Resurrection or immortality of the soul?
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**Resurrection or life immediately after death?**

In this as well as in a series of other articles, we will touch a very serious topic that has been the source of long discussions and many questions. This topic refers to what happens after death and it will be approached from the point of view of the Bible, which we honestly believe that, being what God has said, is the only source that can give us reliable information.

**1. Death: God does not want us ignorant**

Starting the research on our subject, we will go to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 where we read:

1 Thessalonians 4:13
"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep..."

As it is obvious from this passage, God does not want us ignorant about those "who have fallen asleep" i.e. the dead ones. In contrast, He wants us informed, which in turn means that He has also provided all the information that is necessary for the elimination of any ignorance or misunderstanding. The only that is needed from our part to receive this information is to simply continue reading on the same passage. Really, verses 13-18 of the same chapter tell us:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those that sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first: Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

As it can be seen, this passage refers to the "dead in Christ" or those that "sleep in Jesus" i.e. to those that died believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Though these are only a category of the total of the dead ones, the conclusions drawn from the above passage regarding the state of the dead have general application.1

Moving now to what the above passage tells us, i.e. to the information that God gave us, to eliminate our ignorance and misunderstanding about the dead ones, we can see that no reference is made to a supposed life immediately after death. In contrast, what this passage clearly points out is the resurrection as the ONLY exit from the death state and the only way to enter again into life. Really according to the above passage, the dead in Christ will be raised in the day of the Lord's coming, while the alive Christians will be caught up that day with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Really, as we will see though there are differences regarding the time that each category of dead (believers, unbelievers, people lived under other administrations) will be raised as well as what will follow these resurrections (eternal life, condemnation, judgment according to the law) there is no difference regarding the present state of the dead that compose these categories.
heaven to meet the Lord in the air. "And thus we (all Christians, dead and alive) SHALL ever be with the Lord", which in turn means that since we SHALL (future tense) be with the Lord, no dead is with the Lord now nor if we will die, will we be immediately with the Lord. Instead, we SHALL be with him at his coming.

Apart from the above passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 that was given to us so that we may be fully aware about the dead in Christ, God's Word contains more passages that corroborate what 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 told us. Such a passage is 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, where starting from verses 20-22, we read:

1 Corinthians 15:20-22
"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ ALL SHALL be made alive."

From this passage two things are made clear. The first is that ALL will be made alive, though, as verse 23 that follow tells us, "every man in his own order" i.e. not all simultaneously. Apart from this, something else that the above passage makes also clear is that the dead SHALL be made alive, which in turn means that they are NOT alive now, and thus the doctrine that teaches the contrary i.e. that they are alive now, cannot be correct. When now shall the dead be made alive is something that is answered In verses 23-24 of the same chapter, where we read:

1 Corinthians 15:23-24
"But each one **in his own order**: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those **who are** Christ's at his coming. Then *comes* the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father; when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power."

The first - and the only one till now - that was raised from the dead is Christ. However, his resurrection will not be unique forever, for in the future it will be followed: in a first place by the resurrection of those that are Christ's i.e. those that died believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and then, by the resurrection of the remaining ones. The time that the first of these resurrections, i.e. the resurrection of those that are Christ's, will happen is defined as the time of Christ's coming, which is what 1 Thessalonians 4 also told us. From this, it can be concluded that since, according to the "timetable" of the above passage, the dead in Christ will be the first that will be made alive and since the day that this will happen will be the day of Christ's coming, which is still future, apart from the Lord Jesus, there is NO dead that is alive now. In contrast, all SHALL be made alive in the future, and each one in his own order.

2. **"With what body will the dead come"?**

The Bible not only tells us that those that died believing in Christ will be raised in the day of his coming, but it also tells us with what body they will be raised. Really, starting from 1 Corinthians 15:35-41 we read:

**1 Corinthians 15:35-41**

"But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And **with what body do they come**? Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what
you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but bare grain - perhaps wheat, or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and terrestrial bodies: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory."

The reason that Paul makes all these references to the seed that grows to something different, to a plant, and to the differences among bodies and "fleshes" etc. is shown in the beginning of the passage, where we are explicitly told that all these are said with reference to "how the dead are raised up, and with what body they come", as well as in verse 42 where we read:

1 Corinthians 15:42
"So also is the resurrection of the dead....."

The phrase "so also" connects what precedes it (verses 35-41) with what follows it ("the resurrection of the dead"). In other words, as a seed, though it "dies" it gives a whole plant, so also though this earthly body will die, another body will succeed it in the resurrection. And as the bodies are not all the same, so also the resurrected body will not be the same with this earthly body. Moreover, as the celestial and the terrestrial bodies differ in glory so also the resurrection body will differ from the earthly body. As verses 42-45 tell us:

1 Corinthians 15:42-45
"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: **It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.** And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit."

In this passage, the phrase "natural body" is a translation of the Greek phrase "σώμα ψυχικόν" (soma psuchikon), where the word "psuchikon" is the adjective form of the noun "psuche" that means "soul". Thus, "soma psuchikon" means "soul body" i.e. a body whose life is based on soul\(^2\). This is the body that we have now, the body that "is sown" (1 Corinthians 15:44). However, this body is inappropriate for the eternal life that God has promised us. Really as 1 Corinthians 15:50 tells us:

**1 Corinthians 15:50**

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption."

This body of flesh and blood, being corruptible, is unable to inherit incorruption, and thus it has to be changed. As verses 53-55 say:

**1 Corinthians 15:53-55**

"this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal **must** put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this

\(^2\) For more about soul, see the article: [Body, soul and spirit](#).
mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Only when the mortal and corruptible body we have now will put on immortality and incorruption, death will have been swallowed up in victory. The reason is that the new body - the body that is raised (1 Corinthians 15:44) - that will take the place of the present corruptible soul body - the body that is sown (1 Corinthians 15:44) - will be incorruptible, death will have no power over it. It will not be a soul body i.e. a body whose life is based on soul, but a spiritual body i.e. a body with the same properties and abilities as the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only one that till now has a body like this. As verses 44-49 of 1 Corinthians 15 tell us:

1 Corinthians 15:44-49

"There is a natural body (soma psuchikon), and there is a spiritual body (soma pneumatikon). And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, earthly: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As was the earthly, so also are they that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, so also are they that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Any man that has passed from the face of the earth, Adam and Christ included, had a soul body. However, Jesus is the only one that went further than this, for though he died, he didn't remain dead as all the others, but he was raised, after three days and three nights, with an incorruptible, spiritual, body.
Thus, the spiritual body is not a theoretical concept, but a reality since it is the body that the Lord Jesus Christ has now. And as we now wear Adam's "uniform", the soul body - "the image of the earthly" - so one day, the day of Christ's coming, we will also wear his "uniform", the spiritual body, - "the image of the heavenly". When will this happen is something that is answered in verses 51-52 of the same chapter of 1 Corinthians, where we read:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52
"Behold, I tell you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

And as 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 also told us:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18
"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first: Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

3 Since after his resurrection Jesus Christ has a spiritual body, a reasonable way to get more information about the properties and abilities of this body would be through a study of the post-resurrection gospel references. By doing this we can see that: the spiritual body is a body with supernatural abilities since the raised Christ could automatically and suddenly appear and disappear (see Luke 24:31, 37). Moreover, it is a body with variable form (Mark 16:12), though it has both flesh and bones and it can be touched, i.e. it is a literal body (Luke 24:39).
Concluding therefore, from what we have seen by now:

God does not want us ignorant about those that died and for this reason, He has supplied in His Word all the relevant information for our benefit. Thus, according to this information, Christ is the first and the only one that though he died he is alive NOW, as God raised him from the dead. As 1 Corinthians 15:23 characteristically told us, he is the FIRSTfruits, the FIRST one. Following him, the next that will be made alive will be those that are Christ's i.e. the dead Christians, while in a later time the remaining dead will follow (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Regarding now the time that the dead in Christ will be made alive, the Word defines it as the time of the Lord's coming. In turn, this means that since the Lord's coming is still a future event, the dead can by no means be alive now. Instead, they SHALL be made alive that day. However, this will not be the only event that will happen that day, as along with the raising of the dead Christians, those Christians that will be alive that day will be caught up with the raised ones in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). And as 1 Thessalonians 4:17 tells us: "AND THUS WE (all Christians) SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD".

Regarding now the body that the dead will have that day, this will be what the Bible calls "spiritual body" i.e. an incorruptible, immortal body like the body that Jesus Christ has now. This will also be the body that the alive Christians that will be caught up in the clouds that day will get, in substitution of the present corruptible soul body. According to the Word, all this will take just "a twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52), and can happen anytime, even in the next moment. The exact time is not something that God has revealed in His Word and
therefore no-one can know it (see 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, Mark 13:32, 2 Peter 3:4-13)

3. Some further analysis regarding the dead

Despite the fact that the Word of God states very clearly the truth about the dead ones, a look at what most Christians believe shows great differences. Really, for many Christians when one dies his soul continues to live and after it is judged, it goes to heaven where it is with the Lord and its loved ones, having full consciousness and praising the Lord in a blissful state. Thus, according to this "common view", death is actually a friend by which we obtain a better life in "the other side". A comparison of this view to what we saw that God revealed for our benefit, makes obvious that it is not coming from the Bible. However, apart from the passages we have seen by now, the Word contains even more passages that make the wrong of the "common view" and its claims more than evident. Below, the main claims of this view will be examined and put against the Word of God

3.1. Is heaven the place where the dead go after death?

As we have already seen, the first group of dead that will go to heaven will be the raised Christians, in the day of the Lord's coming. From this, it can be easily concluded that no dead is in heaven now - apart of course from the raised Christ - and no-one goes there after his death. Where therefore do the dead go after death? The answer that the Bible gives is simply the grave, as this is the

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4 For the examination of what the Bible defines as soul, and the relative claim of "soul's immortality" the reader is referred to appendix 1 of this article.
meaning of the words “Sheol” and "Hades” that the Bible uses to denote the place of the dead. A complete understanding of the characteristics of the place of the dead, the grave, can be obtained by a word study of these two words. For this purpose the part “Occurrences of the words "Sheol" and "Hades" in the Bible” contains a complete list of their occurrences in the Bible.

