (Rev. 20:6) and will reign on the earth, not in heaven (Rev. 2:26; 5:10).

Spirit (Breath of Life) Returns to Yahweh

If we don’t go to heaven, where then do we go? We find the answer in two key passages. The first is from the pen of King David and speaks about the death of human beings: “Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust,” Psalm 104:29. The second is from his son, Solomon, “Then shall the dust return

to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto Elohim who gave it," Ecclesiastes 12:7.

When we die our bodies go to dust and our spirit goes back to Yahweh. Spirit is the Hebrew *ruach* and means, "wind; by resemblance breath," Strong's Hebrew Dictionary. The ***Brown Driver and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*** defines *ruach* as "spirit (used of the living, breathing being in man and animals); as gift, preserved by [Elohim], [Yahweh's] spirit, departing at death."

Ruach literally means a burst of air, and by extension, breath of life. It can also refer to spirit beings and to the Holy Spirit. In the context of the aforementioned passages, it represents the life that Yahweh our Father in heaven breathes into every living soul or human being, as can also be seen from the following:

- "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life [*ruach*], from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die," Genesis 6:17.
- "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life [*ruach*]," Genesis 7:15.
- "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath [*ruach*] of all mankind," Job 12:10.
- "Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath [*ruach*] in them," Jeremiah 51:17.
- "Thus saith my Sovereign Yahweh unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath [*ruach*] to enter into you, and ye shall live," Ezekiel 37:5.

To make a person come alive Yahweh breathes the breath of life into him or her, just as He did with the first humans, Genesis 2:7. According to Genesis 7:15 this breath of life is also given to animals so that they come alive. Unlike our life, however, the life essence of animals does not return to Yahweh but goes down to the earth, Ecclesiastes 3:21.

Ezekiel's statement in 37:5 is key. It's a reference to the second resurrection when Yahweh will revive His people Israel. Once he restores the fleshly body He will return the breath of life or *ruach* to each person in the second resurrection.

While the first resurrection is to spirit essence (1Cor. 15:42-44), the second resurrection is to physical life, meaning that those in it will be resurrected to flesh with the potential to live forever, the same potential Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden before their sin. This is likely the reason for the tree of life in New Jerusalem, Revelation 22:2. Those who eat of it will have perpetual life.

In the New Testament the parallel word that corresponds to the

Hebrew *ruach* is the Greek word *pneuma*. Strong's defines this word as, "a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively, a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) [Elohim], [Messiah's] spirit, the Holy Spirit." *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* further states, "*pneuma* NT:4151 primarily denotes "the wind" (akin to *pneo*, "to breathe, blow"); also "breath"; then, especially "the spirit," which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful...."

The essence of *ruach* and *pneuma* is defined as a current of air, i.e., wind, or breath. It is the breath of life. By extension, it also signifies angelic beings as well as the Holy Spirit.



This meaning is verified in Revelation 11:11, "And after three days and a half the Spirit [*pneuma*] of life from Elohim entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them."

At the end of the age, after the two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days, the Man of Sin will kill them and their dead bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three-and-a-half days. After this time, at the return of Yahshua the Messiah, the breath of life (*pneuma*) will be restored to them and they will stand on their feet as a witness against those who defied the will of Almighty Yahweh. Yahweh always has His representatives on earth through times of trial.

Perish the Thought

When we die our spirit or *ruach* returns to Yahweh. All our thoughts and awareness of our world come to a complete end, Ecclesiastes 12:7. There is no more consciousness at death.

Solomon in Ecclesiastes 9:5 wrote, “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, 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 forever in anything that is done under the sun.” King David confirmed this fact about death in Psalm 146:4: “His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”

When the *ruach* returns to Yahweh two things happen. First, our bodies return to the dust and second, our thoughts, which include all mental awareness, totally stop. The word “thoughts” is from the Hebrew *eshtonah* which literally means, “thinking” (Strong’s). The word “perish” is the Hebrew *abad*, a primitive root that means, “to wander away, i.e. lose oneself; by implication to perish or destroy” (Strong’s).

The Hebrew clearly shows that when our spirit returns to Yahweh that our ability to think stops; at death we fall into total unconsciousness. *Ruach* does not mean an “immortal soul” but rather the life-force that our Father gives to each living person. Through His prophet Yahweh stated, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” Ezekiel 18:4.

