

On Death, Dying, and the Future Hope

Understanding Human Nature

Lesson #3 for October 15, 2022

Scriptures: Genesis 1:24-27; 2:7,19; Matthew 10:28; Ecclesiastes 12:1-7; 1 Kings 2:10; 22:40.

1. Consider this introduction from the Bible study guide [=BSG]:

The tension between God's word, " 'You shall die' " (*Gen. 2:16, 17, NRSV*) and Satan's counterfeit promise, " 'You certainly will not die!' " (*Gen. 3:4, NASB*) was not restricted to the Garden of Eden. It has echoed throughout history.

Many people try to harmonize the words of Satan with the words of God. For them, the warning, " 'You shall die,' " refers only to the perishable physical body, while the promise, " 'You certainly will not die!' " is an allusion to an immortal soul or spirit.

But this approach doesn't work. For example, can contradictory words of God and of Satan be harmonized? Is there an immaterial soul or spirit that consciously survives physical death? There are many philosophical and even scientific attempts to answer these questions. But, as Bible-based Christians, we must recognize that only the Almighty God, the One who created us, knows us perfectly (*see Psalm 139*). Thus, only in His Word to us, the Scriptures, can we find answers to these crucial questions.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, October 8.[§]

2. ***Why do you think Satan began his first conversation with humans by claiming that God had lied to them?*** (Genesis 3:4) No one had lied to them before!
3. ***So, what is actually the nature of humanity? What do our body, soul, spirit consist of? And what happened at creation? And what happens at death?***

Genesis 1:24-27: ²⁴ Then God commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small"—and it was done. ²⁵ So God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw.

²⁶ Then God said, "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small." ²⁷ So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 1:24-27). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[‡]

Genesis 2:7,19: ⁷ Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; **he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live....**

¹⁹ So he took some soil from the ground and formed all the animals and all the birds. Then he brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and that is how they all got their names.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] Although both animals and man alike were made from "the ground," the formation of the man was distinct from that of animals in two main ways. **First**, God shaped the man physically, and then "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (*Gen. 2:7, NIV*). He was a physical entity before he became a living one. **Second**, God created humanity as both

male and female in the very image and likeness of the Godhead (*Gen. 1:26, 27*).

Genesis 2:7 explains that the infusion of the “breath of life” into the physical body of Adam transformed him into “a living being” (Heb. *Nephesh chayyah*) or literally “a living soul.” It means that each of us does not *have* a soul that can exist apart from the body. Rather, each one of us *is* a living being or a living soul. The claim that this “soul” is a conscious entity that can exist separate from the human body is a pagan, not a biblical, idea. Understanding the true nature of humanity prevents us from accepting the popular notion of an immaterial soul and all the dangerous errors built upon that belief....

In fact, not only is the very nature of life a mystery (scientists still can’t agree on exactly what it means for something to be alive), but even more mysterious is the nature of consciousness. How does the few pounds of material tissue (cells and chemicals) in our heads, the brain, hold and create immaterial things, such as thoughts and emotions? Those who study this idea admit that we really don’t know.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, October 9.^{†‡§} [We cannot begin to explain the brain!][‡]

4. But, God has promised us not only life on this planet but also the possibility of eternal life as well!

5. ***What does the Bible say about the nature of the soul?***

Ezekiel 18:4,20: ⁴ “The life of every person belongs to me, the life of the parent as well as that of the child. The person [soul] who sins is the one who will die....

²⁰ “It is the one who sins who will die. A son is not to suffer because of his father’s sins, nor a father because of the sins of his son. A good person will be rewarded for doing good, and an evil person will suffer for the evil he does.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [Compare the second commandment.][‡]

6. **Romans 6:23** tells us clearly that sin pays its wage: death and **Romans 5:12** reaffirms that because sin has spread, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned.

7. ***So, what is the relationship between the life that exists in human beings and the life that exists in animals? Is there any real difference in the essential nature of humans and animals? Our brains can “think” and make moral choices!***

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20: ¹⁹After all, **the same fate awaits human beings and animals alike. One dies just like the other.** They are both the same kind of creature.