3.2 Do the dead have consciousness and knowledge?

Another claim of tradition is that after death, the dead continue living, having full knowledge and consciousness and helping the living ones. Again, from what God told us so that we may no longer be ignorant it is obvious that a claim like this cannot be right. Really, according to what we saw, the dead are not alive now which in turn means that they cannot do things that can be assigned to and characterize the living ones only. Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 9 truly leaves no space for any different opinion. Thus there we read:

Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 9

"But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living KNOW that they will die; BUT THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; NEVERMORE WILL THEY HAVE A SHARE IN ANYTHING DONE UNDER THE SUN. ........ Whatever your hand finds top do, do it with your might FOR THERE IS NO WORK OR DEVICE OR KNOWLEDGE OR WISDOM IN THE GRAVE (Hebrew: Sheol) WHERE YOU ARE GOING."
As it is obvious from this passage, the dead are not conscious, and "nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun" i.e. in anything done in life. This not only refutes the claim of consciousness and knowledge after death but it also refutes the claim of many denominations that "holy" dead men appeared to other "holy" men and spoke to them, or that such persons as Mary hear and answer prayers. As we saw, according to the Bible, with the exception of the raised Christ there is no man that died and is alive now. Thus there is no dead that can appear to alive people or hear and answer prayers for, being dead, he has no consciousness and cannot "have a share in anything done under the sun."

3.3 Do the dead praise God?

Another claim of tradition regarding the dead, is that when one dies he goes to heaven where he praises God. Though from the examination of the information that God gave us so that we may be informed and not ignorant, it is obvious that this claim is again false, as the dead are neither in heaven nor they are alive so that they can praise, the Word answers this claim directly as well. Thus Psalms 6:5 tells us:

Psalms 6:5

"For in death there is no remembrance of You [God]. In the grave [Hebrew: Sheol] who shall give you thanks?"

Contrary to the tradition's ideas, the Word makes clear that "in death there is NO remembrance" of God. In Sheol, in the grave, no one will give Him thanks for no one is alive there so that he can do that. In contrast, it is the LIVING and
only the living that will praise God and give Him thanks. Really, Isaiah 38:18-19 tells us:

Isaiah 38:18-19
"For SHEOL CANNOT THANK YOU [God], DEATH CANNOT PRAISE YOU; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. THE LIVING, THE LIVING MAN, HE SHALL PRAISE YOU...."

It is the living and not the dead that will thank and glorify God. It is now that we will thank Him and praise Him and not when we will die.

3.4 Is death a friend sent by God?

In addition to the above, another claim of tradition is that death is a friend sent by God to bring us closer to Him. Again, what we have seen in parts 1 and 2, is enough to show that this claim is again false. Really, if death was a friend sent by God then there would be no reason for God to cancel its effects with the resurrection. This shows that death cannot be a friend, as tradition supports. Really, in 1 Corinthians 15:26 we read:

1 Corinthians 15:26
"The last ENEMY that will be destroyed is death"

Death is not a friend, as many present it, but an enemy and as such it will be destroyed⁵. From this we can additionally conclude that death being an enemy

⁵ See Revelation 20:14 for the exact record of its destruction.
that God will destroy, cannot have God as originator. Who is then the real originator of death? The answer is given in Hebrews 2:14 where we read:

Hebrews 2:14
"He himself [Jesus] likewise shared in the same that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death THAT IS THE DEVIL"

It is the devil therefore, and not God, who is the master of death. As John 8:44 characteristically tells us:

John 8:44
"You [He means the Jews with whom he was speaking] are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He [the devil] was murderer from the beginning"

Devil was a murderer from the beginning. In contrast, God not only He never desired death, but working to exactly the opposite direction, supplied a complete solution to the death problem. What is this solution? The believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Really as Jesus said in John 11:25

John 11:25
"Jesus said to her, "I'm the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live"

When shall he live? We have already seen it: in the day of the coming of the Lord when "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52).
4. Conclusion

In this article, we studied the subject of what happens after death. As we saw, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ that was raised from the dead, there is no other dead that is alive now. The next ones that will be made alive, will be those that are Christ's i.e. the dead Christians, in the day of the Lord's coming. The body they will have that day, will not be a soul body, like the one they used to have up to their death, but a spiritual body, like the body that the Lord Jesus has now. The resurrection of the dead Christians will be followed by the catching up of those Christians that will be alive that day, and whose body will also be changed from soul to spiritual. After all this, "WE [all Christians, dead and alive] SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Having examined what the Bible says about the dead, we moved on and examined some common claims of tradition in the light of what God's Word says. Thus, we saw that the dead:

i) do not go to heaven but to the grave (Sheol in Hebrew, Hades in Greek).

ii) have no consciousness and no share to what happens in life

iii) do not praise God neither give Him thanks.

Moreover, we saw that:

iv) death is not a friend that brings us nearer to God, but an enemy that will be destroyed and that

iv) it does not have God as originator but the devil.

From all the above, it should be clear that death is not a hope that as Christians we should have. Instead, our hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus
Christ, by which, if we are dead we will be risen, and if we are alive will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). As Christians therefore, we should not wait for the day of our death but for the day of the Lord's coming. As Philippians 3:20-21 characteristically tells us:

Philippians 3:20-21

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body [the soul body] that it may be conformed to his glorious body [the spiritual body], according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself."

May we therefore open our ears and hearts not to the false "comfort" of the religion but to the true comfort of the Word, so that we may wait not for the day of the miserable event of death but for the day of the glorious coming of the Lord, in which our present corruptible soul body will be transformed "that it may be conformed to his glorious body" and after which "we shall always be with the Lord".
The origins of the doctrine of the “immortality of the soul”

We have seen in the article: “Resurrection or life immediately after the death?” that the Bible clearly and unanimously presents the dead as sleeping and having no consciousness. Just to give again some of the related passages:

Daniel 12:2 says:

“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.”

Everlasting life starts not with death but with the resurrection! Till then those that have died are presented as “sleeping in the dust of the earth”. See that God did not tell Daniel “and many of them whose souls are now in heaven”.

Same also with Paul: when speaking to the Thessalonians about the dead and the hope we have in the resurrection he spoke about those “sleeping”: In every verse of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16 he mentions the dead. See the terms that he uses:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-16

“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 Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which
are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”

Paul’s hope, the hope that God gave to us in his Word has only one name: resurrection. Sometime between now and the resurrection some of us, perhaps all (depending on when the Lord will come – this time nobody knows), will die. We will not then enter into a blissful state in heaven or in paradise. Instead we will be sleeping. Where? In the dust of the ground, or as it is usually called in the Word “Sheol” or “Hades”, the gravedom). This is the simple and easy to grasp truth of the Word of God.

**Immortality of the soul: the common belief vs. the Bible**

The truth that the dead are now sleeping and will be made alive in the resurrection is unfortunately not what most Christians believe and which can be summarized as follows:

“A person is composed by body and soul. The body is the physical flesh-and-blood "shell” that works as a house for the soul. The soul is the nonmaterial part, the mind the feelings etc. At death the soul leaves the body, and continues to live consciously forever in heaven or hell.”

In the article “body, soul and spirit” we have dealt with the soul and what exactly it is. Perhaps there is no better summary to the meaning of the respective Hebrew word (“nephesh”), translated as “soul” in the English Bible, than the one given by Vine in his dictionary:
“Nephesh: “the essence of life, the act of breathing, taking breath ... The problem with the English term 'soul' is that no actual equivalent of the term or the idea behind it is represented in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination or opposition of the 'body' and 'soul' which are really Greek and Latin in origin” (Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 1985, p. 237-238, emphasis added).

“Nephesh” (or “Psuchi” in the Greek New Testament), soul, is, according to the Word of God simply the breath, the life. Genesis 2:7 demonstrates this truth very clearly:

**Genesis 2:7**

“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 [“nephesh” in Hebrew].”

See that the Word does not speak about soul as something separate from the body. “Man became a living soul”. Everyone of us that breaths today is a living soul. When we will have breathed our last, we will no longer be living souls. We would be sleeping, having no consciousness, exactly as during deep sleep people have no consciousness.

If we adopt the definition the Word of God gives to soul and not the one of the “Greek and Latin in origin”, as Vine calls it, we will not then have a problem when we realize that the animals also have soul:

**Genesis 1:20-21**
"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature [nephesh, soul] that has life [nephesh, soul] and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature [“nephesh”, soul, so also in the MKJV and others] that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good"

and Genesis 1:29-30

"And God said "Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yield seed; to you it shall be for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is a living soul [nephesh in Hebrew] I have given every green herb for meat:" and it was so."

There is obviously nothing metaphysic in soul. Whatever breathes, man or animal, is a living soul. Where then does the belief of the so called “immortal soul” come from? This is something we will deal with next.

**Immortality of the soul: a platonic belief**

Concerning the origins of the idea of the immortality of the soul, Vine already gave us some hinds above: this belief comes from Greek philosophy, expounded especially by two of the chief Greek Philosophers: Plato and Socrates. Plato, though not the first to assert the doctrine of the immortal soul, he was definitely the most eloquent one. As Werner Jaeger of Harvard University says:

“*The immortality of man was one of the foundational creeds of the philosophical religion of Platonism* that was in part adopted by the Christian church” (Werner

As The Catholic Encyclopedia (Topic: the platonic school) also informs us:

“The great majority of the Christian philosophers down to St. Augustine were Platonists.”

What did then Plato believe about the soul? Plato was a disciple of another great Greek philosopher, Socrates. Plato’s work “Phaedo” is a dialogue which depicts the death of Socrates. The dialogue supposedly took place on the last day of Socrates, before being executed by drinking hemlock. As Wikipedia says: “one of the main themes in the Phaedo is the idea that the soul is immortal”. We could consider “Phaedo” a work that gives the combined beliefs of Plato and Socrates, the two greatest Greek philosophers on the matter. Here are some passages from this work (Taken from the following website: http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedo.html):

“The soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable .... It goes away to the pure, and eternal, and immortal, and unchangeable, to which she is kin.” (Phaedo)

And again:

“The soul whose inseparable attitude is life will never admit of life's opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, and since immortal, indestructible ... Do we believe there is such a thing as death? To be sure. And is this anything but the separation of the soul and body? And being dead is the attainment of
this separation, when the soul exists in herself and separate from the body, and the body is parted from the soul. That is death.... Death is merely the separation of the soul and body." (emphasis added)

Furthermore:
“Be of good cheer, and do not lament my passing ... When you lay me down in my grave, say that you are burying my body only, and not my soul”

Does what Plato and Socrates say sound very familiar? Indeed it does. It could very well be a summary of what the average Christian also believes!

As the church historian Philip Schaff says:
“Plato gives prominence also to the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments. At death, by an inevitable law of its own being, as well as by the appointment of God, every soul goes to its own place; the evil gravitating to the evil, and the good rising to the supreme good.” (The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, article: Platonism and Christianity).

All the above, sound indeed like written by a contemporary Christian preacher. In fact, compare what we read from Phaedo with what the most celebrated preacher of contemporary Christianity says about our topic:

“....you are an immortal soul. Your soul is eternal and will live forever. In other words, the real you -- the part of you that thinks, feels, dreams, aspires; the ego, the personality -- will never die. ... your soul will live forever in one of two places -- heaven or hell .... whether we are saved or lost, there is conscious and everlasting
existence of the soul and personality.” (Billy Graham, Peace With God, chapter 6, paragraphs 25 and 28).