Scripture nowhere teaches that death is an automatic portal to another life. The following passages show that death is like sleep: “Now shall I sleep in the dust; and you shall seek me in the morning, but I shall not be,” Job 7:21. “For in death there is no remembrance of You: In the grave who shall give You thanks?” Psalm 6:5. “And he [Stephen] kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, ‘Master, lay not this sin to their charge.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep,” Acts 7:60. “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of Elohim, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption,” Acts 13:36.

Daniel shows that only at the resurrections do the dead come alive again: “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. Paul called the rising of the Messiah from the dead, “the firstfruits of them that slept,” 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23.

Immortality Belief: Relic from the Mysteries

If the immortality of the soul belief is not rooted in Scripture, where did it

originate and how did it end up in popular teachings?

The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, in the article, “Immortality of the Soul,” says, “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere taught in the Holy Scripture.... The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal



exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended.”

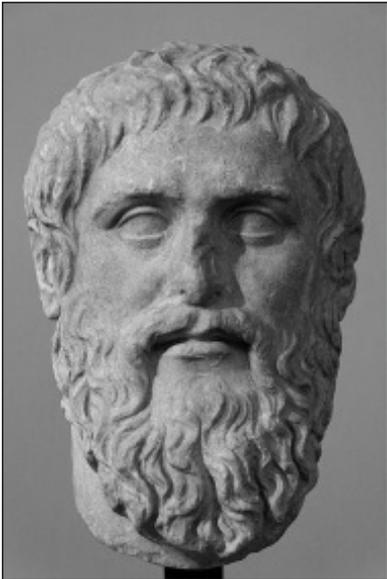
Like many of today’s popular teachings, belief in an immortal soul is a legacy of ancient pagan beliefs handed down through the millennia. According to Herodotus, a Greek historian who lived during the fifth century B.C.E., immortal soul beliefs trace directly back to the mystery religion of the Egyptians: “The Egyptians were the first that asserted that the soul of man is immortal...This opinion some among the Greeks have at different periods of time adopted as their own” (*Euterpe*, chapter 123).

The *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* corroborates, “Perhaps we may say that the idea of immortality assumed a more definite shape among the Egyptians, for they clearly recognized not only a dwelling-place of the dead, but also a future judgment. ‘Osiris, the beneficent god, judges the dead,’ and, ‘having weighed their heart in the scales of justice, he sends the wicked to regions of darkness, while

the just are sent to dwell with the god of light.’ The latter, we read on an inscription, ‘found favor before the great G-d; they dwell in glory, where they live a heavenly life; the bodies they have quitted will forever repose in their tombs, while they rejoice in the life of the supreme Gd.’ Immortality was thus plainly taught, although bound up with it was the idea of the preservation of the body, to which they attached great importance, as a condition of the soul’s continued life; and hence they built vast tombs, and embalmed their bodies, as if to last forever,” *Immortality*, p. 514. This same exhaustive source also explains the connection between immortality and the ancient eastern religions of Hinduism and Confucianism:

“Hindus – In the sacred books of Hindus called the Veda, ‘immortality of the soul, as well as personal immortality and personal responsibility after death, is clearly proclaimed...’

“Chinese – While it is true that Confucius himself did not expressly teach the immortality of the soul, nay, that he rather purposely seems to have avoided entering upon this subject at all...it is nevertheless implied in the worship which the Chinese pay to their ancestors...” p. 513.



Plato- philosopher in Classical Greece
427-347 BCE

Eventually these pagan beliefs were handed down to the Greeks, who then delivered them to Judaism and Christianity, forever changing the concept of the soul for western religion. According to Plato, a Greek philosopher and mathematician schooled by Socrates, the soul could not be destroyed. In Plato’s dialog *Phaedo* he states, “The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit of life’s opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, and since immortal, indestructible...”

Contrary to the beliefs of the pagan Plato, the soul is not immortal. As Ezekiel wrote, “...the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

Life Essence Is Called ‘Soul’

The word “soul” comes from the Hebrew *nephesh* and means “a breathing creature, i.e. animal of (abstractly) vitality; used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense (bodily or mental).” (Strong’s). It first

appears in Genesis 1:20 where we read, “And Elohim said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature [*nephesh*] that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

As we see, the word “soul” does not refer to an indestructible inner spirit, but to the life bestowed by Yahweh on His creation, including animals. The words “immortal” and “soul” never occur together anywhere in Scripture.