A human being is no better off than an animal, because life has no meaning for either. ²⁰They are both going to the same place—the dust. They both came from it; they will both go back to it.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] **The second concept is that the physical death of a person implies the cessation of his or her existence as a living soul (Hebrew *nephesh*).**

In Genesis 2:16, 17, God had warned Adam and Eve that if they should ever sin, by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, October 10.^{†‡§}

Genesis 2:16-17: ¹⁶He said to him, “You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Psalms 104:29: When you turn away, they are afraid; when you take away your breath, **they die**

and go back to the dust from which they came.—*Good News Bible*.*†

8. ***Do animals have souls and spirits? They have existence and breath! Can they sin?***
9. These verses tell us clearly that “the soul who sins shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4,20) “Sin pays its wage: death.” (Romans 6:23) That applies to all sinners which rules out the possibility that some part of man escapes the body and lives on.
10. However, let us be clear. God wants all of us to share His eternal life.
John 6:40: “For what my Father wants is that all who see the Son and believe in him should have eternal life. And I will raise them to life on the last day.”—*Good News Bible*.*
11. As we have discussed before, there was no reason for Christ to have come the first time if He does not plan to come back! And what will happen when He does come back?
12. ***Would there be any reason for a second coming if everyone who has died has already gone to their reward?***
13. Compare the statements in Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 12:1-7.
Genesis 2:7: Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live [“and man became a living soul” *KJV**].—*Good News Bible*.*††
Ecclesiastes 12:1-7: ¹So remember your Creator while you are still young, before those dismal days and years come when you will say, “I don’t enjoy life.” ²That is when the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars will grow dim for you, and the rain clouds will never pass away. ³Then your arms, that have protected you, will tremble, and your legs, now strong, will grow weak. Your teeth will be too few to chew your food, and your eyes too dim to see clearly. ⁴Your ears will be deaf to the noise of the street. You will barely be able to hear the mill as it grinds or music as it plays, but even the song of a bird will wake you from sleep. ⁵You will be afraid of high places, and walking will be dangerous. Your hair will turn white; you will hardly be able to drag yourself along, and all desire will have gone.
We are going to our final resting place, and then there will be mourning in the streets. ⁶The silver chain will snap, and the golden lamp will fall and break; the rope at the well will break, and the water jar will be shattered. ⁷**Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life will go back to God, who gave it to us.**—*Good News Bible*.*†
14. We are told that at the time of the flood:
Genesis 7:22: Everything on earth that breathed died.—*Good News Bible*.*
15. ***What is the essence of the “spirit” of a human being? Can it have a separate existence apart from the body? Do you have a spirit? Or, are you a spirit?***
16. ***In the ancient languages with limited vocabulary, the same word is used to mean wind, breath, and spirit.*** So, what happens to the spirit if the body dies? Is there some spirit that escapes and goes back to God? The breath of life that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and that He also gives to all other human beings, returns to God. In other words, life simply stops flowing into and through them. The life-giving principle that keeps every cell in our bodies working ceases; the cells die. It is like unplugging an electrical machine; when unplugged, it stops working.
17. But, God has a final answer to sin and death; He will finally eliminate both sin and death.
1 Corinthians 15:26: The last enemy to be defeated will be death.—*Good News Bible*.*

18. Now that we have seen some of the results of understanding or misunderstanding those first claims in the Garden of Eden, what other implications do we see that exist in modern times?

What is the meaning of *soul*? And *spirit*?