Now compare this with what God and His archenemy, the devil, said in Genesis 2 and 3:

Genesis 2:16-17, 3:4

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die ..... "But the serpent said to the woman, "You will NOT surely die."

The first that taught that man is – though fallen - supposedly immortal was the devil in the garden of Eden. Compare his “you shall not surely die” with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. “Your soul is immortal and will live forever”, Billy Graham said. As much as I respect him, the same also Plato, Socrates and the devil said. According to them: there is no real death. “You will not surely die”, “You soul just leaves the body and lives eternally in heaven or in hell, depending on what it has done”. This is not a Christian belief brothers; it is a heathen belief, taught first by the father of lies in the Garden of Eden.

**Immortality of the soul: Tyndale and Luther**

Let’s now see what 2 of the greatest reformers thought about the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Tyndale that great reformer and revered Bible
translator, who was burned in the stake, said about the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, answering to Papal supporter Thomas More⁶:

“And ye, in putting them [the departed souls] in heaven, hell, and purgatory, destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection.... And again, if the souls be in heaven, tell me why they be not in as good case as the angels be? And then what cause is there of the resurrection? ... The true faith putteth [setteth forth] the resurrection, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers, denying that, did put [set forth] that the souls did ever live. And the pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of Christ and the fleshly doctrine of philosophers together; things so contrary that they cannot agree, no more than the Spirit and the flesh do in a Christian man. And because the fleshly-minded pope consenteth unto heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the Scripture to establish it.” (An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue (Parker's 1850 reprint), pp. 180, 181., emphasis added)

He also said:

“And I marvel that Paul had not comforted the Thessalonians with that doctrine [he means the doctrine of the immortality of the soul], if he had wist [known] it, that the souls of their dead had been in joy; as he did with the resurrection, that their dead should rise again. If the souls be in heaven, in as great glory as the angels, after your doctrine, show me what cause should be of the resurrection” (An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue (Parker's 1850 reprint), pp. 118, emphasis added).

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⁶ Pope Leo X had just issued a bull declaring, "We do condemn and reprobate all who assert that the intelligent soul is mortal".
Furthermore, Martin Luther, the great German Reformer, in response to the same doctrine and the same Bull of Leo X, classified the immortality of the soul to “monstrous opinions”. Here is what he said:

“However, I permit the Pope to establish articles of faith for himself and for his own faithful—such are: That the bread and wine are transubstantiated in the sacrament; that the essence of God neither generates nor is generated; that the soul is the substantial form of the human body that he [the pope] is emperor of the world and king of heaven, and earthly god; **that the soul is immortal**; and all these endless monstrosities…” (Assertion of all the articles of M. Luther condemned by the latest Bull of Leo X), article 27, Weimar edition of Luther's Works, vol. 7, pp. 131, 132, emphasis added)

The Lutheran scholar Dr. T. A. Kantonen (The Christian Hope, 1594, p. 37), summarized Luther's position on the death in these words:

"Luther, with a greater emphasis on the resurrection, preferred to concentrate on the scriptural metaphor of sleep. “For just as one who falls asleep and reaches morning unexpectedly when he awakes, without knowing what has happened to him we shall suddenly rise on the last day without knowing how we have come into death and through death. We shall sleep, until He comes and knocks on the little grave and says, ‘Doctor Martin, get up! Then I shall rise in a moment, and be with him forever.’ "

We couldn’t agree more with these two great Reformers. Death is indeed sleep! There is no such thing as immortal soul. The comfort of the Bible is NOT the comfort that most preachers give in funerals i.e. that the soul of the deceased
supposedly lives on. This was the comfort of Plato and Socrates whose teaching
t heir converted students (I remind again the quotation from the Catholic
Encyclopedia: “The great majority of the Christian philosophers down to St.
Augustine were Platonists.”) carried on! Will we continue believing on this or we
will turn our ear to what the Word of God says?

**Immortality of the soul: other sources, Church fathers**

That the immortality of the soul doctrine is something foreign to the
Scriptures is also stated by the Jewish Encyclopedia, which says concerning it:

"The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body
is...nowhere expressly taught in 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 principle exponent, who was led to it through Orphic
and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely
blended" (The Jewish Encyclopedia, article, "Immortality of the Soul", emphasis
added).

Similarly the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says:

“We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea that the body
dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite
consciousness and is nowhere found in the Old Testament.” (1960, Vol. 2, p. 812,
“Death”)

Brothers, the soul is **NOT** immortal. The soul is just what gives life to the
body. You breath.. you have soul. You are a living soul. Same also for the animals:
they are also living souls. You are dead.. there is no soul. The hope of the
Christian rests on one and only one doctrine: the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. When Paul went to Athens, the capital of Greek philosophy, the home of Plato and Socrates, he preached “Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). By then the concept of the immortality of the soul was widespread in the Greek world. But Paul did not adopt it to appeal to the Greek philosophical mind. Instead he preached the only true doctrine on the matter: the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul would not compromise the truth to appeal to the philosophers and their opinion. In fact here is the warning he issued to all of us:

Colossians 2:8

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

The word “philosophers” is the word used in the Acts 17:18 to describe the Epicureans and the Stoics that were deriding Paul, because he was preaching the resurrection. It is the word Plato, Socrates and all others used to describe themselves. They were philosophers and their product was one thing: philosophy. While Paul warned: “see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy”, the church Fathers – most of them - were taken captive by it. For example, the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology says about Origen, a Church father described by Encyclopedia Britannica as “the most important theologian and biblical scholar of the early Greek church”:

“Speculation about the soul in the subapostolic church was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. This is seen in Origen’s acceptance of Plato’s doctrine of the preexistence of the soul as pure mind (nous)...” (1992, p. 1037, “Soul”)
Here is what Origen himself wrote:

“... The soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness ... or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments ...” (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4, 1995, p. 240)

Many of the Church Fathers, instead of rejecting their previous philosophical influences, they christianized them, getting captive by them and mixing the truth of the Word with the error of pagan philosophy. Here is what Ackermann says concerning one of the very early Greek Church Fathers, Justin Martyr:

"Justin was, as he himself relates, an enthusiastic admirer of Plato before he found in the Gospel that full satisfaction which he had sought earnestly, but in vain, in philosophy. And, though the Gospel stood infinitely higher in his view than the Platonic philosophy, yet he regarded the latter as a preliminary stage to the former. And in the same way did other apologetic writers express themselves concerning Plato and his philosophy."” (Ackermann, Das Christliche im Plato, chap. i., Hamburg, 1835; Eng. transl., The Christian Element in Plato, Edinburgh, 1861)

In fact Encyclopedia Britannica, describes Justin Martyr as “the first Christian to use Greek philosophy in the service of the Christian faith”.

And as German Church historian Philip Schaff says in his Encyclopedia:
“many of the early Christians, _found peculiar attractions in the doctrines of Plato_, and employed them as weapons for the defense and extension of Christianity, or _cast the truths of Christianity in a Platonic mold_. The doctrines of the Logos and the Trinity received their shape _from Greek Fathers, who, if not trained in the schools, were much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Platonic philosophy_, particularly in its Jewish-Alexandrian form. _That errors and corruptions crept into the Church from this source can not be denied_. ……

Among the most illustrious of the Fathers who were more or less Platonic, may be named Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Ireneus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Minutius Felix, Eusebius, Methodius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Augustine.” (The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, article: Platonism and Christianity, emphasis added)

**Immortality of the soul: conclusion**

To conclude: the doctrine according to which the souls of the dead separate from the body at death and carry on living in heaven or hell, because the soul is supposedly immortal, is not a Christian innovation. It is something that was articulated by Socrates and Plato, who in turn had a profound influence on most of the Church Fathers, from Justin Martyr down to Augustine. This pagan doctrine although unfounded in the Bible and foreign to the Old Testament, to Jesus and the apostles was taken over together with other Greek philosophical ideas and practices and was renamed as Christian. This platonic pagan doctrine replaced the true Christian hope concerning the dead: the resurrection at the last trumpet, “for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 15:52). For though the resurrection of the dead is kept as a doctrine of the church, what is its meaning if the dead get immortality immediately upon death? Tyndale was very right to ask: _If the souls be in_
heaven, in as great glory as the angels, after your doctrine, show me what cause should be of the resurrection”. The immortality of the soul doctrine is unbiblical, pagan and essentially incompatible with the Biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead: there is indeed no meaning to the resurrection if the dead are alive now, for the resurrection aims to make them alive! As Paul says in I Corinthians 15:22-23:

“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.”

All SHALL be made alive. It is future. The Word in saying that the dead SHALL be made alive at Christ’s coming, makes very clear that they are NOT alive now. Everything else is a lie, regardless of whether it is your pastor, your denomination, or your favorite Church saint that teaches it.

You and I have a choice to make: will we believe God and His Word, or we will believe Plato, Socrates and what they brought, through their disciples, into the church doctrines? Do you want to be a disciple of Plato or a disciple of Christ? Making the right choice may mean standing out against popular opinion (and believing in the immortality of the soul is the popular, established in church opinion) and bearing the respective costs. But do we care for this or we care for the truth? Do we care about what men say about us or about what God says about us? As Paul instructs us:

2 Timothy 2:15

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”
Keeping both the Word and our traditions is in this case no possible. One of the two will have to go and I pray you make the right decision which one it will be.
Examination of Scriptures used to back up the doctrine of life immediately after death
"Absent with the body, present with the Lord"

In 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, we read:

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

"Therefore 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, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

For many people what the phrase "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord", means is that when one dies is immediately with the Lord. However, a careful reading shows that this is not what the passage says. Really, what it says is that "we are willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord". The phrase "we are willing" shows that the passage states a will, a wish, which is not a wish to die but a wish "to be absent from the body and present with Lord". Though a full and clear picture of what this phrase means will be possible only after the examination of its context, we can from the outset rule out that it could ever mean that when one dies he is immediately with the Lord for in a case like this, there would be a stark contradiction with 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 that says:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those which are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first:
Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: **AND THUS [i.e. by this way, the resurrection of the dead Christians and the changing of the body of the alive ones] we SHALL always be with the Lord.**

If in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 God said that when one dies he is immediately with the Lord, then how could in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 the same God say that "AND THUS [i.e. by the resurrection, and the changing of the bodies] we SHALL always be with the Lord?" Obviously either the Word is wrong, which is impossible, or the interpretation that is usually given to 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 is wrong. As we will see by studying the context the later is the case. Thus starting from 2 Corinthians 4:13 - about fifteen verses earlier - we read:

2 Corinthians 4:13-14
"We having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, and therefore I spoke; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."