Following are more uses of *nephesh*:

- “And Yahweh Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul [*nephesh*],” Genesis 2:7.
- “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life [*nephesh*] of man,” Genesis 9:5.
- “And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons [*nephesh*], and take the goods to thyself,” Genesis 14:21.
- “And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life [*nephesh*] for life [*nephesh*],” Exodus 21:23.

Immortal Soul Arguments Answered

We'll now look at some of the popular passages often cited by advocates of the immortal soul belief. The first is in Genesis 35:18 where Rachel was giving birth: “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.”

Many will point to the phrase, “soul was in departing,” as indicating that the soul as an immortal, inner spirit flutters away to heaven at death. The problem is that the word “soul” or “*nephesh*” refers not to a separate being or essence but simply to the life of the person. When we die our life leaves us, just as it does with animals.

The *New International Version* (NIV) translates the phrase simply as “she breathed her last...” The same phrase is in the Jewish TANAKH. Both the NIV and the TANAKH refer to the life breath of Rachel, as do the *Modern Language Bible* and *The Torah: The Five Books of Moses* (“she breathed her last”).

In 1Kings 17:21 Elijah is restoring life to a child, translated “soul”: “And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto Yahweh, and said, O Yahweh my Elohim, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.” Soul here is *nephesh*.

Here is an incredible story of Yahweh's healing through the prophet Elijah (properly EliYah, meaning, “my El is Yah”). In response to the boy's death, EliYah prayed that Yahweh would restore the soul or life of the

child. In verse 22 we find that Yahweh answered his prayer: “And Yahweh heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” The word “soul” used here again is *nepshesh*, referring to the life force of the boy.

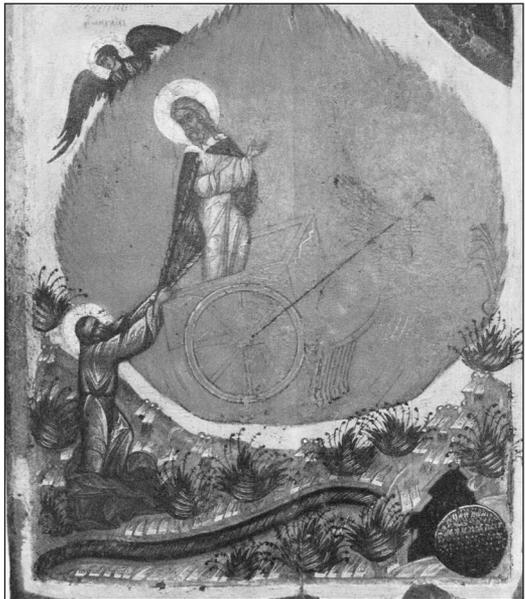
An immortal essence (“soul”) does not make an individual come to life, rather, the soul IS the life. The NIV reads, “...let this boy's life return to him.” The TANAKH reads, “...let this child's life return to his body.” From the NIV and Jewish TANAKH we see that the word “soul” or *nepshesh* is not referring to an immortal essence in a person, but simply to his or her life.

We use the same terminology when speaking of human life when we say, “many souls were lost” in a disaster.

Did Enoch and Elijah Head to Heaven?

Many read Hebrews 11:5 where Enoch was “translated that he should not see death” and believe he went to heaven (a clear contradiction of Yahshua's statement in John 3:13 that no one has gone to heaven). Later in verse 13 we find that Enoch died in faith, along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many others – and not of them has yet to receive the promise of everlasting life (“not having received the promises”).

The word “translated” here is the Greek *metatithemi* and simply means carried. Yahweh carried him to a different location on earth. It is the same word used in Acts 7:16 where Jacob died in Egypt and was carried to Sychem for burial. Similarly, after baptizing the eunuch Phillip was caught away by the Spirit, but was seen later at Azotus, 34 miles from Gaza. “Translated” is never used in Scripture to mean “was made immortal.”



16th century depiction of the prophet Elijah riding a flaming chariot across the sky in the Pskov Museum.