[BSG:] The Creation account makes it clear that humans were created by the Lord. Genesis 2:7 describes two of the Creator's intimate actions. The result of those actions was the creation of the first human being, Adam: "The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground [the first action] and [the second action] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and [the result] the man became a living being [*nefesh khayah*]" (*Gen. 2:7, NIV*). Ontologically speaking, we are a unit (body + spirit = living soul). God created Adam as a living person or a human being, literally, in Hebrew, "a living soul." The word "soul" means in this context "person," "being," "self." The basis of biblical anthropology is that we *are* a soul; we do not *have* a soul. Hans Wolff asks: "What does *nepheš* [soul] . . . mean here [in Gen. 2:7]? Certainly not soul [in the traditional dualistic sense]. *Nepheš* is designed to be seen together with the whole form of man, and especially with his breath; moreover man does not *have nepheš*, he *is nepheš*, he lives *as nepheš*." —Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), p. 10.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 39-40.†§ [Note that the brackets in the paragraph are in the Bible study guide; but, the brackets in the introduction are added.]‡

19. There are clear examples in the Bible in which the word *soul* refers to an entire person.

Genesis 46:15,22,25-27: ¹⁵These are the sons that Leah had borne to Jacob in Mesopotamia, besides his daughter Dinah. In all, his descendants by Leah numbered 33....

²²These fourteen are the descendants of Jacob by Rachel....

²⁵These seven are the descendants of Jacob by Bilhah, the slave woman whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel.

²⁶ The total number of the direct descendants of Jacob who went to Egypt was 66, not including his sons' wives. ²⁷Two sons were born to Joseph in Egypt, bringing to seventy the total number of Jacob's family who went there.—*Good News Bible*.*

Genesis 46:26-27: ²⁶ All the **souls** that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six;

²⁷ And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two **souls**: all the **souls** of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.—*The Holy Bible: King James Version*.* (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Genesis 46:26–27). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.† [Clearly, a soul is a person.]‡

Acts 2:41: Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.—*King James Version*.*

[BSG:] Thus, everything we are and do must be sanctified by God. Within our existence as humans, we experience life on a physical, emotional, mental/intellectual, spiritual, and social level. One cannot separate these aspects. For example, when we engage in physical exercise (whether we jog,

work in the garden, or walk), we also engage our feelings; our thoughts; and our mental, spiritual (in the event that we pray or recite biblical text), and social faculties (if we are not alone) during the time of our activity.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40.‡

20. As we have seen, many verses in Scripture (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7; Psalm 32:2; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 20:15; 21:27) make it clear that just as a person, or soul or being, was created by God in the beginning, that life-principle continues in our lives; when we stop breathing, that whole process is reversed. **The body and the soul die; the spirit ceases to function.**

21. Many significant theologians from different backgrounds have supported this idea.

[BSG:] Ezekiel makes it plain that “soul” is mortal when he states: “The one [Hebrew, *nephesh*, i.e., human person] who sins is the one who will die” (*Ezek. 18:4, NIV*). A soul (i.e., person) who does not live according to the will of God will perish. It means that a soul (human being) can sin and die. Jesus confirms it: “Be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (*Matt. 10:28, NIV*). Note that Jesus speaks about the whole person (“soul and body,” internal and external dimensions of our existence) being destroyed in hell (*gehenna*), in the lake of fire.

The soul does not exist without the body and does not survive the death of the body. Only God is able to kill the soul, which means the soul is not immortal. **Soul here means the life of a person, one’s total existence and destiny (it does not refer to an *immortal soul or spirit*);** meanwhile, body represents only a temporary physical existence.

Claude Tresmontant correctly asserts: “By applying to the Hebrew *Nephesch* [*sic*] [soul] . . . the characteristics of the Platonic *psyche* [soul], . . . we let the real meaning of *Nephesch* [*sic*] escape us and furthermore, we are left with innumerable pseudo-problems.”—Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, translation by Michael Francis Gibson (New York: Desclee Company, 1960), p. 94.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41.†§

22. So, what does the Bible say about the consciousness and the activities of the dead?

Psalms 115:17: The LORD is not praised by the dead,
by any who go down to the land of silence. [Footnote: *land of silence*: The world of the dead.]—*Good News Bible*.*†§

Psalms 146:4: When they die, they return to the dust;
on that day all their plans come to an end.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Ecclesiastes 9:5,10: ⁵Yes, the living know they are going to die, but **the dead know nothing**. They have no further reward; they are completely forgotten....