What Paul knew by revelation was not that after one dies he continues to live together with the other dead. Instead what he knew and taught was that: "he which **raised** up the Lord Jesus shall **raise** up us also by Jesus, and shall present **us** with you." Paul waited and still waits the resurrection, to be presented, to be together, with those Corinthian believers. The last time he saw them was in the last time he visited Corinth, and the next time he will see them will be when both he and they will be **raised** to meet, together with the alive believers, the Lord in
the air. Obviously therefore, the context of our passage is not about death but about its exact opposite: the resurrection of the dead. But let's continue:

2 Corinthians 4:18-5:4
"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

When this passage speaks for a "tabernacle" and for a "house" it obviously does not mean a physical lifeless structure. Really, it is not possible "to be clothed upon" with a physical house, nor is it possible by changing it that "mortality might be swallowed up of life". When therefore in the above passage the words "house" and "tabernacle" are used, they are used with the meaning of a living structure, a living house. In other words they are used with the meaning of a body which as we know is the "house" of our being⁷. This is also affirmed by the controversial verses 6-8 that follow the above passage and which speak for a body. As therefore the above passage (and others as well - see below) tells us, there are two bodies. The one is the earthly body or house which we desire to substitute with the other that is the heavenly body or house. As the passage says

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⁷ This is also the way that the word "tabernacle" is used in 2 Peter 1:13-14.
when we will be clothed upon with our heavenly body. THEN "mortality will be swallowed up of life". 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 says exactly the same. Really there, starting from verse 44 we read:

1 Corinthians 15:44-54

"There is a natural [soul] body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual [body] is not first, but the natural [body], and afterward the spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy [the earthly, natural, body], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [the heavenly, spiritual body]. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be RAISED incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY."

When "will death be swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54)? When "shall mortality be swallowed up in life" (2 Corinthians 5:4)? The answer of the two passages is very clear: this will happen when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality". It will happen when this "earthy" house (2 Corinthians 5:1) or soul body (1 Corinthians 15:44),
will be substituted with the heavenly house (2 Corinthians 5:2) or spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44), which in turn will occur when the Lord will come back (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). As 1 Corinthians 15:52-54 tells us, "THEN [and only then] shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

From all the above it should be clear that the context of the "controversial" passage of 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 does not speak about death as a hope but for the changing of the bodies, from earthly to heavenly, and from soul to spiritual, which as we saw will happen in the day of the Lord's coming. With this in mind, let's now reread verses 6-8:

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body (the earthly body), we are absent from the Lord (we need the heavenly body to be with him): For we walk by faith, not by sight: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body (the earthly body), and to be present with the Lord."

Being in this body we are absent from the Lord. Do we therefore want to be absent from this earthly body? Of course yes, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Does it mean that we want to die? Of course not. Really where does the passage says something like this? In contrast, as 2 Corinthians 5:4 made clear: "we don't want to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon". What therefore we should really desire is not to die (be "unclothed") for then, though we may be absent from the earthly body we will also be absent from the Lord, for we will not have the heavenly body either. In contrast, what we should really desire is to be "clothed upon" with our
heavenly body, abandoning the present earthly body. Only then, when our earthly body will have been substituted by our heavenly body, we will be present with the Lord (2 Thessalonians 4:17). When will this happen? 1 Corinthians 15 was very clear: "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Amen!
Lazarus and the rich man

We have seen up to now that the Bible clearly teaches that the dead are dead, i.e. they are **without consciousness**, waiting for the resurrection. This we recognize is against the traditional view that believes that though somebody dies “his soul continues living”. We have however seen, from a multitude of Scriptures, that this traditional view cannot be correct, as it contradicts the Bible. There are though a few passages of the Bible that being misunderstood are used by tradition to support its doctrine of a supposed life immediately after death. One such passage is the story of the rich man and Lazarus, given in Luke 16:19-31. There we read:

Luke 16:19-31

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 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. Then 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.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are
tormented. ‘And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’ Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, ‘for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’"

Now before we say anything about a passage, especially one that seems to contradict many other passages, we need to study its context. To whom did Jesus say this story? This we can easily find by looking at the verses that precede the above passage. Starting from Luke 16:1 we can see that the Lord spoke to His disciples and gave them a teaching that ended with the following conclusion: “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:13) Now to this the Pharisees that were around responded as follows: “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him” (Luke 16:14). Then Jesus moved on and replied to them:

Luke 16:15-19

“And He said to THEM [the Pharisees], You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one title of the
law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery. There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.”

I have intentionally included verse 19 in the above. Because this is part of the same talk that started in verse 15 and was addressed to “them”, them being the Pharisees. It was to them that Jesus tell the story of Lazarus and the rich man. He was not giving there a general sermon to the people or a teaching to his disciples (though they were present). In contrast His eyes were looking at the Pharisees and His words were addressed to them. It was only after He completed this story that He turned again to the disciples, for we are reading in Luke 17:1 “then He said to the disciples....”. In other words, looking in chapter 16 as a whole we can see that what the Lord said in that chapter was addressed to two different groups of people: what he said from Luke 16:1 to 13 was addressed to the disciples with the Pharisees hearing. To this the Pharisees reacted deriding him. Then from verses 15-31 (which also includes the story we are looking at) He turned to the Pharisees and addressed them. When He was done with them, He turned again to the disciples (Luke 17:1).

It was therefore to the Pharisees that the Lord addressed the Lazarus and the rich man story. Now looking at this story we may feel very perplexed as there are elements in this that are not seen elsewhere in the Bible. Let’s see some of them:

i) The rich man died and went to Hades, where he was apparently tormented. As it appears from the passage he was still conscious as he could see, feel and speak.
Moreover he had still sympathy and concern for his brothers and he wanted to warn them. This description of Hades and the state of the dead is in obvious contradiction with many Scriptures, some of which we give below:

**Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 10**

“But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living **KNOW** that they will die; **BUT THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING**, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. **Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; NEVERMORE WILL THEY HAVE A SHARE IN ANYTHING DONE UNDER THE SUN.** ....... Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might **FOR THERE IS NO WORK OR DEVICE OR KNOWLEDGE OR WISDOM IN THE GRAVE** [Sheol in Hebrew] **WHERE YOU ARE GOING.**"

**Psalms 6:5**

“For in death **there is no remembrance of you: in the grave [Hebrew: Sheol, Hades in Septuagint] who will give you thanks?”

**Psalms 31:17**

“let them be silent in the grave [Hebrew: Sheol, Hades in Septuagint]”.

**Psalms 115:17**

“The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence. [Septuagint: go down into Hades i.e. Hades = silence]”

**Psalms 30:9**
“What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it declare your truth? ”

Isaiah 38:18-19
“For the grave [Sheol in Hebrew] cannot praise you, death cannot celebrate you: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth. The living, the living, he shall praise you, as I do this day: the father shall make known your truth to the children.”

The same passage in Septuagint [note to the translator: please translate this]
“For they that are in the grave [Greek: Hades] shall not praise You, neither shall the dead bless You, neither shall they that are in Hades hope for thy mercy. The living shall bless thee, as I also do.”

As it is obvious from the above, Sheol (in Hebrew) or Hades (in Greek) is a place of silence and non-consciousness. There is no tormenting or refreshing there. There are no feelings of sympathy and there is no knowledge there. There is not praising of God there. There are really more than 70 occurrences of the words Sheol and Hades in the Bible and nowhere do we see in them the characteristics we see in the above story. Really in our story we see the rich man in Hades, speaking, feeling, having sympathy and being tormented. Why is that? Before we see the why, let’s also see some other points of this story. Let’s focus on the poor Lazarus.

ii) So for poor Lazarus we read:

Luke 16:22
“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom”

Once again this sentence contains strange references, unprecedented in the Bible. Indeed, there is no other Biblical reference to “Abraham’s bosom” and to angels bringing people there. There are as we said more than 70 occurrences of the words Sheol and Hades in the Bible that define Hades, literally the grave, as the place that all dead – without distinction – go. But we never read of an “Abraham’s bosom” there, nor do we read that the poor or the just go to a different place than the rich or the unjust. Why is Jesus making such references that have no parallel in the Scripture and in fact contradict it in many points?

The answer can be found by going back to the context: to whom was Jesus addressing this story? As we saw this was not intended to be a general teaching on the dead but it was addressed specifically to the Pharisees that scorned him because he was teaching that there is no way to work both God and money. This audience we read were “lovers of money”, “covetous” and they “were justifying themselves among men”. The Pharisees had, as we can read in other places in the Scripture, traditions that didn’t have anything to do with the Word of God. They believed things that were foreign to Scripture and made the Word of God of no effect. Mark 7:1-13 give us some insight on how far from the Bible this sect was:

Mark 7:1-13

“These then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the
tradition of the elders. *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, *Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* ’ "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." He said to them, "*All too well* you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. "For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ ”But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban" (that is, a gift to God), "then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, "*making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do. ’”

The last phrase “and many such things you do” shows that the above were not the only instances where the Pharisees were clearly deviating from Scripture. In fact, as it happens many times today, they had replaced the Word of God with their traditions. Their teaching were not teachings coming from the Scripture but traditions with no base on the Bible and in fact traditions that were blatantly contradicting the Bible. Now why do I say all these things about the Pharisees? The reason is simple: because though the “bosom of Abraham” and the other strange things that appear in the rich man and Lazarus story do not appear anywhere else in the Bible, and in fact contradict other references in the Bible,
they do appear in the traditions the Pharisees believed. Here is what the Catholic encyclopedia tells us about the beliefs of the Jews of the 1st century (emphasis added):

“In the Holy Bible, the expression "the Bosom of Abraham" is found only in two verses of St. Luke's Gospel (16:22-23). It occurs in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus the imagery of which is plainly drawn from the popular representations of the unseen world of the dead which were current in Our Lord's time. According to the Jewish conceptions of that day, the souls of the dead were gathered into a general tarrying-place the Sheol of the Old Testament literature, and the Hades of the New Testament writings (cf. Luke 16:22; in the Greek 16:23). A local discrimination, however, existed among them, according to their deeds during their mortal life. In the unseen world of the dead the souls of the righteous occupied an abode or compartment of their own which was distinctly separated by a wall or a chasm from the abode or compartment to which the souls of the wicked were consigned. The latter was a place of torments ... -- the other, a place of bliss and security known under the names of "Paradise" and "the Bosom of Abraham".”