Yahweh mercifully took Enoch out of the social situation he was in to remove any opportunity to jeopardize his salvation. The verb tense is future conditional, meaning he was taken so he “would not die,” meaning

the judgment of the second death (John 8:51, 11:26). This also means that Enoch will be in the first resurrection at Yahshua's return, as he has not yet seen the promises.

Why did Yahweh do this for Enoch? Read the last part of the verse: "for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased Elohim." By his life Enoch showed himself to be a true follower of Yahweh and was blessed by this gracious act of Yahweh because of it.

Many assume Eliyah (Elijah) in 2 Kings 2:9-11 was taken up to heaven by a whirlwind. If that's true then why do we find him 10 years later back on earth writing a letter of chastisement to a king? (2Chronicles 21:12). Obviously he was still earthbound, writing to and warning Jehoram of Judah about the king's impending punishment.

The Bible speaks of three heavens: the air above us, outer space, and the place where Yahweh dwells. Whirlwinds exist only in the atmosphere surrounding the planet, the first heaven, and was the conveyance by which Eliyah went up, v. 2:11.

If Eliyah had gone to the third heaven to be with Yahweh, then why did Elisha consent to allow 50 sons of the prophets to search three days for him in the mountains and valleys? (2:17) They would never have done so if they, along with the Holy Spirit-directed Elisha, thought that Eliyah had gone to be with Yahweh.

The account in Matthew 17 of Moses and Eliyah on the Mount of Transfiguration with Yahshua also leads some to believe in an immortal soul. But in verse 9 Yahshua tells the three disciples who witnessed it that it was a "vision" (Greek *horamah*, meaning a supernaturally granted spectacle). This vision was used to accentuate Yahshua's teachings about immortality in the kingdom to come.

Rich Man Inflamed?

In Luke 16 is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Realize that this is but a story used indirectly to illustrate a point. Parables are rich with metaphor and by nature are a step removed from literal reality. Yahshua is talking about the Pharisees here, symbolized by the rich man who dressed and ate well.

These religious leaders know the truth, yet they reject it. Converted gentiles are represented by the beggar Lazarus, who lives by every morsel of truth given him and ultimately is rewarded for his willing obedience to what he learns.

In the allegory we find Lazarus dead and buried and carried by the angels into "Abraham's bosom." According to theologian John Lightfoot in speaking of death the Pharisees would say, "This day he sits in Abraham's

bosom” (*Commentary on the Gospels*, vol. 12, pp. 159-163). This unique expression means that he joined Abraham and his other deceased forefathers in the grave. See 1Kings 1:21; 2:10, 11:21. Abraham was not in heaven because later on Hebrews 11:13 distinctly tells us that Abraham “died in faith NOT having received the promises.”

Verses 22-23 in Luke 16 read, “...the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell [*hades*] he lifted up his eyes...” The Vulgate and Syriac versions exclude part of this verse and simply read, “and was buried in *hades*.” *Hades* is the grave. This fact is confirmed by the word “torments” in verse 23. Torments is *basanos* and means, “going to the bottom” of the grave.

Continuing in verse 24: “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

The rich man’s tongue is dry because of his intense anxiety at being shut out of salvation and he wants his tongue refreshed with a drop of water. If he were in hell fire he would have asked for a flood of water to put out the flames! A drop of water would do nothing to relieve the excruciation in an environment of burning sulphur and fiery brimstone. Furthermore, “tormented” has nothing to do with physical torture but relates to mental anguish. It means he was distressed, grieved (*odunaomai*, *Companion Bible* note).

Being that this is only a parable, Yahshua animates these dead men to prove a point – that the Pharisees (v. 19) will be shut out of the promises, Matthew 5:20.

The additional meaning of the parable is that repentance is impossible once we die. Death ends all possibilities to change our lives. Psalm 88:10 asks, “Will you show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise you?”

Wise King Solomon wrote: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest,” Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Let’s now consider a few notable passages in the New Testament.

What Yahshua said in Matthew 10:28 is one of the most frequently cited verses to support the immortal soul belief. It states, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,” KJV.

What did Yahshua mean by, “but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body...”? Was He saying that the body and soul were distinct, with the soul being immortal? To understand we must look at the Greek.

