

CHAPTER 4

DIFFERING VIEWS

“...The scripture cannot be broken...” ~ Yeshua

Now that we have clearly seen where Sheol is located and examined more than a few scriptures showing the complexity of our lives as a union of our spirit and soul in a fleshly body, we need to examine the main views used to oppose this understanding. Only God’s word can resolve the mystery of life after death, so let’s get back to it. We’ll begin by reviewing a few passages that have confused some teachers and thus blinded those parishioners that did not study independently of their church’s or synagogue’s teachings.

Eccl 3:19-21

19 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity.

20 All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.

21 Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?

While Shlomo (Solomon) seems to lament over the fact that men die and return to the dust just like beasts, there are two poignant points worth noting: 1] “*Who understands” the spirit of man which goes up at death and the spirit of the beast that goes down into the earth at death?* (Eccl 3:21)” and 2] “*All go to one place*”. As far as point #2 about ‘all going to one place,’ while the bodies of both man and beast are made of the dust, we know that the graves of the dead are not all in one place. In fact, they are scattered all around the world! Neither do animals die ‘all in one place.’ However, Sheol is “one place.” As for point #1 about the spirit, Solomon himself clarifies a distinction between man and beast – only the spirit of man goes back up to God at death.

We see that Solomon touched on this subject more concisely later on in the book of Ecclesiastes, where he encouraged us to make our life count while we can, for we will all face God.

Eccl 12:7

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Some have misapplied this passage in an attempt to support their teaching that there is no existence beyond death – something the scriptures do not teach.

Eccl 9:5-6

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.

6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy
have now perished; nevermore will they have a
share in anything done under the sun.

Some believe that this means, “if the dead know nothing,” then how can they have a conscious soul? This passage is not saying that the dead have their memories wiped or that their soul will not continue to have life. It is saying that men are soon forgotten after their death. With the exception of a few “stand-outs” who have been recorded in the annuals of history, most are forgotten within a few generations at best. The knowledge about them and their deeds is soon gone. No one remembers. Further, the dead have no more

control of what is happening on earth “under the sun” (Isa 63:16, Job 14:21). The above passage is not saying that a person has their memories wiped at death! What do we get to take with us at death? By God’s grace, we get to take our character, our life giving spirit, the life of our soul and our precious memories.

So what does, “*nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun*” mean? How can our soul survive our death in light of this passage?

The key to understanding these verses is given within the context of verses themselves. They really need no interpretation. To be understood, the reader only need receive the full thought expressed without taking anything out of context or imputing our pre-conceived beliefs upon the passage. Notice the words, “anything done under the sun.” The dead have no more portions of this life under the sun. It’s an encouragement that we are to make all that this physical life has to offer really count. We’re put on this globe that orbits the sun for a reason. We are to make the most of it while we are here! We will not be able to continue the plans and dreams we have under the sun, in the netherworld. Today’s life under the sun, with its hopes, frustrations,

love and the myriad of pursuits it offers, comes around for each of us to make the most of today. Don't waste it! That's all this passage is saying. It seems intellectually dishonest or blind to claim it says otherwise.

The problem understandably arises when we don't take all the words that are given to form the complete communication intended in this thought together. Ignoring the words, "under the sun," changes the meaning of what was communicated and sets the reader up for supposed contradictions that actually are not there at all.

Also, let's remember that Solomon got pretty discouraged and negative, as his heart was turned away from God through his many Gentile unconverted wives (1 Kg 11:3 – 4). While he remained wise, clearly, this affected his writing and his character.

But like the wise teacher said, the body of the beast and the body of man are both temporal and will return to the dust – physically speaking. The differences between man and beast are much more acute and diverse after death when examined spiritually, than

they are carnally today under the sun. Man is made in God's image and God is a Spirit being.

Since we do not have power to retain our spirit (Eccl 8:8), our spirit returns to God who gave it when we die. For the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26).

As Solomon heart was turned away from God, he saw a certain vanity in this life that we toil in under the sun. It can sometimes be hard and discouraging. But there is rest for both man and beast in death. The weak are at rest, as they are no longer subject to threats from the strong. The cruel have no power over the weak any longer. Kings rest next to their former subjects. The "playing field" is leveled at death. Death is the great equalizer of all mankind and every beast. Job understood this too:

Job 3:11-19

"Why did I not die at birth? *Why* did I *not* perish when I came from the womb?

12 Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?

13 For now I would have lain still and been quiet, I would have been asleep; then I would have been at rest

14 With kings and counselors of the earth, who built ruins for themselves?

15 Or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses *with* silver;

16 Or *why* was I not hidden like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light?

17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling, and there the weary are at rest.

18 *There* the prisoners rest together; they do not hear the voice of the oppressor.

19 The small and great are there, and the servant *is* free from his master.

This amazing passage has a lot to offer those who like to ponder and think. Job muses how life would have been better for him had he been stillborn – born dead (Job 3:16). Job says if he had died at birth (verse 11) or had died in the womb before birth, still he would have lain at rest in peace next to kings and nobles with none to persecute or harm him. That is the state of the dead as they wait for the raising that is promised to all mankind (Dan 12:2, Hos 13:14, Rev 20:12).