See in the above the emphasis to the “Jewish conceptions of that day”. We are not speaking here about Scripture based traditions that originate from God but “traditions of that day”, “popular representations of the unseen world”. The Bosom of Abraham, the just being in it, the angels bringing them there, the punishment of the unjust, the chaos between these two places and the other points we read above as the view of the Pharisees, have no parallel in any other part of the Scripture except the story of the rich man and the Lazarus. In other words: WHAT THE LORD USED IN THIS STORY, SPEAKING TO THE PHARISEES,
WAS WHAT THE PHARISEES THEMSELVES BELIEVED TO BE HAPPENING AFTER DEATH. He used their own story to pass his own message. We can understand the Lord’s point in the conclusion given in the last sentence of the above story:

Luke 16:31
“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”

Obviously the rich man hadn’t heard, which is to say hadn’t followed, the Moses and the prophets, the Word of God, and ended up tormented. He was an unjust rich and his richness didn’t help him to avoid getting the tormenting share. On the other hand the poor man, though he was poor he was a man that followed the Word of God, the Moses and the prophets, and because of this ended up in Abraham’s bosom. And this is exactly what the Lord wanted to tell to these Pharisees. In Luke 16:13 he told the disciples “you cannot serve God and mammon”. Then Luke 16:14 tells us: “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him”. These people were lovers of money and they were not keeping the Word of God, the Moses and the prophets. In fact as we read elsewhere they were making the Word of God of no effect. Yet, they thought that somehow they would be saved – which according to their (false) traditions meant that after death they would go to the “Bosom of Abraham”. Then the Lord, using their own weapons, their very own traditions, turns to them and gives them a story where the poor ended up in the Bosom of Abraham because he kept the Word of God but the rich and unjust – like they were – ended up in torment. The riches were not sufficient to save him from this. Only keeping the Word of God could do this. It is a teaching to covetous Pharisees that in short tells them: “don’t think that riches will save you. What will save you
is to follow the Word of God (the Moses and the prophets)”. To tell them this, the Lord used one of the most effective ways: their own language i.e. the language of their traditions about salvation and condemnation.

To conclude, the Lord didn’t intend with this story to give a sermon on what happens in the afterlife, as many have taken His words to mean, ignoring the context and the Pharisees beliefs that elsewhere the Lord judged severely saying that they bring the Word of God to no effect. What the Lord did, was addressing the Pharisees, using their very own beliefs about the afterlife to tell them that what matters is not riches but keeping the Word of God. He used their own framework, their own beliefs about afterlife, to add his own conclusion. He could choose another framework to say the same thing. But few will doubt that the most effective way to speak to somebody is using a language that is familiar to him. And this is what the Lord did: he spoke to them using their picture of the afterlife as a framework, adding to it the message He wanted. It is very sad that many have taken this framework, these wrong Pharisaic beliefs, and turn them into a doctrine about the dead. This is indeed a doctrine but a Pharisaic one. We hope that this article will help the reader to draw his own conclusions.
What did Jesus really say to the criminal at the cross?

Another passage that is used to support the doctrine of living immediately after death is what the Lord Jesus Christ said to the repented criminal that was crucified with him.


“Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

So people get verse 43 and say “you see: the dead criminal was that day with Jesus in Paradise”. However, when you try to understand a passage you have to take all the other passages into consideration. And as we have extensively covered in the article “Resurrection or life immediately after death” the great hope of the Christian is not death but the resurrection. Resurrection is the main thread in the word of God when it comes to life after death. Here is what happens in the above given passage: the ancient Greek text had no commas and no points of punctuation. This is not an assumption. It is a FACT! In other words the passage reads the way it reads because the translators decided to put a comma before the word “today”, thus making Jesus appear as promising to the criminal that despite the fact that he would not have been resurrected, he would be that very day with Jesus in paradise. But such an interpretation is we believe false on two grounds that we explain below.
“And so we shall always be with the Lord”

The Word very clearly says that to be with the Lord we need resurrection! You do not “go to be with the Lord” when you die. You will be with the Lord when he returns and you are resurrected. Indeed 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first.** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, **and so we shall always be with the Lord.***"

How we SHALL (in the future) always be with the Lord? Through resurrection! There is no other way! Unless we are ready to accept that Jesus was playing favors and for that particular criminal the Word of God didn’t apply and he didn’t need resurrection to be with the Lord, then it is obvious that the traditional interpretation is faulty. Furthermore, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51-55:

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”
To be immortal you must put on immortality, and this will only happen at the last trumpet, at the coming of the Lord. If after death you were already immortal, then why on earth would you need to put on again immortality?! Also the Lord said:

John 5:25-29

“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

Do the dead live now? According to the Lord, NO! That’s why he uses future tense in what He says: “an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live”. The dead are not living now. They WILL live in that day, when “when all who are in the tombs will [future] hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment”

Jesus Himself died and had to be resurrected 3 days after. As Paul said quoting David:

Acts 13:34-37
“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' Therefore he says also in another psalm, "'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.”

Had Jesus not been raised from the dead He would indeed have seen corruption. Jesus obviously was not in paradise (which is something still future) that day but in the tomb. He could therefore in no way issue a promise to the criminal that that very day he would be with him in Paradise.

**What and where is “paradise”?**

The second reason this interpretation is faulty is because Jesus’ promise was about the paradise. When He spoke about it, He was answering to the request of the criminal, who said:

Luke 23:42

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

He obviously had heard about the coming Kingdom of God. This was the constant theme of Jesus’ teaching. So he knew this teaching. Therefore when Jesus replied to him, he replied on this request. Many get confused because of the tradition that interprets “paradise” as a place in heaven where the good ones go after their death. But paradise is nothing like this! To find the true meaning of paradise we need to look not into human interpretations but into the Word of
God. And this Word leaves no place for doubts. In Revelation 2:7 we hear Jesus giving the following promise:

“To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

So the tree of life is in the paradise of God. The next reference to the tree of life is in Revelation 22:1-2, where we read:

Revelation 22:1-2

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

The tree of life was on either side of a river, which was flowing “through the middle of the street of the city”. Which city? The answer is given in Revelation 21:1-2:

“So I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

So the tree of life is part of the new Jerusalem and therefore part of the future heaven and earth! Now connecting the dots: since the tree of life is in the
paradise of God, is the paradise something present? NO! It will become present in the new earth! As Peter said:

2 Peter 3:13
“But according to his promise **we are waiting** for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

The new heavens and the new earth, and thus also the paradise being part of the new earth, are things still to come. We are waiting for them! There is no paradise right now as the new earth to which it is part is still not there. But there will be! And in that paradise, in that new earth, in the Kingdom of God, we will see also the repented criminal, exactly as the Lord promised him that day:

“Assuredly I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise”

This is the right way to read this passage.
Moses and Elias in the Lord’s transfiguration

One other record that is sometimes a source of confusion on the topic of whether the dead are actually living today or not is the record of the Lord’s transfiguration. In this record we have Moses and Elias appearing together with the Lord and from this sometimes people conclude that these prophets must have been alive in order to appear in the scene of the transfiguration. As we will see from a careful examination of the text this needs not to be the case. The record of transfiguration is given in the gospel of Matthew from verses 1 to 9 (we can also find it in the gospels of Mark and Luke). There we read:

Matthew 17:1-9

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the VISION to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."
In this passage it appears that Moses and Elijah had a conversation with Jesus and the question is: does this mean that these two prophets were alive, though at least for Moses we read explicitly in Deuteronomy 34:5-6

Deuteronomy 34:5-6

“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Bethpeor”

And in Joshua 1:2 God said:

“Moses my servant is dead”

According to what we have seen in the main article the dead are NOT alive now. They are all sleeping waiting for the resurrection. The only one that was dead and is alive now is the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead. Therefore Moses could not be alive and physically speak with Jesus on the day of transfiguration. The resurrections had not happened and thus Moses was not alive on that day. What then happened in the transfiguration? The key word to understand this is the word “vision” in Matthew 17:9, where Jesus told the disciples to “tell the vision to no man”. When Moses and Elias spoke to Jesus this was a supernatural vision and therefore didn’t require nor it meant that these two prophets were alive at that time. We can understand this even better by looking at the New Testament occurrences of the Greek word that is translated as vision here. This Greek word is the word “όραμα” (horama).

**Occurrences of the word “horama” - vision in the New Testament**
The case of the Paul and Ananias

In Acts 9:10-12 we read:

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”

Paul had seen Ananias in a vision, without Ananias even knowing it! The Lord told this to Ananias afterwards. In other words the fact that a person appears in a vision does not mean that this person is there physically. God can use his image to communicate a message to somebody. But this does not mean that this person is there at the time of the vision. In turn, the fact that Moses and Elias appeared in the transfiguration vision does not mean that they were there physically nor it means that they were alive at the time of the vision.

The case of Peter and the sheet with the various animals

Acts 11:5-10 (see also Acts 10:17 and Acts 10:19)

“I [Peter] was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. “When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four–footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. "And I heard a voice
saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ "But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ "But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ "Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.

The great sheet, led down from heaven and its content was shown to Peter in a VISION. We all understand reading this passage that God didn’t have to physically get all these animals, put them in a table and present them to Peter. We understand reading the word “vision” that what Peter saw was something that God showed to him and didn’t require the physical presence of these animals. The conclusion is the same as previously with Ananias: the fact that something or somebody is shown in a vision does not require its physical presence in the vision. It is a picture that God gives to communicate a message to the one to whom He shows the vision.

In the same way we need to understand that the fact that Moses and Elias appeared in the transfiguration vision, does not mean that these two prophets were alive or physically present in the vision.

The case of Peter and his deliverance from the prison

Acts 12:6-10

“And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to
him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." **And he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.** When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.”

Now this is **NOT** a vision. An angel came and literally woke up Peter and delivered him from the prison. This did require physical presence of the angel and it was a physical presence. Look now what Peter thought initially:

“**And he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.**”

Peter thought initially that what was happening was **not true but it was a vision**. This makes a contrast between a vision and reality: Had this incidence been a vision it would not be physically real. If it was physically real then it wouldn’t be a vision. When Paul saw Ananias healing him in a vision, it was not physically real i.e. Ananias was not there nor he actually healed Paul at the time of the vision. When however Ananias went, knocked Paul’s door, put his hands on Paul’s eyes and healed him it was no longer a vision but it was physically real.

Applying this to what happened in the Lord’s transfiguration we are told that this was a vision i.e. it was something that God showed, a message that God wanted to convey, and it was important for this message to have Elias and Moses appearing there. But God didn’t have to make these prophets physically alive in
order to have them in the vision. Their appearance in this vision didn’t require their physical presence there.

The case of Paul and the man of Macedonia

Acts 16:9-10

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Now did this man of Macedonia come all the way from Macedonia and stood there literally? Nobody of us thinks so. Right? We all understand that since the text says that he appeared in a vision it was not there literally, physically. In the same way, and though we may be repetitive, it is again obvious that Elias and Moses didn’t have to be physically there to be shown in the vision of the transfiguration. God can present whatever and whoever He desires in a vision in order to convey His message. What is presented in a vision does not have in any way to be physically there.

The case of the Lord speaking to Paul
Acts 18:9-11

“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Now the person speaking here is very important, because it is the Lord Jesus Christ. This person IS ALIVE for God raised Him from the dead. He is the only dead that is alive now and he appeared to Paul in a vision telling him to continue preaching the gospel in Corinth. I have no reason whatsoever to argue whether Jesus was physically there or not, for Jesus is ALIVE and has a spiritual body with supernatural abilities. This is a case much different than any other one.