The word “body” here is the Greek *soma*. Strong’s defines it as “the body (as a sound whole), used in a very wide application, literally or figuratively.” The word “soul” comes from the Greek *psuche*. According to Strong’s this word is from 5594, *psucho*, meaning to breathe voluntarily. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew *nephesh*, or life force. Only Yahweh can destroy the body as well as terminate the life force that goes back to Him at death. He does this at the second death in the lake of fire (*gehenna*). There is no resurrection to life from *gehenna*. When we understand the Greek, our Savior is simply saying, “but rather fear him which is able to destroy both the breath, i.e., life, and body...” There’s nothing in this passage indicating the immortality of man’s soul. It is not immortal if it can be destroyed.

Sacrificing for the Faith

Before moving on from this passage let’s review. The Hebrew equivalents for Greek NT:5594, *psucho*, and NT:4151, *pneuma*, are OT:5315, *nephesh*, and OT:7307, *ruach*. Hebrew’s exact equivalents of these Greek words show how they were originally defined and used in the Old Testament, the foundation of the Scriptures.

We must also consider two other examples. The first is Revelation 6:9: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of Elohim, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Yahweh, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

This fifth seal of Revelation represents the martyrdom of the saints. Many will use this passage to support the immortal soul notion. They will point out that the souls here are crying out for retribution on their enemies.

The Bible often uses symbolism and metaphor. For example, in Genesis 4:10 Abel’s blood is personified as crying out. “And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.” Was Abel’s blood literally crying out from the ground? Of course not. This passage is just figurative speech, which is very common in the Hebrew language. Just as Abel’s blood symbolically cried out from the grave, we find the same type of speech here in Revelation, where the saints are symbolically calling out for Yahweh to avenge their deaths.

The intent of this passage was not to show that man is immortal,

but to confirm that those who die to Messiah will receive white robes representing eternal life in His coming Kingdom.

In Revelation 20:4 we find another example of this type of speech. It reads, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Yahshua, and for the word of Yahweh, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Messiah a thousand years.”

The word “souls” in this verse is from the Greek *psyche*, corresponding to the Hebrew *nephesh*. As we’ve seen, neither word refers to an immortal soul, but to the life and breath of individuals. (How do you behead an immortal soul?) The timing here is important. This isn’t referring to immortal souls in heaven, but to the future Kingdom on earth when the saints will rule with the Messiah as priests, Revelation 5:10.

Second Resurrection Is to Physical Life

Paul in 1Thessalonians 4:13-18 reveals that the second resurrection takes place at the Messiah’s Second Coming: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Yahshua died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Yahshua will Elohim bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of Yahweh, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Master shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Master himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of Elohim: and the dead in Messiah shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Master in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Master. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

This is the greatest promise we have as believers. When our Savior returns to the earth those in Messiah who died will rise first in this first resurrection, followed at that time by the righteous who are still alive. Death is not final; for those found worthy of Yahweh’s grace, death is but the beginning.

Imagine witnessing our Savior coming down from heaven with thousands of angels and seeing the saints coming forth from their graves and those already alive following them, to meet him in the clouds! This is the reward that awaits those found worthy. There’s no greater assurance than the promise of the resurrection for those who love our Father in heaven.

When Yahshua descends from heaven all will hear the shout of an archangel and the deafening trumpet blast of Yahweh. Contrary to popular belief, there will be no secret rapture but a visible return of our Savior.

More on the Order of the Resurrections

Paul further details the sequence of the resurrections in his first epistle to the Corinthians, “But now is Messiah risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits; afterward they that are Messiah’s at his coming,” 1Corinthians 15:20-23.

Yahshua was the first of the firstfruits to be resurrected, symbolic of the firstfruits of the barley harvest in the Old Testament offered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Yahshua’s resurrection depicted the firstfruits of a larger harvest of human souls in the New Testament.

Notice also the comparison between Adam and the Messiah. In Adam all died, but in Messiah all shall be made alive. Only by Yahshua can we achieve eternal salvation through His resurrection. Through His blood we find justification and the hope of everlasting life. If it were not for Yahshua the Messiah and His atoning blood, we would all be dead in our sins.

To share in the Messiah’s resurrection at His second coming we must first be baptized into His death: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yahshua Messiah were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection...” Romans 6:3-5.

When we are immersed into His Name we die to our old man and from that point onward our life or *nephesh* belongs to Him. This is why baptism into Yahshua’s Name is so important!

