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Presentation Transcript
Life After Death, Part 4 – Spirit in Man
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In the first part of this series, *Life After Death*, I mentioned that the concept of an immortal soul cannot be found in the Bible. It is, instead, a Greek concept. If that's really true, how did the whole of Christianity come to believe it? I can point to the history of it, but I can't for the life of me explain how that happened. The Bible is so clear on the issue. And yet, the idea of all of us having an immortal soul has seeped into the psyches of most people. So let's debunk that.

Let's go to Matthew 10:28 to start out. Jesus – who's He? Well, He's the founder of our religion. This is what He said.... Someone asked Him, "If they accuse You of being the devil, what would they do to those who follow You?" And we're breaking into the middle of His response in Matthew 10:28. He said:

Matthew 10:28 – *Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

So right there – right out of Jesus' own mouth – it's clear that we do *not* an immortal soul. God can kill it. There *is* a soul, but it's not immortal. We've read that one with our own eyes. Let's take a look at something else. If there is no immortal soul, but a soul can be killed, what does that mean? How are we supposed to think about it then? Let's look at some words. Let's look at one of the words He used there.

Soul – what did that mean to the people He was speaking to? Here it is from the Louw & Nida Domain-Oriented Lexicon in the Greek: *the essence of life in terms of thinking, willing and feeling; inner-self – mind, thoughts, feelings, heart, being*. That's what it meant to them – nothing about immortality. I think the Greek word in the Bible is the same word we use today to encompass the Louw & Nida definition – *psyche*.

In the Old Testament, the word was *nephesh*. That's Hebrew. God breathed the breathe of life into Adam and he became a living soul – or *nephesh*. God made Adam's body out of the dust and He breathed the breathe of life into him, and it says, *then he became a living soul*. Body and

psyche together make a human being. So it's not that we *have* a soul, it's that we *are* one. So he could think, will, feel. He had an inner self – a mind, thoughts, feelings, heart, being. That's what that means.

So each person is given, as well as a body, a *nephesh* – a psyche – a soul. But it's not immortal. Daniel Siegel, the great brain researcher, said that not everything that goes on in the mind can be explained by brain science. I was in a conference listening to him, and I really sat up and took notice when he said that. So, besides what's physical, there's something else there that cannot be measured, seen in a brain scan – something that's beyond the physical. And that something else is the spirit revealed to us by God in the Bible. Paul explains it this way – 1 Corinthians 2:10 through 12.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 – *These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. So what's he talking about? Well, he's talking about spiritual information. About what happens to us after we die would be a good example. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. And he's talking about the Holy Spirit, which is God's Spirit. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God – except they have the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God that we might understand the things freely given to us by God.*

So people have a spirit that gives them certain abilities to understand. And God has a Spirit that expands on that ability. When God gives us *His* Spirit – the Holy Spirit – that adds to our human spirit to understand some things of God.

I was talking to two women on Zoom recently in my counseling practice – both on the same day. Neither of them have ever met each other, know each other's names. Before we started working together, I had never met either one of them. And as I got to know them, as I listened to them express their deepest feelings and concerns, I noted they expressed their hopes and longings in the same way I did. The emphasis was on the same things. The understanding of what's going to happen was the same – that opposed to many others who do not know about the Holy Spirit or the resurrection or what God has in store for us. I came to this realization: all three of us think about the same things of God in exactly the same way. Now that's modified a little bit by our own personal spirit and the things that have happened to us, but the language is the same, the thoughts are the same. It's uncanny really. There isn't any way to explain it in physical terms.

In Ecclesiastes 3:21, we learn that animals have a spirit too – a psyche. That's why dogs don't think like cats, for example – really different. And that's why humans have an ability to reason beyond animals, though nothing that different can be seen in their brains. If you have an animal that has a brain the size of a human, they look a lot alike – not different enough to warrant the huge difference we see in animals and human beings. And that difference demonstrates what Paul is saying about the difference between the mind of God and the mind of man. Just like we know a lot more than animals, God knows a lot more than we do.