*The case of Moses and the burning bush*

Acts 7:31

“When Moses saw *it* [the burning bush], he wondered at the sight [Greek: horama]: and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him,”

This is the only case where the word “horama” is translated “sight” and not “vision”. Reading the detailed record of this incident in Exodus we see that “God called unto him [Moses] out of the midst of the bush” (Exodus 3:4) and a whole conversation took place between God and Moses there (see Exodus chapters 3 and 4). Some visions are shown in the night, may be in the sleep, as in the case of the Lord speaking to Paul to continue his preaching in Corinth and in the case of the Macedonian through whom the Lord told Paul to go and preach the gospel.
there. Others again happen with the eyes wide open, as in the case of Peter and the sheet with the various animals. What is important to understand is that a vision is a supernatural way which God can choose to communicate a message to His people. The fact that something appears in a vision does not mean that it is physically there. What appears in a vision is important in relationship to the message that God wants to convey. It is part of this message. Visions can also be shown to me and you. As it says in Acts 2:17:

Acts 2:17

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions [Greek: horaseis, from the same root as horama] and your old men shall dream dreams:”

We understand that these visions, are supernatural messages that God can show to us and whatever is involved there does not have to be physically there not to physically exist at all for us to see it.

We could go on and examine the usage of the word vision in the Old Testament but I think we have exhausted the subject. We know from the Scripture that Moses and Elias appeared in the transfiguration in what was a vision. From what we have seen, it is I believe obvious that the fact that they appeared in this vision does not require nor it means that they were alive during the time of the vision.
The references to the souls in Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4

A Bible reference that is frequently used by the tradition that wants the dead living without resurrection is in the book of Revelation and in the following passages: Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4. These two references relate closely to each other and therefore we will see them together in this article. Starting from Revelation 6:9 we read:

Revelation 6:9-11

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

Much of the misunderstanding here is caused by reading the word “soul” and immediately interpreting it as the souls of the dead people that are living now somewhere. This is because all these years we have been taught that once somebody dies then “his soul goes to heaven, where it lives with God or it goes to hell where it is tormented forever.” But we have to define a word as the Bible defines it. And soul is not used with this meaning in the Bible. The article “Body, Soul and Spirit”, gives insights to this, clarifying what is the soul. In short, the soul
is what gives life to the body. As long as you have life you have a soul, soul-life. Life and soul are words used many times as synonyms. 40 times the KJV, one of the most popular English translations, translates the Greek word “ψυχη” (psuchi) which in Greek means “soul” as “life” and not as soul. Apart from this usage the word soul is also used in the Bible with the meaning of “person”. There is an expression in today’s English that is used in a similar way: thus when somebody says that he has 10 hands working for him, we don’t understand 10 isolated literal hands but 10 persons. The word hand is put for the whole person. The same also happens for the word soul: it is put for the whole person. For example in Acts 27:37 we read:

Acts 27:37

“And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls (Greek: psuches).”

What does this mean? It simply means 276 persons.

Here are some more examples:

I Peter 3:20

“when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water”

Acts 7:14
“And Joseph sent, and called to him Jacob his father, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.”

Genesis 12:5

“And Abram took Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.”

You will find more such examples in the Bible. In all these examples the word “soul” is simply put for the person. Instead of saying “persons”, it says “souls”. The meaning however is the same. Now returning to the passage in Revelation, when we read that John says that he: “saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” what it means is that he saw the persons that had been slain for the Word of God and their testimony. How did He see these persons? In a vision. “I was in the Spirit..” we read in Revelation 1:10, while Revelation 9:17 says: “And this is how I saw in the vision...”. What was John seeing was a vision and seeing something in a vision does not mean that it is literally there or that it is happening literally8.

Actually, there is a crystal clear proof that these martyrs of Revelation 6 were NOT living somewhere in heaven when they appeared as speaking. This proof is in fact in the second reference to the “souls” in the book of Revelation. This is in Revelation 20:4-5. There we read:

8 We have analyzed this in detail in our article about Moses and Elias in the Lord’s transfiguration.
Revelation 20:4-6

“They saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”

“The souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God” of Revelation 20:4 are obviously the same with “the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” of Revelation 6:9 plus the martyrs that had died in between. These are not “souls floating around” but persons, the martyrs that were slaughtered for their testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God. What do we read for them in Revelation 20:4-5? We read that “they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” “They came to life” obviously means that were not living before! Otherwise they wouldn’t come to life! They would already be living! Verse 5 makes it also clear “the rest of the dead did not come to life...” In other words before Revelation 20:4: none of them was living. After Revelation 20:4, those that were beheaded because of the word of God, from dead became alive. How? By the only way a dead can become alive: by resurrection! We read it in the above passage: “This is the first resurrection”! All
the others continued to be dead (“they did not come to life” says the Word of God).

**Summary**

Having seen the above, we can go back to Revelation 6:9-11. What did John saw there? Those that were slain for the Word of God and their testimony. They were speaking and asking God to avenge their blood. Were these dead people, alive - though they had not been resurrected - and were they literally speaking? No. What John saw was a vision. As we say in the articles about the transfiguration of Christ: “The fact that something or somebody is shown in a vision does not require its physical presence in the vision. It is a picture that God gives to communicate a message to the one to whom He shows the vision.” The reader is referred to this article for a detailed examination of the word vision in the Bible. We also saw that Revelation 20 make it crystal clear: these dead are not alive now. They will be made alive in the future, with a resurrection, and they will reign with Christ 1000 years. It also makes clear – referring to the dead that had not yet been resurrected - that “the rest of the dead did not come to life”, which means that they remained dead. And dead means dead - no living with Christ, no lake of fire yet. This all comes later, in verses 11 to 15 of Revelation 20.
1 Peter 3:19: the spirits in prison

I got some time ago a question from a reader concerning the passage of 1 Peter 3:19. Let’s read this passage together with verses 18 and 20:

I Peter 3:18-20
“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, who once were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

What are these “spirits in prison”? Many people reading the word “spirits” in this passage translate it in their minds to dead people that supposedly live now (as spirits) in a prison. Such an understanding however is not founded on the Word of God, and here is why: the Word of God does not use the word “spirit” to denote dead, non-resurrected, men. To understand what are the spirits in prison, we need to look at the Word of God and see how it uses this word plus to take into consideration other references of the Bible on the subject of the above verses of 1 Peter. For indeed the Word of God speaks not in just one but in four different places about what 1 Peter 3:19 speaks about. But first of all, let’s see what could these spirits in prison be. As we said, they could NOT be dead men. Despite the fact that our age uses the word spirit for dead men that are supposedly living somewhere without resurrection, the Bible does not use this
word with such a meaning. It does however use this word to denote angelic beings. As Hebrews 1:13-14 says:

**Hebrews 1:13-14**

“But to which of the angels has He ever said, Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool? Are they not all ministering SPIRITS, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”

and some verses earlier:

**Hebrews 1:7**

“And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels SPIRITS And His ministers a flame of fire."”

Angelic beings were created by God and they are spirit beings. They are “spirits”. Could then be that these “spirits in prison” are fallen angels in prison? As we will see yes this is what it is. But let’s first get some background information. As we saw angels are spirit beings. Though all of them were created by God not all remained with God. Some of them rebelled against Him and were fallen from their position. The chief fallen angel is the devil or Satan. Two passages that describe his rebellion and fall are: Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:3-23. However, the above passage of I Peter 3:19 does not refer to this fall. I Peter 3:20 sets the time to the “days of Noah”. The devil had rebelled long before those days as we see him active in the garden of Edem. Besides that, he and his angels are not in a prison now. Instead the devil is described as “prince of the air” and he and his fallen angels as “principalities...powers...rulers of the darkness of this age.. spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”. Spiritual hosts of
wickedness are literally hosts of wicked spirits—and this is what fallen angels are—that are now active in the heavenly places. I Peter 3:19 therefore does not refer to the devil’s fall but to another rebellion of angels that occurred “in the days of Noah” and before the Flood. These fallen spirits ended up in a prison and we will read more on this in 2 Peter and in Jude. But let’s first go to Genesis 6, just before the Flood. We will find there details about the fall of these angels.

Genesis 6:1-8

“There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

There was something that happened when man started multiplying. The “sons of God” saw the daughters of men and took wives from them. See that verse 1 puts in contrast the men and the daughters of men with the sons of God. “The sons of God saw the daughters of men”, we read. Who were these sons of
God? Although the believers in the New Testament have been given authority by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His resurrection from the dead to become sons and daughters of God, this was not something that was available in the Old Testament. The term “sons of God” is used 3 more times in the Old Testament, in addition to Genesis 6. In all cases it denotes angelic beings. Let’s see these occurrences, all from the book of Job.

Job 1:6

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”

and in a very similar reference: Job 2:10

“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.”

The sons of God that presented themselves before the Lord were obviously angels.

Also Job 38:7 speaking about the earth:

“To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?“

What Job 38:7 describes, refers to the creation of the earth when no human being was present. But the sons of God, the angels, were present and shouted for joy.

In short the beings of Genesis 6:1 were not human beings. Otherwise they would not be put in contrast with the daughter of men. There was and there is
nothing wrong or strange for men to get married and have children. But this is not what happened in Genesis 6. What we have in Genesis 6 is that non human beings, angelic beings, sons of God - not sons of men - saw the daughter of men and desired them and furthermore they had children with them! As the Bible tells us in Genesis 6:4, the result of this union were the giants, a race of beings that God had not created nor He intended to create but were instead product of this ungodly union between angels and men. Noah was present at those days. These were “the days of Noah” and to these days I Peter 3:19 refers to.

To the same events we have further references in the New Testament. Let’s see them, starting from 2 Peter 2:4-5, 9

2 Peter 2:4-5, 9

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;...... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,”

The phrase “cast them down to hell” is one word in the Greek text the verb “ταρταρόω” (tartaroo) and it means “to cast down to Tartarus”. As Bullinger says: “Tartarus” is a Greek word not used elsewhere or at all in the Septuaqint. Homer describes it as subterranean. The Homeric Tartarus is the prison of the Titans, or giants, who rebelled against Zeus” (The Companion Bible, Appendix 131). And as Vine also explains: “the verb tartaroo, translated “cast down to hell” in 2 Peter 2:4 signifies to consign to Tartarus, which is neither Sheol nor Hades nor Hell, but the place where those angels whose special sin is referred to in that
passage are confined “to be reserved unto judgment;” the region is described as pits of darkness” (Vine’s dictionary, p. 553). Tartarus is to be understood therefore as a prison and in this prison, as Peter says, were cast the angels that sinned, to be reserved in judgment. They are in this prison of darkness reserved for the day of judgment. See that what follows this reference of 2 Peter is Noah and the reference to the Flood. This is not accidental as both these events are connected and happened not long from each other. But let’s also see the evidence from Jude who also speaks about the same subject:

**Jude 6-7**

“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Jude speaks about the same rebellion as Peter and Genesis. Sometime during the times of Noah, angels “left their own habitation” and went after “strange flesh”, after the daughters of men. The result? They are now “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” This is the prison, the Tartarus that Peter speaks about in his letters. To these fallen spirits, fallen angels, spirits in prison, Jesus went and preached, says the KJV. The NKJV has this translated better as “made proclamation”. Now the text does not say what He proclaimed. But I agree with what Vine is saying in his dictionary, when he speaks about the word “kerusso” that is translated in 1 Peter 3:19 as “made proclamation”:
“In I Peter 3:19 the probable reference is, not to glad tidings but to the act of Christ after His resurrection in **proclaiming His victory to fallen angelic beings**” (Vine’s expository dictionary of New Testament words, page 883, emphasis added).