Kingdom Will Come to Earth

What happens next for those found worthy of the second resurrection? Revelation 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of Elohim and of Messiah, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Those in the first resurrection will rule as priests with the Messiah for

a millennium or thousand years. Imagine, at this time the saints will be changed from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible, and will then be with their Savior forever.

Notice that the second death will have no power over those in the first resurrection. As Israel was exempt from most of the plagues of Egypt, those in the first resurrection will not be in danger of the second death.

Do you comprehend the significance of this promise? Yahweh is guaranteeing everlasting life to all who will devote their lives to Him now! Those in the first resurrection will have already passed judgment and been granted immortality. They will be with the Messiah for eternity.

Where will the saints be in the millennial Kingdom? Many would say in heaven, but Scripture says otherwise. Revelation 5:10 confirms, “And hast made us unto our Elohim kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” The saints will reign under Yahshua and David on the earth during the future Kingdom.

The millennial Kingdom is a time of restoration. Along with the Messiah, the saints will be teaching Yahweh’s ways to those who survive the Great Tribulation: “And though Yahweh give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more, but your eyes shall see your teachers,” Isaiah 30:20.

But what about those who died never having the opportunity to learn and live the truth of their Heavenly Father? Are they forever doomed?

Second Resurrection Comes after the Millennium

John of Patmos provides a description of the second resurrection in Revelation 20:11-15, sometimes called the Great White Throne Judgment. It reads, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before Elohim; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The Great White Throne Judgment is for all mankind, excluding those who were found worthy of the first resurrection. Books will be opened for the judgment. While the Word doesn’t say what information these

books contain, we can safely assume that one contains a record of our lives. Another book is likely Yahweh's Word, the standard of judgment, which will be the Constitution in the coming Kingdom. At this time all of mankind will be judged from these books based on how they lived, or as we find in verse 13, their works.

Requirements of the First Resurrection

This message of Yahweh's Kingdom coming to earth is nonexistent in nearly all modern teachings. Most erroneously think we leave this world and go to heaven, but they don't know what they are supposed to do there. Many also believe that we are under grace alone, that grace overrides works and therefore they have no need of works. This is not the message we find in Scripture. Yahweh states that we will be judged according to our works, Revelation 2:23, Jeremiah 17:10. So where does that leave the "grace by faith alone" doctrine?

While salvation is based on our Father's grace (Rom. 6:23), we still have an obligation to obey the commandments to be found worthy of His grace. In the book of Jude, verse 4, we find this warning, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, wicked men, turning the grace of our Elohim into lasciviousness, and denying the only Sovereign Yahweh, and our Master Yahshua Messiah."

Yahweh's grace is not a license to continue in sin. Upon repentance we are to change our lives and abide by Yahweh's moral standards. This is accomplished by obedience to His commandments, 1John 2:3, Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14. Those who teach that the commandments are no longer obligatory are guilty of turning Yahweh's grace into lasciviousness (lawlessness).

What about those who were not law observant because of ignorance? Will they be given an opportunity for salvation? Those who lived a moral life based on what they understood will certainly receive grace in the judgment. Yahshua alludes to this in John 9:41 when He said "...If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

He also provides a second example in Matthew 11:23, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to the grave: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

While Yahweh's law is always present, His condemnation is not.

Yahweh doesn't hold to account actions done in ignorance. If we are indeed unaware of keeping certain commandments (e.g. the Sabbath, Feasts, Yahweh's Name, etc.), He overlooks that disobedience.

But we also find this principle in Acts 17:30, "And the times of this ignorance Elohim winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Notice that once we know the truth we must repent and follow that truth. Willful ignorance is unacceptable to our Father and Savior. Deliberate disobedience will be punished.

Traditions of Hellfire

We read earlier from Revelation 20, "And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire." The word *hades* is traditionally rendered "hell" and has been understood as a place of perpetual torment. The fact is, this belief is nowhere in the Bible but only in myth and man's traditions.

The current concept of hell developed from Greek influence, according to authors Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber in their book, *What Christians Believe—A Biblical and Historical Summary*.