Now, there's another word here – and this is a little bit off track from the spirit in man, but I promised I'd cover this. Jesus used another word in this verse that was translated *hell*. In my Bible – the one I'm using – there's a little number out to the end of that word. You click on it and it says *Gehenna* – capitalized. You can look it up yourself, if you'd like. But *Gehenna* is a term that has been massaged over time. Even by the time of Jesus, it took on a different meaning than it did in the beginning. It refers to a place – the Valley of Hinnom. I guess the locals would call it a *wadi* south of Jerusalem. And it's here that people burned trash in olden times, and animal carcasses, etc. So it was like the dump. It had a really bad connotation to it, because years before Jesus, people burned their children as sacrifices to Molech in this place. That was the connotation Jesus placed in the minds of those who heard Him. “Don't be afraid of people who can kill your body, but be afraid of the one who can burn up your body and destroy your spirit in *Gehenna*.” *Gehenna* is capitalized because, as we're going to learn next week, that is a word that is used to represent final judgment. But hell fire is the same kind of fire we all know. It burns things up.

Okay, so that was a bit off track, but let's get back to the spirit in man. It says in Ecclesiastes 12:7:

Ecclesiastes 12:7 – *...and the dust returns to the earth as it was* – this is talking about when someone dies. So we know we bury people or they're cremated. *...the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*

So that's a pretty clear picture of what happens when we die. Our body decomposes, our spirit goes back to God, Who put it in us originally. People say, “Well, isn't that the soul, then, going back to God?” But we just read that that can be killed. So, no, it's not an immortal soul. It's something different.

Also mentioned in the New Testament, in Hebrews 12:12, it's not immortal – no indication of consciousness, but containing a record of us. This is also mentioned in the New Testament in Hebrews 12:22 and 23.

Hebrews 12:22-24 – *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect* – it says the *righteous* here, which means the same thing – *and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.*

So there in heaven are the spirits of just men made perfect – not immortal, no indication of consciousness. But it is recorded that they are righteous. So there is something recorded in the spirit there that let's us know that. It is some way to record, perhaps, everything about us.

People have asked me, “Well, what does God do with it?” – with that spirit. Well, it doesn't say,

but when the first resurrection occurs, using this as an example, how will God resurrect us from the dead, except He have a record of what each one of us was like? We think, “Well, God remembers everything.” Well, yes He does, but He also has these things up there for a reason. So maybe it’s very important, and there needs to be something kept for posterity. I don’t know.

So it says, “the spirits of just men made perfect.” So that spirit identifies at least the perfection in people. In the second resurrection, where the knee bone connects to the thigh bone, how is God going to resurrect bodies that have lone since disintegrated? How’s He going to do that, except that He has a record of that body and that psyche? It doesn’t say that that’s how He’ll do it, but we know He’s going to do that. We think that this is all so hard that we seek some kind of mechanical explanation of how it’s going to happen – like a blueprint for a building, for example. I’ve seen that example used many times. But bringing a life into existence is easy for God. It’s as easy for Him as breathing on them. It may even be less difficult to restore life than to create a new one.

So, to recap this one. There’s no teaching about an immortal soul. The word *soul* translated in the Bible is about our psyche – everything about us – no implication of eternal life. Think about this: We always talk about how Jesus Christ came that we could have the gift of eternal life. Well, if we have an immortal soul, we would already have it, wouldn’t we? So where’s the gift? Instead, there is a spirit in each person that makes us a human being. And that goes back to God when we die. And if God chooses not to resurrect us, then that spirit is going to die, because it’s not immortal.

I want to talk a little bit now, because this does bother people. Everybody asks me stuff about this. There are all sorts of common ideas based on this idea of an immortal soul. Ghosts – ghosts are the immortal souls of people who have died and are wandering the earth. That’s what a lot of people think. But there’s no such thing. When we die, our body decomposes and our spirit goes to God. Same thing for haunted houses – a house inhabited by the dead. Well, that doesn’t happen. The dead are dead. They’re asleep. Then there are experiences where people have seen the dead, or seen aspects of their dead.