As an interesting side note: Many wonder if there is hope for stillborn children. Job says they are resting together with the rest of the dead, so they will rise together. Abortion is the taking of a life that is made in God's image. It appears that God will restore life to those aborted. It is God's timing and prerogative to demand a reckoning for abortion. Vengeance is His.

Job also understood that the day would come when God would restore life to all the dead who lie in Sheol and wait. I like the clarity here in the CJB version. Notice:

Job 19:25-26

25 "But I know that my Redeemer lives, that in the end he will rise on the dust;

26 so that after my skin has been thus destroyed, then even without my flesh, I will see God. CJB

God has appointed a time for everything under the sun. There is a time to be born, a time to die and a time to be raised again. Job waited for this time when his life and relationship with God would both be restored. We all wait for the sound of that trumpet.

Job 14:13-15

13 "Oh, that You would hide me in the grave,
That You would conceal me until Your wrath is
past, That You would appoint me a set time, and
remember me!

14 If a man dies, shall he live *again*? All the
days of my hard service I will wait, till my
change comes.

15 You shall call, and I will answer You; You
shall desire the work of Your hands.

Let's review a few more passages that have been used
by some well-meaning but blind teachers, in their
attempt to cobble together support for their beliefs:

Ps 146:4

His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that
very day his plans perish.

Like the passages in Ecclesiastes, the Psalmist is
reiterating that the spirit departs the body at death and
then the body decomposes back into the earth that it
came from. All our earthly plans perish at death. That

is just a fact. But while our fleshly plans perish, our hope does not (Ps 146:5)!

Here's another verse that has been difficult for some to reconcile with other passages in God's word:

John 3:11-13

11 Most assuredly, I say to you, we speak what we know and testify what we have seen, and you do not receive our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

The context of this passage is: Who has firsthand knowledge? It was believed that if someone could ascend up to heaven and receive instruction directly from God that they would be among the greatest teachers/prophets since they would have firsthand heavenly knowledge and experience (Deut 30:12, Prov 30:4). Messiah was pointing out that He had this firsthand knowledge. No one can bring us knowledge

of and from heaven like Messiah – the Son of man – can! Messiah did not need a teacher. He taught from what He knew firsthand. The last four words of John 3:13, “who is in heaven,” are not in the oldest and most respected manuscripts. Nonetheless, they are a parenthetical statement about the One who, by the time of the writing of the book of John, had risen and was “in heaven” again.

So does John 3:13 prove that no man has ever ascended to heaven? At the time Yeshua spoke those words – YES – for Messiah had not yet risen and freed the captivity of those held captive by the bars of Sheol (Eph 4:8). There will be more on this important subject in the following chapters. For now, let’s consider a few additional points so the reader can be clear as to the truth, with no doubts. Then we can go forward.

But my church “evangelist” said...

Often people cannot attain a high level of truth in understanding because they have limited their knowledge to only receive what their leaders tell them.

This can happen to Jews and Christians alike. For example, many Jews have accepted the tradition taught by their rabbi's that Torah forbids eating milk and meat together. This is based upon the statute that says; "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk (Ex 23:19)." This is called Rabbinical Judaism. But God's command does not prohibit eating milk and meat together – only that a young goat should not be boiled in its mother's milk. On the contrary, Abraham and Sarah prepared a meal consisting of milk and meat for the visiting Angel that spoke with them.

Gen 18:8

So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

This is called Biblical Judaism. But tradition and other inherited teachings are often believed instead of Biblical Judaism or Biblical teachings which are the truth. So it is with the Biblical teachings about our souls. People often accept inherited beliefs and hold on to these traditions at the expense of truth.

Recently I was reading an article from an evangelist who was making his case against what he called "soul sleeping." He seemed against any inference to our souls remaining alive between the death and the

resurrection of our bodies. This preacher is somewhat known among his own circles, but he typifies certain types of people and how they inherit their beliefs. Although this evangelist seems to be a fine man in many ways, it seems he merely accepted what he had been taught, apparently without ever really proving it for himself. Over the years, his received teachings became so “ironed in” to his psyche that now he merely parrots back his received traditions and teachings to others with confidence. In his article, he quoted a few passages about the hope of the resurrection, but with a twist. Faithfully, he re-postulated the same teachings that he had been given from his youth. The inference is that because the passages he chose to read from did not speak about the life of the soul after death, it must not exist. We can’t “cherry pick” only from those Bible passages that we feel we can use to support our beliefs. Honesty with God is carefully deriving our beliefs *FROM* His word (exegesis), not interpreting the text by reading into it our own inherited beliefs (eisegesis). We must not cherry pick or manipulate scripture.