¹⁰Work hard at whatever you do, because **there will be no action, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in the world of the dead**—and that is where you are going.—*Good News Bible*.*†

23. ***There are many people who have claimed and still claim that they can communicate with the dead? Is there some being that is talking to them? Who is that?***

24. If these biblical statements are correct, what does that tell us about the condition of man in death? It should tell us that **there is no everlasting burning hell, or even temporary purgatory waiting for those who die unsaved**. Furthermore, God has a wonderful future for those who accept His plan for their lives; that plan is everlasting life. Notice:

[BSG:] According to **Psalm 146**, the mental activities of the individual cease with death: **“His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish”** (*Ps. 146:4, NASB*). This is a perfect biblical depiction of what happens at death.

Ecclesiastes 9 adds that “the dead know nothing” and in the grave “there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom” (*Eccles. 9:5, 10, NKJV*). These statements confirm the biblical teaching that the dead are unconscious.

The biblical teaching of unconsciousness in death should not generate any panic in Christians. First of all, **there is no everlasting burning hell or temporary purgatory waiting for those who die unsaved**. Second, there is an amazing reward waiting for those who die in Christ.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, October 12.†§

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment.** “If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death,” “he shall never taste of death.” **To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness.** The life is hid with Christ in God, and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” John 8:51, 52; Colossians 3:4.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 787.1.††

25. So, it should be clear that when a person dies, his/her thoughts perish. The next thought that a dead person will have will be at the point of resurrection. The righteous will be raised at the second coming and the wicked at the third coming. They will be completely unaware of anything that has happened between the moment of their death and the moment of their resurrection. The time will pass as if in the twinkling of a moment.
26. One of the clearest examples of death being a kind of sleep is the story of the resurrection of Lazarus as recorded in John 11 in which **Jesus said, “Lazarus sleepeth.”** (*KJV**)†

John 11:11-15: ¹¹ These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend **Lazarus sleepeth**; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

¹² Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. ¹³ Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

¹⁴ Then said Jesus unto them plainly, **Lazarus is dead.**

¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.—*King James Version.*†*

[BSG:] **Belief in the immortality of the soul is taken from Greek philosophy. Pythagoras** (a younger contemporary of Daniel) based his religious teachings on the tenet of metempsychosis. Metempsychosis posits that the soul never dies but, rather, is destined to a cycle of rebirths until able to free itself from this cycle through the purity of its life. **Pythagoras** believed in transmigration, or the reincarnation of the soul again and again into the bodies of humans, animals, or vegetables until it became immortal. Pythagoras’s ideas of reincarnation were influenced by ancient Greek religion.

Plato (roughly speaking, a contemporary of Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet) enhanced this Hellenistic teaching, making the belief of the immortal human soul so prevalent that it became a popular view. During the intertestamental period, the teaching of eternal torture (*Jth. 16:17*) and the

practice of praying for the dead (*2 Macc. 12:39–45*) began to penetrate Judaism (for exceptions to these trends, however, see also *Tob. 14:6–8*; *Sir. 7:17*; *Sir. 19:2, 3*; *Sir. 21:9*; *Sir. 36:7–10*; *Bar. 4:32–35*; *1 Macc. 2:62–64*; *2 Macc. 7:9, 14*). Flavius Josephus mentions that the Pharisees believed in the immortality of the soul (see Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2.8.14; *Antiquities* 18.1.2, 3).

Tertullian (c. 155–220), a Christian apologist, was one of the first among Christians who claimed that humans have an immortal soul: “I may use, therefore, the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, ‘Every soul is immortal.’”—Tertullian, “On the Resurrection of the Flesh,” *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2004), p. 547.

