

Is Man Immortal?

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In the Scriptures immortality is something that belongs intrinsically to God alone.

*“Now unto the King eternal, **immortal**, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (I Timothy 1:17).*

*“**Who only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (I Timothy 6:16).*

Immortality is defined by Webster as “the quality of never ceasing to live or exist,”¹ and by Strong as “deathlessness.”²

Resurrection brings immortality to man through the gospel of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ!

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Timothy 1:10).

Note that life and immortality are brought to light, *after* death has been abolished – Resurrection!

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Corinthians 15:53).

When will man take on immortality?

The context of this chapter (I Corinthians 15) is clear: it will take place in *resurrection!* According to this verse, immortality is *not* something that man has, but something that must be “put on.” In the resurrection God will clothe man in immortality!

Most of Christendom’s theology teaches that man is already immortal. This is accomplished through the doctrine of the “immortality of the soul;” but as we have already seen, the soul is said to die. The teaching that man is immortal stands in contrast to the truth of Scripture and discounts the real need of resurrection. It is a pagan teaching espoused and made popular by Plato.

1. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828.

2. James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Greek #110 “Athanasia”.

Luther on Immortality

“I permit the Pope to make articles of faith for himself and his faithful, such as ... *the soul is immortal*, with all those monstrous opinions to be found in the Roman dung-hill of decretals”³ (Martin Luther, in his response to Pope Leo X).

Darby on Immortality

“We would express our conviction that the idea of *the immortality of the soul* has no source in the gospel; that it comes on the contrary from the Platonists and ... the doctrine of *the immortality of the soul* came in to replace that of resurrection. This was about the time of Origen. ... This view has taken the place of the doctrine of the resurrection of the church, as the epoch of its joy and glory”⁴ (J.N. Darby, *The Hopes of the Church*, 1841).

The Effect of the False Teaching of Immortality on the Doctrine of Resurrection

“The generally accepted view of death makes the grand experience of resurrection to be an anti-climax, and, of no essential value to the believer. If, as it is so confidently asserted, death ushers the believer into the presence of Christ, then resurrection can add nothing to this, neither can it accomplish anything that will in any way compare with its grand experience. If the ‘orthodox’ conception of death is true, then the dead will be happy in heaven or miserable in hell whether they rise from the dead or not. But if scriptural conception is true, then resurrection is of the utmost importance, for without it then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished (I Corinthians 15:18).⁵

“Since death is the result of the sin of one man (Adam), and resurrection is the result of the righteousness of one man (Christ), it cannot be right to make the result of Adam’s sin to be the experience that will usher us into the blessings of Christ. We should be willing to reexamine any teaching that causes the hope of men in Christ to be in death rather than in resurrection. God’s answer to death is resurrection. God’s remedy for death is resurrection. We dishonor God’s testimony when we make resurrection to be the reversal of a disembodied condition. Resurrection is the reversal of death.

“We preach the death of Christ. But what would our answer be if an honest inquirer came to us asking if He really died, and if He were truly dead for three days and three nights. What answer would we give if asked, ‘If He had not risen from the dead, would He still be dead?’ Would we still be able to say, ‘We do not preach a dead Christ,’ if He had not risen from the dead?

“When the Apostle Paul sought to comfort the sorrowing saints in Thessalonica, did he comfort them by assuring them that their loved ones were happy in heaven, or did he set before them the hope of resurrection (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)? Did not the greatest Comforter Who ever spoke a word of consolation say to the one whose brother had recently died, ‘*Thy brother shall rise again*’ (John 11:23)? If these questions are honestly considered they will increase the conviction that the whole matter of death and resurrection needs to be restudied.”⁶

3. Cited by Otis Q. Sellers, *The Study of Human Destiny*, 1955, page 17.

4. Ibid.

5. “*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished*” (I Corinthians 15:17-18).

6. Sellers, pages 19-20.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”
(Romans 6:23).

“I do not believe that the dead are either conscious or unconscious. These words can be applied only to the living. I believe that the dead are dead until the resurrection.”⁷

Death being death, and not life, can be seen in Peter’s description of the current condition of David.

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

Conclusion

“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” (I Corinthians 15:54).

“Death is swallowed up in victory when Jesus Christ returns and raises the dead and transforms the living. ... The teaching that man is inherently immortal robs Jesus Christ of glory that belongs to Him, for it is only through Him and His saving work that man receives immortality.”⁸

7. Ibid., page 24.

8. Tom Ballinger, *Heaven Dwellers*.

Taken from chapter 5 of *The Salvation of All: Creation’s Final Destination* (A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation). Available from StudyShelf.com for **\$16.⁹⁵** (+**\$3.⁷⁵** s&h).

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