

Does Man Have an "Immortal Soul"?

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Most NT scholars today recognize that there is nothing in the Bible about an immortal soul. Instead, the believer's hope is the resurrection and transformation of the *person* himself so that he can "inherit the kingdom of God" in the "age to come" (I Cor. 15:50; Luke 20:34-38). I quote standard works:

Although the Hellenistic term *psyche* (soul) appears more frequently in the later epistles of the NT ... it must not be imagined that this implies the concept of the soul as the real and valuable part of man, the eternal and permanent element. That would be a misunderstanding. This kind of thinking ... deduces the immortality and permanence of the soul from its own particular quality. **This is just what the NT does not teach.** The soul is simply that area in which decisions are made concerning life and death, salvation and destruction. Moreover, every statement about the *psyche* in the NT is linked in context with

eschatological statements about renewal and resurrection ["Soul," *The New Int. Dict. of NT Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 686, emphasis mine].

In Isaiah 26:19 and Dan. 12:2, it is the faithful individual members of God's people who are given personal assurance that their fidelity to God will be rewarded when they are raised up from among the dead. This hope was given concrete expression in the early Christian assurance that God raised Jesus from the dead and that his people will share in the resurrection of the faithful and in the age to come (I Cor. 15) ... In Hellenistic tradition there was a belief that the human soul would be released from the body at death and might ascend to the realm of the eternal and the divine ... But when Paul describes the state of the faithful in the new age, it is not in terms of a disembodied soul but as a transformed human body - the spiritual body (I Cor. 15:35-49). Similarly, in Rev. 20:11-22:5, the righteous find their ultimate fulfillment - not as souls ascending to heaven - but in the new order, the new city, and the new temple, which come down out of heaven to a renewed earth (Rev. 21:10) [*The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, p. 544].

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