Oscar Cullmann challenges Tertullian’s view and stands in opposition to it. Cullmann wrote a very influential book, and in it he argues that the idea of human immortality is of Greek origin, and theologians cannot have it both ways: a belief in an immortal soul and immortality received as a gift at the time of resurrection (Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* [New York: Macmillan Company, 1958]).

Brevard Childs explains: “It has long been noticed that according to the Old Testament man does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul (Gen. 2:7). That is to say, he is a complete entity and not a composite of parts from body, soul and spirit.”—Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 199.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41-42.†‡§ [Note that the brackets in the paragraph are in the Bible study guide; but, the brackets in the introduction are added.]‡

27. ***How can God re-create beings after they have been dead and make them just exactly as they were before? Today, even a simple user can download files and settings “from the cloud” to a new computer or phone! God can do even more!***

28. The Bible uses some interesting expressions to describe what happens to people when they die. Notice these passages:

Genesis 25:8: Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied *with life*; and **he was gathered to his people**.—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*.* (1995). (Genesis 25:8). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.†§ [Abraham was buried alongside Sarah.]‡

2 Samuel 7:12: ““When your days are complete and **you lie down with your fathers**, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.””—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*.*†

1 Kings 22:40: So Ahab **slept with his fathers**, and Ahaziah his son became king in his place.—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*.*†

29. Another way of expressing Old Testament ideas is found in the following passages.

Deuteronomy 32:50: “Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be **gathered to your people**, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was **gathered to his people**.”—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*.*† [Was Moses “gathered to his people”?]‡

30. What does the fact that both good and bad kings went to the same place at death teach us about the nature of death? (2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chronicles 32:33)

2 Kings 24:6: So Jehoiakim **slept with his fathers**, and Jehoiachin his son became king in his place.—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.**†

2 Kings 24:6: Jehoiakim died, and his son Jehoiachin succeeded him as king.—*Good News Bible.**

2 Chronicles 32:33: So Hezekiah **slept with his fathers**, and they buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. And his son Manasseh became king in his place.—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.**†

2 Chronicles 32:33: Hezekiah died and was buried in the upper section of the royal tombs. All the people of Judah and Jerusalem paid him great honour at his death. His son Manasseh succeeded him as king.—*Good News Bible.**

31. Another biblical way of describing *death* is by stating that someone *rested* with their forefathers. About King David's death, the Bible says that he "**rested with his fathers**, and was buried in the City of David." (1 Kings 2:10, *NKJV**†) The same expression is used in reference to several other Hebrew kings, both faithful kings and unfaithful kings.

1 Kings 2:10: Then David **slept with his fathers** and was buried in the city of David.—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.**†

So, what can we conclude from these ideas?

[BSG:] We can identify at least three meaningful aspects of resting with the forebearers. **One** is the idea that sooner or later the time will come when we need to rest from our own tiring labors and sufferings. **Another idea** is that we are not the first and only ones to follow that undesirable trail, because our forebearers already have gone ahead of us. A **third** idea is that, by being buried close to them, we are not alone but remain together even during the unconsciousness of death. **This might not make much sense to some modern individualist cultures, but it was very meaningful in ancient times.**

Those who die in Christ can be buried close to their loved ones, but even so there is no communication between them. They will remain unconscious until that glorious day when they will be awakened from their deep sleep to rejoin their loved ones who died in Christ.

Imagine what it would be like if the dead were actually conscious and could see what life was like down here, especially for their loved ones, who often suffer terribly after their death. Why, then, should the truth that the dead sleep be so comforting to the living?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, October 13.†‡

32. **What do we know about the future existence of the wicked?**

Revelation 20:7-15: ⁷ After the thousand years are over, Satan will be let loose from his prison, ⁸and he will go out to deceive the nations scattered over the whole world, that is, Gog and Magog. Satan will bring them all together for battle, as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. ⁹They spread out over the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people and the city that he loves. But fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. ¹⁰Then the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the

false prophet had already been thrown; and **they will be tormented day and night for ever [sic] and ever.**