Even so, the very passages this teacher quoted from contained clarifying truths that he seemed to simply gloss over, ignore or missed; while other clarifying statements were also missed that were only a verse or two away from where the author started or stopped quoting. It’s important to study scripture in its context

– not just a verse selected here and there to form a narrow vein of passages that can be twisted to support what we already believe. I don't think anyone likes to be quoted out of context or incompletely – in a way that changes the meaning of what they said – including God and His prophets. If we are not willing or able to open mindedly consider all that God's word has to offer on any given subject, how can we help others understand? Don't let anyone steal God's words away from you or hinder your pursuit of truth, regardless of how well intentioned they may be.

What does the Hebrew word *nephesh* mean?

This same evangelist author went on to, I believe, grossly mis-represent the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is translated *soul*, implying that *nephesh* merely refers to our physical lives and bodies. He states:

*The Hebrew word for “soul” is nephesh, which means physical or natural life. The same word nephesh also refers to animal life in Gen 1:21.
(Evangelists' teaching)*

The plain truth is that the Hebrew word *nephesh* does not mean physical or natural life at all. If you get a quality Hebrew Lexicon or a copy of Vines Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words, you can easily prove it for yourself. While *nephesh* is used of both the soul of a man and the soul of the beast – God also uses *nephesh* to describe His own soul! (Jer 32:41, Heb 10:38, Isa 42:1, Matt 12:18).

Are we to believe that God's *nephesh* means that His life is a physical or natural life? Absurd!

Don't be fooled by shortsighted narrow-minded postulations. Messiah said when the blind lead the blind; they both fall into the ditch. Let's prove what we believe with eyes open wide.

“Nephesh” **Strong's OT:5315** is from the root, “naphash” meaning, *to be breathed upon*. This is because God breathed upon man and then he became a living soul (Gen 2:7). “Nephesh” **OT:5315 : soul, living being, inner being, life, essence of life, self, person, inner desire, heart, mind, will.**

It's not that *nephesh* means just one of the above descriptions, it's that *nephesh* (soul) means all of the above descriptions.

THE CONTEXT OF USE HELPS DEFINE THE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS

Another way the meaning of a word is established is through the context of its use. While it is true that *nephesh* is sometimes translated "life;" to alter its meaning by combining it with different words that are not in the inspired text is not Bible study. It's Bible manipulation.

Adding the words "natural" or "physical" in front of "life," totally changes and restricts the inspired meanings of God's words. If *nephesh* actually meant "physical or natural life," then Messiah's statement: "Do not fear him who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul (Matt 10:28)", would make absolutely no sense at all!

Let's see how "physical life" fits into Yeshua's statement and see if it still makes sense. Please compare the following two passages. The first passage is a straight NKJV translation:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt 10:28).

Now we'll insert the evangelist's "translation" of "physical life" or "natural life" in place of the word "soul," so we can see if it still makes any sense at all.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the *physical life*. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both *physical life* and body in hell (Matt 10:28).

This interpretation is nothing more than foolish and confusing duplicity, for the body is the physical part of life. Clearly the evangelist's rendition of the meaning of the word "soul" leads us into utter confusion. We all know that the body *IS* the physical, carnal life which is subject to death and decay. **ONLY GOD** can take away the core of our life - our inner life, the soul! Hallelujah! Our understanding is

so much fuller when we can accept what Messiah said and believe it, instead of spending our energy trying to explain it away, so we can hold onto false teachings.

Let's try this test one more time. This time we'll substitute "physical life" or "natural life" with soul in a passage from the Tanach. First the NKJV translation:

Jer 32:41

Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good,
and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with
all My heart and with all My soul.'

Now let's see what using the evangelists "translation" looks like – where he tells us that soul means "physical life. (You can also try "natural life" if you like.)

Jer 32:41

Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good,
and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with
all My heart and with all My *physical life*.

What??? That makes no sense, for God we all know that God is spirit – not physical.

John 3:6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 4:24

God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Clearly we can all see how silly and misleading it is to try and teach the biblical meaning of “soul” as being *physical or natural life*. Indeed, try substituting either “physical life” or “natural life” in place of the word “soul” or “nephesh” and see how many Bible passages would be rendered into “utter confusion” while also becoming “contradictory” in nature.

Worse yet is the realization that injecting the word “physical” into the meanings of word “nehshesh” or “soul,” actually hides many authentic truths – including the spiritual nature of our souls.

Out of respect, the name of the evangelist author was withheld. Using the example of his teaching is a fair

representation that illustrates how people can believe what they have been taught, without actually ever having a factual basis for that belief, while remaining totally oblivious toward evidence to the contrary.

We can all be taught something that is not true. If we're not in the habit of independently proving our beliefs, we can confidently hold onto our dearly held deceptions unto our death. Nonetheless, these examples can also be good “teachers” which can further enlighten some of us so we can enjoy the full benefits of truth.

The truth about the resurrection is great indeed. And God's promise to resurrect our bodies does not deny the truth about the essence of our life, our inner being – our souls. It complements it.

Next we'll examine the very good news regarding the state of the dead who rest in Sheol who were perhaps not saints. We'll also examine God's promise of a resurrection for all mankind. Remember – Messiah came to save – not to destroy. We will also examine

the amazing promises for those who are called,
“saints,” by God.