To conclude therefore: when in I Peter 3:19 we read that Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison, we should not understand this as dead people living in a prison, without resurrection, and Jesus going to them to preach the good news. What the Word of God is speaking in I Peter 3:19 is not about dead people but about spirits, angelic beings that are in a prison, in the Tartarus, bound in everlasting chains under darkness. Why? Because of what they did in the times of Noah, leaving their own habitation, giving themselves over to fornication and going after “strange flesh”, after the daughters of men.

**References**

God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob

A passage that some think that is supporting the doctrine of “souls” continuing living after death is in Matthew 22:32. There we read:

“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

So people say: “you see: God is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and since He is not a God of the dead but of the living, therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though they died, they are alive”. However such an isolated consideration of the passage completely ignores its context and can only give wrong results. In fact if you read the above passage you will understand that the first part of it is a half sentence. What happened is the following: the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, came and challenged Jesus asking him whose wife a woman that married seven times will be in the resurrection. Then Jesus gave them the following reply:

Matthew 22:29-32

“Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?” God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.""
All that Jesus said was about the resurrection! When he said “have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?' God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”, his sentence did not start there! Instead he said this speaking about the resurrection: “But concerning the resurrection of the dead...”. Indeed, God is not a God of dead but of living. Why? Not because the dead are now living somewhere, but because God will raise the dead and they will live again. It is “concerning the resurrection of the dead” that “He is not a God of dead but of living”.

Tassos Kioulachoglou
On necromancy and the woman of Endor

Because of the belief that the souls are living somewhere in heaven and the dead are conscious, many people have fallen victims to the practice of trying to contact the dead. A whole movement called “spiritualism” is devoted in exactly this. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 tells us how the Lord feels about this practice:

“There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord.”

Necromancy is put in the same category as that of sorcery, practicing divination, burning kids as offerings, fortunetelling (put here also astrology), interpretation of omens, mediums, charmers. As The Word makes clear: “whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord”. Whoever is tempted to supposedly get in contact with the dead or do any similar practices (including astrology and fortunetelling), let him be clear that he practices something that the Lord considers detestable and he will of course bear the respective consequences. Nobody who comes in contact with devil spirits, nobody that opens himself up to the darkness, will get out without devastating consequences. But let’s continue to see some other passages on the matter:

Leviticus 19:31
“Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.”

Leviticus 20:6

“If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.”

Leviticus 20:27

"A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them."

2 Kings 21:6 (speaking about king Manasseh)

“And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.”

It is I believe clear from the above that necromancy, contacting the dead, is not something innocent. It is a detestable sin. Why? Because the one who does this, essentially contacts devil spirits and the occult. There is nothing innocent and real in this. Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 (and many other passages) tells us very clearly that:

“the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.”
In contrast to the popular belief that wants the “souls” of the dead floating around in heaven and watching over us, and therefore having knowledge and perhaps a share in what happens in our world, the Word of God in no unclear terms tells us that the dead know **NOTHING**! Imagine if the Church really taught what the Bible teaches on the matter of the dead i.e. that they are sleeping, unconscious, awaiting the resurrection! The devil would have much less ground to deceive many people, even Christians, to get in contact to what supposedly are the spirits of the dead.

**The woman of Endor**

Towards the end of 1 Samuel we find the incidence of a certain necromancer used by King Saul for divination concerning his last battle with the Philistines. The related record is in 1 Samuel 28. There we read:

1 Samuel 28:3-8

“Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the necromancers out of the land. The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a medium at En-dor.""

As soon as Saul had difficulties hearing from the Lord he sought for a medium, a woman with a devil spirit to perform divination for him! He knew that
this is abominable to the Lord, for because of this he himself had driven out all mediums (necromancers), from the land. And yet here he is, ready to go and do the detestable to the Lord act of contacting a medium. Really could he expect that God would answer to him through something that he considers disgusting! But let’s continue:

1 Samuel 28: 8-14

“So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you." The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?" But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me." When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." The king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth." He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage. ”

We have read earlier that necromancers and their likes are abomination, detestable to the Lord. The same practices (necromancy etc.) were also done by the nations that inhabited the land before Israel. Necromancy has NOTHING to do with the Lord. We have also seen that the dead know nothing and can no longer have part in what is happening under the sun. Behind necromancy is no
other than the Devil. He is the father of lies and there is nothing true in him and what he is doing. It was a devil spirit therefore who pretending Samuel, appeared to Saul and passed to him the information that his end was very close:

1 Samuel 28:15-20

“Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do." And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines." Then Saul fell at once full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.”

What the medium told Saul, indeed came to pass. Because of this many have come to assume that it was indeed the dead Samuel who said these things prophesying to Saul. This however cannot be true, unless we are ready to assume that the dead not only are alive and know information (while Ecclesiastes in no unclear terms told us that they know nothing) but also that they are available on request from people that do detestable things to the Lord i.e. we are ready to
assume that the devil and his servants are able on request to bring up everybody including such great servants of God as Samuel and have them prophesy! It is obvious that such an assumption is plain folly. They could not possibly do this! Therefore what we have here is clearly a devil spirit pretending to be Samuel. And the information? How could the devil spirit acquire what appears to be right “information”? We cannot know for sure but what the devil spirit said had devastating effects on Saul. Could then it be that what it said became a self-fulfilling prophecy, bringing by itself Saul to the point of total defeat? The devil definitely knew the negative mood in the Israelites camp that they were perhaps fearful, ready to disperse in front of their enemies (1 Samuel 28:5 tells us how terrified Saul felt when he saw the army of the Philistines, which could perhaps be a hint of how the Israelites also felt). To this fact he added making Saul, their king, even more terrified. These two together could be the perfect recipe for a complete defeat. Well, as we said, we cannot know for sure. What we can know for sure though, is that whoever is contacting “the dead” is not actually contacting the dead. Instead he contacts devil spirits, who pretend the dead, with all the horrible consequences that this means, including that by his act is doing something absolutely disgusting to the Lord. Similarly, Saul that day did not speak to the dead Samuel but to a devil spirit that masquerading itself as Samuel.
APPENDICES
Appendix 1

Body, Soul, Spirit

Few scriptures are so much misunderstood as the ones that refer to the fall of Adam and Eve. Unfortunately, misunderstanding of these passages has caused no end of confusion and misunderstanding in many other areas of the Bible as well. Indeed, if we do not have a clear understanding of what happened in Genesis: 1-3 then we will not also have a good understanding of what Jesus Christ accomplished as savior. Really, why should we need a savior for? What did Jesus Christ restore? Many of us know that Jesus Christ redeemed us from what Adam did. But do we know what exactly happened when Adam did what he did? Also we know that today after we believe in Jesus Christ we get holy spirit. But why do we need holy spirit for and why it was not available before the day of Pentecost? To answer to these and to many other questions, a clear understanding of what is said in the first three chapters of Genesis is more than necessary. That's why I consider what we are going to see in this study as especially significant and I ask for your attention.

1. "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"

To start approaching our topic, let's go to the first book of the Bible, the Genesis. There, after God made man, He imposed a restriction on him and He also made known the penalty, for the case that this restriction was violated. So let's read:
Genesis 2:16-17

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die".

The restriction that God imposed on Adam was that he should not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for the case that this restriction was violated was that: "in the day (pay attention: that very day) that you eat of it you shall surely die". Two very significant things have to be noted in that penalty. The first is that if Adam ate from the tree death would happen immediately, in that very day. The second is that this would happen surely. The phrase "you shall SURELY die" has exactly the purpose to put emphasis on the fact that death would happen 100%, surely, in that day.

Now let's go to chapter 3 of Genesis to see if Adam and Eve kept what God told them:

Genesis 3:1-6

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said "you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman "You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like

9 Tradition has made many of us to think an apple when we read this passage. Well, the Bible does not say apple. Does it? What it says is "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". Therefore, the so-called "apple" is just a human invention.

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God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate."

This passage describes how the serpent, which is another name for Satan, deceived Eve. We have already seen in issue 1 of this journal that Satan succeeded in his purposes, because Eve didn't know the Word of God accurately. It is the accurate knowledge of the Word of God that gives terrible headaches to Satan. So finally, Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Having done that, according to what God had said, they should have died at that moment. The problem here is that Genesis 5:5-6 says:

**Genesis 5:5-6**

"After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died."

Therefore, according to the Bible, Adam continued to have life in his body for many many years after he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the other hand, God had said that if he ate from that tree he would surely die in the same day. At first glance, here there is a problem about what finally happened in the day that Adam and Eve ate from that tree. Did they die as

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10 As in the case of the "apple", tradition has made us to think of a snake that speaks here. However, the Bible explains what it means when it says "serpent". So, Revelation 20:1-2 tells us: "Then I (John) saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, THAT OLD SERPENT, WHO IS THE DEVIL AND SATAN, and bound him for a thousand years." (NKJV-KJV). Can it be clearer that the "serpent" of Genesis 3 is the Devil?
God said, or they didn’t die? Who will solve us this "problem"? Man's ideas, theories, religion and tradition? No! Only one can give us answers, and this is no other than the Word of God. And if you want this Word to give you answers, you have to leave it to speak for itself (self interpretation).

In our case, since God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19) in the day that Adam and Eve ate from that tree they really died. Actually, it was Devil that said, when he deceived Eve, "you shall not surely die". Thus, if they didn't die that day, as God said, then Satan was right and God was wrong which is simply impossible. However, that's exactly what many teach today when they say "actually when God said that they would surely die He meant that just the sperm of death would be planted". The Word of God does not need such kind of defense. Actually it does not need any defense at all for it is truth and truth can stand by itself. What the Word needs is to be rightly divided and then boldly proclaimed. Returning to our topic: SINCE GOD SAID THAT THEY WOULD SURELY DIE THAT VERY DAY, THEY INDEED DIED THAT DAY. However, since they continue to have life in their bodies even after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it is self-evident that they must have had another form of life, in addition to the life of their bodies, that was lost in the day that they ate and for this reason it was death (absence of a form of life). So, we have to search the Scriptures to see how man was created and what were the parts of his being. Knowledge of what composed the life of the first man will also enable us to see what was lost in that day.