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sits on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence and were seen no more. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing before the throne. Books were opened, and then another book was opened, the book of the living. The dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. ¹³Then the sea gave up its dead. Death and the world of the dead also gave up the dead they held. **And all were judged according to what they had done.** ¹⁴**Then death and the world of the dead were thrown into the lake of fire. (This lake of fire is the second death.)** ¹⁵Whoever did not have their names written in the book of the living were thrown into the lake of fire.—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

[EGW:] If it were true that the souls of all men passed directly to heaven at the hour of dissolution, then we might well covet death rather than life. Many have been led by this belief to put an end to their existence. When overwhelmed with trouble, perplexity, and disappointment, it seems an easy thing to break the brittle thread of life and soar away into the bliss of the eternal world.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 539.2.‡

[EGW:] **Nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures is found the statement that the righteous go to their reward or the wicked to their punishment at death. The patriarchs and prophets have left no such assurance. Christ and His apostles have given no hint of it. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 549.3-550.0.†‡

33. ***Why does the Bible say that the Devil, the beast, and the false prophet will be tormented in the lake of fire forever and ever?***

34. What is the meaning of “he shall serve him **forever**”? (Exodus 21:6, *NKJV**†)

35. To the ancient near-eastern mind the vast stretches of time that we try to envision as “forever” were unfathomable. To them the term forever just meant “as long as it is supposed to last.” The Greek lexicon describes this as “of time to come which, if it has no end, is also known as eternity.”—Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*: (4th Ed.) University of Chicago Press. January 1, 1958.

36. While these verses suggest that *forever* does not have to go on for a long time, the righteous can be assured that eternal life will have no end because “there will be no more death.” (See Revelation 21:4; compare Revelation 20:14.) The servant mentioned in this verse (Exodus 21:6) clearly could not serve beyond his own death! The words *forever*, *eternal*, and *everlasting* all have similar meanings in the ancient languages. Compare Jude 7.

37. Since only God has immortality, it should be clear that for us to live forever, we must depend upon His gift of eternal life, given to us by God at His second coming.

1 Timothy 6:16: He [God] alone is immortal; he lives in the light that no one can approach. No one has ever seen him; no one can ever see him. To him be honour and eternal dominion! Amen.—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

[BSG:] Eternal life is God’s gift to those who believe in Christ Jesus as their personal Savior (*John 3:16; John 5:24, 25; John 10:27, 28; John 17:3; Rom.*

2:7; Rom. 6:22, 23; Gal. 6:8). Immortality is conditional and depends on our positive response to God's goodness and on our acceptance of the gospel. **This immortality is given to believers at the second coming of Christ** (1 Cor. 15:51–55, 1 Thess. 4:13–18).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 42.†‡§

1 Corinthians 15:51-55: ^{51–52} Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed. ⁵³For what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die. ⁵⁴So when this takes place, and the mortal has been changed into the immortal, then the scripture will come true: “Death is destroyed; victory is complete!”

⁵⁵ “Where, Death, is your victory?

Where, Death, is your power to hurt?”—*Good News Bible*.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: ¹³ Our brothers and sisters, we want you to know the truth about those who have died, so that you will not be sad, as are those who have no hope. ¹⁴We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died believing in him.

¹⁵ What we are teaching you now is the Lord's teaching: we who are alive on the day the Lord comes will not go ahead of those who have died. ¹⁶**There will be the shout of command, the archangel's voice, the sound of God's trumpet, and the Lord himself will come down from heaven. Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first; ¹⁷then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸So then, encourage one another with these words.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

38. In this lesson we have seen clearly that **God is the only Source of life**. He keeps us alive even in our sinful state by granting us the life-giving power that belongs only to Him. **When a person dies, that life-giving power ceases to flow into their bodies; they cease to exist. They have no thoughts, no feelings, they make no plans until the day of their resurrection**, either at the second coming or the third coming.

39. Our only hope for the future is to claim a place among God's faithful people so that we may share in His everlasting life.

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