"In the intertestamental period there were significant developments in eschatological themes. The first relates to the development of a compartmental view of *sheol*. When the righteous and the wicked die, they go to different places. This is to be contrasted with the Old Testament view that *sheol* is the place where both the righteous and wicked go. Under the growing influence of Greek concepts of a distinct body and soul, some Jews taught that after death 'the immortal and perishable soul, once detached from the ties of the flesh and thus freed from bondage, flies happily upwards' [quote from Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, II, VII.2]...On the other hand the wicked go to *sheol*, which is now identified with the Greek *hades*. This region of damnation is also called *gehenna*, a place of eternal fire (originally the old rubbish heap and a place of child sacrifice south of Mount Zion in Jerusalem). It was known as the Valley of Hinnom," pp. 423-424.

The current concept of hell as an ever-burning fire is completely missing from the Old and New testaments and arose only through pagan traditions of man. This belief was further propagated and solidified in the 14th century through the "Inferno," the prologue to Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. Scholars say Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy* as retribution against his political rivals, whose evils are featured in the work. He depicts *sheol* or *hades* as a place of fire and torment in the earth for those who do wrong during their lifetimes. Images of this epic-poem continue to influence New Testament believers today.

Sheol, Gehenna, and Hades Analyzed

While these words come from different languages, not one refers to an ever-burning hell fire in Scripture. Let's examine each one individually.

Sheol appears 66 times in the Old Testament and is rendered in the KJV as, "grave, hell and pit." *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines *sheol* as, "*Hades* or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates." Notice that Strong's defines this word as the "world of the dead." This "world" included both the righteous and the wicked, as shown in Genesis 37:35, "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave [Heb. *sheol*] unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." In this account Jacob is mourning the assumed death of his righteous son Joseph.

Gehenna refers to the Valley of Hinnom. It was a place where the Israelites burned their trash and sacrificed their children to Molech, an abominable practice abhorred by Almighty Yahweh. This word occurs 12 times in the New Testament and in every instance is rendered "hell" in the KJV. Strong's defines this word as, "...of Hebrew origin [OT:1516 .and OT:2011]; valley of (the son of) Hinnom; gehenna (or Ge-Hinnom), a valley of Jerusalem, used (figuratively) as a name for the place (or state) of



The Valley of Hinnom, 2007. This valley is mentioned five times in the Book of Jeremiah (7:31, 32 19:2, 6, 32:35) as the place where the people would "burn their sons and daughters in the fire" as part of the worship of Moloch. *Photo by Deror Avi*

everlasting punishment.” The Valley of Hinnon was not a place of perpetual torment, but one of total, eternal destruction. In other words, those who go to “hell” will reap the totality of Yahweh’s judgment. However, the concept of burning forever is foreign to Scripture.

Hades appears 11 times in the New Testament and means, “the place (state) of departed souls,” Strong’s. The ***Complete Word Study New Testament***, under its Lexical Aids, states that *hades*, “corresponds to *sheol* in the Old Testament,” and that, “both words have been inadequately translated in the KJV as hell.” According to ***Thayer’s Greek Lexicon***, in biblical Greek this word was associated with “Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. Usually *hades* is just the abode of the wicked, Luke 16:23; Rev.20:13,14; a very uncomfortable place.”

Keep in mind that this understanding developed through pagan Greek thought and philosophy. For that reason it’s essential that we interpret the word *hades* based on Scripture.

What About Eternal Fire?

You might be wondering, what about the references in Scripture to eternal fire? To the surprise of many, this phrase does not refer to an everlasting punishing. From the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah we learn that “eternal fire” simply refers to the finality of Yahweh’s judgment: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,” Jude 7.

From the ***Restoration Study Bible*** we see that the phrase “refers both to its ability to continue burning in the presence of sufficient fuel, as well as its lasting effects...” The latter explains the eternal nature of this punishment. It is not the fire that burns forever, but the punishment or sentence of judgment that remains forever. Sodom and Gomorrah no longer burn, but Yahweh’s judgment on them will be forever remembered.

Two additional examples are found in Jeremiah:

- “But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched,” Jeremiah 17:27.
- “Therefore thus saith my Sovereign Yahweh; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched,” Jeremiah 7:20.

These prophecies were fulfilled when Judah was conquered by

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. It says this fire would not be “quenched.” This word comes from the Hebrew *kabah*, a primitive root, meaning, “to expire or (causatively) to extinguish (fire, light, anger).” As with Sodom and Gomorrah, it is not referring to eternal fire, but to fire that no one shall put out until it has completely burned up its fuel, a comparison to the totality of Yahweh’s judgment.