I talked to a woman once. Her daughter had committed suicide when she was twelve years old. Her daughter had three favorite colors and she would always see these colors together in different places. They are very common colors – one was purple, and one was that sort of high visibility yellow – a real vibrant yellow – and then I forget what the third one was. But you see that a lot. She told me that that was her daughter who kind of teased her a lot and was playful in teasing her. This, I think, was a delusion. It’s not just because I don’t believe in immortal souls, but because I think the delusion was in place for a reason – and that was to comfort her – to make her feel closer to her daughter – to help her get past the trauma of what occurred to her. I noticed – and this is one of the reasons why I think it was just what I say it is – as she went through her therapy – and we did EMDR and helped her get past the trauma and she started adjusting to the fact that her daughter was dead – that delusion became less and less a part of her

life. So strong evidence to indicate that it was there to help her. I've noticed that many delusions that people have are ways to cope with what has happened.

My mother, after the death of my father, would look over from her recliner and see him sitting in his recliner. She asked me if there was something wrong with her. And I said, "Mom, that happens to lots of people because they miss the person that died and they see them for a second or two. So it's not him. It's just your mind creating something there. She told me about a month later that she swapped recliners – moved hers to the other side of the room and his where she was – and that stopped it.

I have another story about something like this. It isn't actually seeing somebody that's dead, but this is about a hallucination actually – not a delusion. What my mother saw was a hallucination. There was this boy whose parents were in the midst of a divorce and he was fifteen at the time. He'd been told, as I recall, by his step-father – who was divorcing his mother – that he and his brothers and sisters were the ones responsible for the divorce. So he had huge guilt. And he said that he saw something pacing up and down the hallway at night. The light was on in the hallway. He could see the shadow of the footprints with the light under the bottom of the door. And I asked him, "Have you ever gone out and looked at that?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "What did you see?" He said, "Well, he was at the end of the doorway, and when I opened the door, he turned and looked at me." I said, "What did he look like?" And he said, "All I could see was a black shape. There were no features, but it was a man wearing a hat – like a cowboy hat." I said, "What happened? Did he make any aggressive moves toward you or do anything?" His mother told me she thought it was a demon. He said, "No, he just looked at me." I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I went back in the bedroom." And I said, "What did he do next?" He said, "He just kept walking back and forth all night. Every time I'd wake up, there he'd be and in the morning he was gone."

So we call that the *dark man*. I've had other people see him before. And I think that was a hallucination because I asked the boy if he'd ever done anything to him to hurt him, and he said, "No." And I said, "Well, how do you know he's not there to protect you?" And he never saw him again after that. That's kind of like my mom switching chairs. I just reframed it with a different way for him to think about it and it disappeared. I think that this whole idea of an immortal soul is wrapped up in a lot of these things – not the demon part – but seeing people walking around – the dead people.

I had another client. She also was fifteen, as it turns out. The boy I told you about wasn't a client, but she told me one day, when she came to her therapy session – I was working on her for her trauma) and she had another talk therapist she talked to.... She told me that her other therapist told her that she was developing schizophrenia. And I said, "Why would she say that?" She said, "Well, I told her about my closet." And I said, "Tell me about it." She said, "Well, I can hear noises in it sometimes. My dog and cat won't go in there when it's in there making those noises. And I've had my room get cold from the top down once. And I felt like it was close to me." And

I said, “And that’s supposed to be that you have schizophrenia?” And she said, “Well, that’s what she said.” And I said, “Does that mean your dog and cat have schizophrenia too?” She started to laugh. I said, “What do you think it is?” She said, “I think it’s a demon.” I said, “Well, there are such things. The Bible teaches us that. She told me that her father told her this story out of the Bible, where these guys tried to cast a demon out of this man, and it turned the tables on them, and they had to run down the street naked and bleeding. And she said, “I wouldn’t want that!” And I said, No, we definitely don’t want that that!” So I said, “Here’s what you do. You just sleep out in the living room on the couch, and every morning and every night, you ask God to make it go away and leave you alone. And don’t try to do anything yourself.” When she came in for her next week, she said, “It only took three days.” I said, “I suppose the cat and dog are now lounging on your bed?” She said, “Yes, and it feels good now.”