2. "For dust you are"
To start our research regarding the first man let's go to Genesis 2:7. There it says:

**Genesis 2:7**

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground........"

Which part of man did God form of the dust of the ground? His body. That's why the elements of the human body can be found in the ground. So one part of the first human being was the body. But let's continue:

**Genesis 2:7**

"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 (soul = nephesh in Hebrew)"

(KJV)

We saw that God formed man's body of the dust of the ground. However, this body didn't have life. It was just formed, without life. Then, the Word of God tells us that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul". Therefore, what is soul? Soul is what gives life to the body. The fact that people do not understand, the simple truths of the Word of God described at that point has caused no end of confusion. Here, the Word of God tells us, that soul is what gives life to the body. Without soul the body is dead. Where is the soul, the life of the body, the life of the flesh? The Word of God again is very accurate:

**Leviticus 17:11, 13-14**
"For the life (nephesh in Hebrew) of the flesh is in the blood.....Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood, and cover it with dust; For it (i.e. the blood) is the life (nephesh) of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life (nephesh) of it: therefore I said to the children of Israel "You shall not eat the blood of any flesh: for the life (nephesh) of all flesh is its blood"
(NKJV-KJV)

We saw in Genesis 2:7 that soul (nephesh) is what gives life to the body. Here in Leviticus we see that "the life of the flesh is in the blood". In the above passage the word life is a translation of the Hebrew word "nephesh" that is translated as soul in Genesis 2:7 as well as in 471 out of the 753 other places where it occurs. Therefore, what is nephesh or soul? According to Genesis 2:7 soul is what gives life to the body. Where is the nephesh, the life of the body, the soul? According to Leviticus 17:11-14 it is in the blood: "For the life (nephesh, soul) of the flesh is in the blood". How this soul life passes from generation to generation? Through the blood. That's why Acts 17:26 says:

Acts 17:26

"And He has made from ONE BLOOD every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth".

The "one blood" of this passage is the blood of Adam which passes from generation to generation and actually is the blood that all of us have.

Actually, soul is not something that only man has. Animals have also soul which again is in the blood. Although this is immediately understood from the
above passage of Leviticus, where we are told that the life of all flesh is in the blood let's go to Genesis 1:20-21, 29-30 to see it there as well:

**Genesis 1:20-21**

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature (nephesh, soul; see also KJV-margin) that has life (nephesh, soul) and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature (nephesh, soul) that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good"

(KJV)

**Genesis 1:29-30**

"And God said "Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yield seed; to you it shall be for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there *is* a living soul (KJV margin - nephesh in Hebrew) I *have given* every green herb for meat:" and it was so."

(NKJV-KJV)

Therefore, not only man but also the animals have "nephesh" i.e. "soul". This is not strange at all, if we understand that soul is what gives life to the body. When you die there is no more life, no more soul. The same happens with the animals. Soul is for them the same that is for man i.e. what gives life to the body. Although, there is no problem about what is defined as soul in the Bible, the problem is created when we go to the Bible with the preconceived idea that soul is immortal. If soul was immortal, then really the souls of the various animals
would also be immortal, since they have "nephesh" as man has "nephesh". Soul is not something immortal. It just gives life to the body. When you stop having life in your body, you have no more soul.

By now, we have seen that the Bible teaches that God formed the body of man of the dust of the ground, and that He gave to that body life i.e. soul. The same is also true for the animals. They also have body and soul. Every man in the world, believer or unbeliever, has body and soul. It can therefore be concluded that since Adam died 930 years old, when he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he obviously didn't lose neither his body nor his soul. Thus, since something had to die for Adam that day, he must originally have had at least one more part, which was lost, died, when he ate. So, let's continue searching the Scriptures to see what they say about that.

3. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him"

To continue our enquiry let's go to Genesis 1:26-27. There it says:

Genesis 1:26-27
"Then God said "let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"

According to this passage, God created man "in His own image". Here is a very critical point, a key point, if we want to understand not only what happened in the day that Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and
evil, but also other passages of the Bible, where what is said here has reflections upon. Reading the above passage, the question that has to be asked is what is the image of God? What does He look like? John 4:24 tells us:

John 4:24
"God is Spirit"

God is not flesh but **Spirit**. That is His image. Therefore, when the Word of God tells us that God created man according to His image, it means that in addition to body and soul man also had that which is the image of God i.e. spirit. In order to understand better the usage of the phrase "in his image" in the above critical passage, let's see another place where this phrase occurs.

Genesis 5:1-3
"This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, **In the likeness of God made He him**; Male and female created He them ; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a **son in his own likeness, after his image**; and called his name Seth"
(KJV)

This passage says that Adam begat a son "in his own likeness, after his image". What does it mean? It means that as Adam was, so his son was i.e. as Adam had hands so Seth had hands. As Adam had feet so Seth had feet etc. As Adam was body and soul so Seth was body and soul. Similarly, when the Word says that God created man "in his image", "in the likeness of God", what it means is that as God is, so Adam was. God is not flesh. He does not have feet, hands,
head. He is spirit. So as God is spirit so Adam had spirit. One could ask, why did God make Adam apart from body and soul, spirit as well? The simple reason is that without spirit Adam could not communicate with God Who is spirit. God being spirit, cannot communicate with the body and soul. They are different things. You see, you cannot receive the messages of the radio station unless you have a radio receiver. You may have a washing machine. But the fact that you have a washing machine does not make possible for you to receive the messages of the radio station. You necessarily need a radio receiver. Similarly, God is spirit and to communicate with Him you must have spirit. Body and soul are enough for things of the five senses. But when it comes to the things of God, what you need is spirit. This truth is also explained in 1 Corinthians 2:14:

1 Corinthians 2:14

"But the natural (psuchikos in the Greek) man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him: nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

In this passage, the word translated "natural" is the Greek adjective ψυχικός (psuchikos), which comes from the noun ψυχή (psuchi) which means soul. So, psuchikos means "a soul man" i.e. a man with body and soul only. According to that passage a man who is only body and soul "does not receive the things of the Spirit of God". As it was said above to receive "the things of the spirit of God", to communicate with God you need the appropriate receiver i.e. spirit. That's why the passage says: "nor can he (the man of body and soul) know

11 The same word, psuchikos (soul man, a man of body and soul) is also used in 1 Corinthians 15:44, 46, James 3:15 and Jude 19.
them because they are spiritually discerned". The man of body and soul is impossible to know the things of God for the simple reason that such things have to do with the spirit, "they are spiritually discerned", and since he lacks spirit he cannot know them. Summarizing all the above, Adam had body, formed from the dust of the ground, soul that gives life to the body and spirit to communicate with God. He was body, soul and spirit. Having established that, there is no question about what happened in the day that Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had told them that in the day that they would eat, they would surely die. Bearing in mind that death means the absence of a form of life, we can now see what died that day. Adam was body, soul and spirit and his body died many years after the day that he ate. Now since what permits to a body to live is soul, Adam had body and soul even after he ate from that tree. On the other hand, since God is always right in what He says, something had to die that day. Since Adam was body, soul and spirit before he ate and since, as we saw, he continued to have body and soul after he ate what was lost for him that day, was the spirit that God gave him. He continued to have body and soul but he didn't have spirit. The spirit departed from him and this was death for him since spirit, a form of life that he had before he ate, was no more there.

You see, how clearly the Bible settles the things when you leave it to interpret itself. It was actually this loss of the spirit that was restored in the day of Pentecost where holy spirit was made available, so that today after believing in Jesus Christ you are again body soul and spirit. However, this as well as other very interesting points on this topic will be examined in a next issue.
APPENDIX 2

Occurrences of the words "Sheol" and "Hades" in the Bible

I) The word Sheol

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 Sheol unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

Genesis 42:38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the Sheol.

Genesis 44:29 And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the Sheol.

Genesis 44:31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the Sheol.

Numbers 16:30 But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the Sheol; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.

Numbers 16:33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the Sheol, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.
Deuteronomy 32:22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Sheol, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

1 Samuel 2:6 The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the Sheol, and bringeth up.

2 Samuel 22:6 The sorrows of Sheol compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;

1 Kings 2:6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the Sheol in peace.

1 Kings 2:9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the Sheol with blood.

Job 7:9 As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the Sheol shall come up no more.

Job 11:8 It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?

Job 14:3 O that thou wouldest hide me in the Sheol, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!

Job 17:13 If I wait, the Sheol is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.

Job 17:16 They shall go down to the bars of the Sheol, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job 21:13 They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the Sheol.

Job 24:19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the Sheol those which have sinned.
Job 26:6 Sheol is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.

Psalms 6:5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the Sheol who shall give thee thanks?

Psalms 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, and all the nations that forget God.

Psalms 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Psalms 18:5 The sorrows of Sheol compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

Psalms 30:3 O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the Sheol: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

Psalms 31:17 Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the Sheol.

Psalms 49:14 Like sheep they are laid in the Sheol; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the Sheol from their dwelling.

Psalms 49:15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the Sheol: for he shall receive me. Selah.

Psalms 55:15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into Sheol: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Psalms 86:13 For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol.

Psalms 88:3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the Sheol.

Psalms 89:48 What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the Sheol? Selah.
Psalms 116:3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

Psalms 139:8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.

Psalms 141:7 Our bones are scattered at the Sheol's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.

Proverbs 1:12 Let us swallow them up alive as the Sheol; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:

Proverbs 5:5 Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on Sheol.

Proverbs 7:27 Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

Proverbs 9:18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

Proverbs 15:11 Sheol and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

Proverbs 15:24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from Sheol beneath.

Proverbs 23:4 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 27:20 Sheol and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Proverbs 30:16 The Sheol; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the Sheol, whither thou goest.
Song of Solomon 8:6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the Sheol: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

Isaiah 5:14 Therefore Sheol hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

Isaiah 14:9 Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Isaiah 14:11 Thy pomp is brought down to the Sheol, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

Isaiah 14:15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to Sheol, to the sides of the pit.

Isaiah 28:15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Isaiah 28:18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Isaiah 38:10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the Sheol: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

Isaiah 38:18 For the Sheol cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

Isaiah 57:9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto Sheol.
Ezekiel 31:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the Sheol I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

Ezekiel 31:16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to Sheol with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

Ezekiel 31:17 They also went down into Sheol with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.

Ezekiel 32:21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Sheol with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

Ezekiel 32:27 And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to Sheol with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the Sheol; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O Sheol, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Amos 9:9 Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

Jonah 2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of Sheol cried I, and thou hearest my voice.

Habakkuk 2:5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as Sheol, and is as death,
and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

II) The word Hades

Matthew 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to Hades: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Luke 10:15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to Hades.

Luke 16:23 And in Hades he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Acts 2:27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, neither his flesh did see corruption.

1 Corinthians 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?

Revelation 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death.

Revelation 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given
unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Revelation 20:14 And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.