Yahshua Was Dead and Never Visited the Fires of Hell

If hell or *hades* were a place of suffering for the wicked, why then do we find it used in reference to believers? For example in Acts 2:27, 31 we find that even Yahshua the Messiah was in hell: “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption...He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Messiah, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

If hell is a place of eternal torment for wrongdoing, why was Yahshua there? And if those who go there can’t possibly get out, why isn’t He still there? Church tradition says that Yahshua went to “hell” to preach to the wicked who were sent there, but Scripture is clear that for three days and three nights He was in the “heart of the earth,” a figure of speech that means the grave, Matthew 12:40.

Further verification is found in the context of verse 31, where Paul connects



“hell” with corruption or decay, a state associated only with the grave. If Yahshua did not die, but went to preach to the wretched in hell fire, then His sacrifice did not pay the death penalty that our sins require. If typical church beliefs about His visit to hell are correct, then He never actually died and we have no salvation.

The Apostle Paul in 1Corinthians 15:55 provides another example, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” The word “grave” here is derived from *hades*. Not only is this verse referring to the saints, those who will be found worthy of the first resurrection, but it also connects *hades* with total death.

Clearly, hell is not solely reserved for the wicked, and is not a place of continual torment in the Scriptures. It is simply the grave where all the dead remain until the resurrection.

Heavenly Paradise Coming to Earth

Following the Great White Throne Judgment of the second resurrection, John of Patmos provides an image that could be described only as, “heavenly paradise on earth.” He states, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from Elohim out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of Elohim is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and Yahweh himself shall be with them, and be their Elohim. And Elohim shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away,” Revelation 21:1-4.

For those found worthy of Yahweh’s calling, this is the prize. After the Millennium (and the second death), Yahweh our Father will bring His holy city, New Jerusalem, to earth. In His Kingdom there will be no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, and no more pain.

Imagine such a paradise! Yahweh Himself will finally make His abode with men. He will be their Mighty One and they shall be His people. That has been His desire and plan for mankind from the beginning.

John further describes this awe-inspiring city: “And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from Elohim, Having the glory of Elohim: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb... And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein : for Yahweh El Shaddai and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of Elohim did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof,” Revelation 21:10-14, 18-23.

The description of this city is breathtaking. Imagine walls of jasper and streets of transparent gold! Rulership in this Kingdom on earth awaits those who devote their lives now to our Father Yahweh and to His Son, Yahshua the Messiah, Revelation 2:26.

Our lives are transitory; the life to come is eternal, full of happiness and blessings beyond measure. There will be no end to Yahweh’s Kingdom. Regardless of our current trials in this world, we have hope for a wonderful promise ahead if we prove faithful to the end.

Time to Make a Critical Decision

Teaching that the soul is not immortal, the Bible presents a serious choice for us. Scripture speaks of two resurrections. How we live now will determine whether we receive everlasting life in the first resurrection or face judgment in the second resurrection. Daniel 12:2 provides one of the first glimpses in the Word of the resurrection: “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 distinguishes the two resurrections here.

Only two possibilities exist in the second resurrection. We will either be raised to everlasting life or be condemned to everlasting contempt. Our fate will be determined by the lives we live now. Many view death as a permanent state, but death is only a temporary type of sleep as we lose awareness or consciousness in the grave.

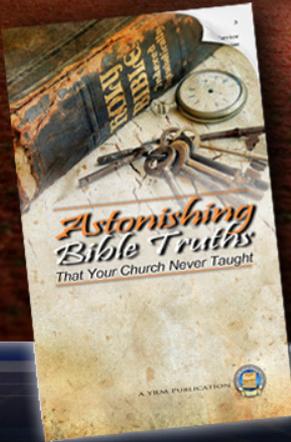
If we strive to live a moral, obedient life according to our Father’s Word, we will have an opportunity for everlasting life. Those, however, who know and understand and yet through their own rebellion refuse to obey, will find themselves in an unfavorable condition.

Paul admonished the assembly at Philippi, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” Philippians 2:12.

That message is the same today.

Truth is *often*
stranger than fiction!

Astonishing Bible Truths
That Your Church Never Taught



FREE booklet, write or request online

Yahweh's Restoration Ministry
PO Box 463
Holts Summit, MO 65043

www.yirm.org

Call and order today!

1-573-896-1000