So people have all kinds of ideas. See, sometimes people think they’re hallucinations – auditory and sensory – and then, like hers, were maybe just auditory – when actually it’s a demon, and other times they think they’re just hallucinations, when actually, it might be an evil spirit. So demons get mixed up in all this, too. There is such a thing as demonic influence, as in her case, or demon possession. She wasn’t possessed by a demon – very, very rare. There is such a thing as black magic. I’ve talked to many clients that got involved in that and wished they hadn’t. There are witches and mediums. And, of course, everybody’s heard of voodoo. The biblical injunction is to stay away all these things. No medium is going to help you talk to dead loved ones. You might be talking to a fallen spirit instead, masquerading as. The Bible mentions the witch of Endor, who was the medium where Saul, after outlawing all those practices, seeks out a medium to conjure Samuel for him. The reason that is forbidden in the Bible is because it has to do with the devil and the spirit realm. It says that when the devil fell, he drew a third of the stars after him. So there are former angels who work in concert with the devil. Some of them, I think, might be mentally ill. And others of them are very high functioning and probably do the most important jobs for him.

I bring that up because people get that confused with ghosts and all that stuff. Sometimes, demons, knowing what we believe about the immortal soul, masquerade as dead people. But, if you read what the Bible says about it, you’ll know the truth, and you’ll know what to think about it, and you’ll know what to do.

Something else that’s much more common than any of this kind of stuff, that I’ve heard of, is just strange events. When Elaine and I hadn’t been married very long at all, and we lived in an apartment, and we only had one car, but I had been gone for a couple days out of town with my boss – we lived in Little Rock, Arkansas, at that time – and we were coming home late at night. And right at about midnight – and I remember looking at the dashboard and seeing the clock there – we were coming up over a freeway overpass, and right in the middle of the slow lane, which we were in, we hit a semi tire that was laying flat in the middle of the lane. And our car, which was a Chrysler 300 – a great big car – went airborne and came down kind of on its front suspension. It broke the suspension. We were okay. Somebody stopped and they notified the

police, and so Jacksonville police came with a wrecker. I don't think they sent out the EMTs back then. Everything was okay, but about midnight – about the time that happened – my wife sat straight up in bed with this premonition that something bad had happened. And twenty minutes later, the phone rang. And when she answered it, it was Jacksonville Police Department, and the guy said, “He's safe.”

So how did that happen? Well, I believe that the spirit – the human spirit – goes outside the bounds of our own body. I hear all the time about connectiveness between people. People have hunches and premonitions and things like that prove to be true. There isn't any physical explanation for it. But there is a spirit in man. And there is the Holy Spirit. So I believe – especially when these things are positive, like ours was – that that has to do with something beyond the physical. So you can make it out what you will, but I hear about things like this – people have hunches – “I just knew this was going to happen,” or that – and there really wasn't any other way to know it, except being connected to the person. There are a *lot* of things that happen, that cannot be explained physically, within the human mind.

Now there is one other minor area I want to talk about today. And I just call it *commercial magic* – you know, the people that are magicians you see on TV and all of that. There was a guy in our church years ago, and we'd go to a YOU basketball game, and all the little kids in whole place would be up in the bleachers around this guy, because he would do magic tricks. I was at his house one time and I asked him if, in every case, it was like that. And he said, “Well, I don't know every magician, but he said (they had a baby grand piano in their living room), “For about fifty bucks worth of parts, you could buy at Home Depot – I guess they didn't have Home Depot back then – but at a hardware store and a lumber yard, he could cause that piano to rise up and rotate 360 in the air and go back down, and I would never see how it was done. And I believed him, because I'd seen him do other things somewhat similar to that. So that's all just tricks where people cause distractions – cause your eye to follow one thing when they're doing something else with the other hand – diversionary stuff. There's nothing bad about it. Now I'm not saying that some people that are magicians haven't delved into the negative side of things and gotten extra help, but mostly not.

So, Paul said spiritual maturity is the ability to distinguish good from evil. If you dabble in these things, you are spiritually immature at the very least, and sometimes, in great peril because of it. I have seen people in my practice who did that who never quite recovered from it.

Paul said we should put our minds on the grace of Jesus Christ and godly things. That's where the benefit is.

We have one presentation left in this series, and that is of eternal judgement, which Paul says is the last fundamental doctrine of Christ, mentioned in Hebrews 5:13. It's so big I might have to turn it into two, but as it stands right now, it's one.

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Don't forget to check out our Website. Lots of good things in there about judgment and life after death. I also want to shout out a big thank you to all those who have been donating to us – helping us get the message out and educate folks about the things of God.

So until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.