



SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (Part 1)

Reading: Genesis 2 and 3

What is sin?

Sin is disobedience to God's laws:

*"Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practises lawlessness; **sin is lawlessness**" (1 John 3:4).*

Scripture is clear that we are all sinners:

"None is righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

The word that the Bible often uses for 'sin' means 'miss the mark'. An archer shooting arrows at a target often misses the mark he is aiming for. We are like this when we sin – we miss the mark. The mark is the perfect example set by the Lord Jesus. He showed us God's standard in the way he lived. His example is the target we should aim for in our lives. We sin when we fail to live up to God's standard:

"... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Most of us have not committed terrible crimes like murder, adultery or theft, and so we excuse ourselves and think that we are good people and acceptable to God. We deceive ourselves. Whenever we miss the mark, by a little or by a lot, it is sin: *"All wrongdoing is sin" (1 John 5:17)*. Galatians 5 provides a list of sins that includes envy, anger, drunkenness and other wrong doings that often we do not even consider to be sins. We should note the warning – we cannot do these things and expect to be in God's kingdom!

*"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that **those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**" (Galatians 5:19-21).*

Telling lies and speaking foolishly are also sins:

"But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices" (Colossians 3:8,9).

When we do these things we sin. All sin is against God, for it is His laws that we disobey. God is totally sinless, and our sin separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:2).

Sin is not just doing wrong things. We also sin when we fail to do what is right:

"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Reading our Bible, being generous and other acts of kindness, like visiting the sick and helping others, please God. We should try to give God glory in our lives.

Human desires (lust)

We are born with basic desires for the survival of the human race built into us. For example, we need to feel hungry; but our hunger should not turn to greed. Sex is a natural part of marriage, but if our desire for sex becomes distorted and we seek sex outside marriage, we sin. When we become selfish and ignore God's ways we fail. We need to control our desires, or they will lead us astray:

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is





enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:1-4).

We need to see ourselves in the way God sees us.

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart” (Proverbs 21:2).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick ...” (Jeremiah 17:9).

It is only when we see how sinful we are that we realise how much we need God’s salvation.

Where did sin come from?

In the beginning God created the first man, Adam. He was formed of dust from the ground:

“... the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7).

God placed Adam in the beautiful Garden of Eden and provided a wife for him. God gave Adam one simple law:

“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16,17).

Adam and Eve could choose for themselves whether to obey God’s law or not. They could choose to be faithful to God, or disobey Him and eat of the forbidden fruit. They were created with free will. God had not made ‘puppets’ with no choice of their own. God wanted them willingly to choose for themselves His way because of their love and respect for Him.

The serpent was just an animal that God allowed to speak. It lied to Eve. It said that Adam and Eve would not die if they ate the forbidden fruit, but that instead they would become like gods, knowing good and evil. The serpent did not force Eve to take the fruit – both Adam and Eve were created with free will. They **chose** for themselves to disobey God and eat of the fruit, and so they sinned.

Death is the punishment for sin

God had told Adam that he would be punished by death if he disobeyed. So Adam and Eve were condemned to death. Adam and Eve did not die immediately but became mortal (dying creatures). They would experience hard work, tiredness and suffer illness, before finally dying.

Adam’s death was no different from ours. We are all descended from Adam and inherit his nature, and we too die because of our sins:

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ...” (Romans 5:12).

What is death?

After Adam sinned, God said, *“you are dust, and to dust you shall return”* (Genesis 3:19). God had created Adam of the dust from the ground. When Adam and Eve died, their bodies decayed and returned to dust. No part of them continued to live. Death is God’s punishment for sin, and death is the end of life and consciousness. The following verses show what happens when we die. They show that dead people cannot think or feel anything – they no longer exist.

REFERENCE	PASSAGE
Psalms 146:4	<i>When his (man’s) breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.</i>
Ecclesiastes 9:5	<i>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.</i>





Psalm 6:5	<i>For in death there is no remembrance of you (God); in Sheol (the grave) who will give you praise?</i>
Psalm 39:13	<i>Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!</i>
Psalm 115:17	<i>The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence.</i>

When God told King Hezekiah that he was going to die, Hezekiah was sad. He wanted to stay alive because he knew that there was nothing in death. He said:

“For Sheol (the grave) does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness” (Isaiah 38:18).

Hezekiah knew that when he died he would not be able to praise God. This is why he said in verse 19, *“The living, the living, he thanks you”*.

We are told that King David did not go to heaven when he died (Acts 2:34), even though he is described as a man after God’s own heart. None of us will go to heaven when we die. We will all go to the grave where our bodies will decay.

‘Soul’ means ‘life’, ‘person’, ‘creature’

The word ‘soul’ often occurs in older versions of the Bible like the Authorised (King James) Version. Many people wrongly think that part of them never dies – and they call this the soul. They believe that their soul will go to heaven when they die – they think that it is immortal (cannot die). But the Bible never talks about immortal souls – the phrase ‘immortal soul’ is not found in the Bible. There is no immortal or ‘divine spark’ in man. There is nothing that continues to live after a person dies.

The table below compares the Authorised Version with a modern version (English Standard Version) to show that ‘soul’ means ‘creature’, ‘person’ or ‘life’.

REFERENCE	AUTHORISED VERSION	ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION
Genesis 2:7	And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul .	Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature .
Genesis 46:26	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 ...	All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, not including Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all.
Leviticus 5:17	And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.	If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD'S commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realises his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.
Leviticus 17:12	Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.	Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.
Joshua 11:11	And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.	And they struck with the sword all who were in it , devoting them to destruction; there was none left that breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire.
Psalm 70:2	Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul	Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life!
Acts 27:37	And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls .	We were in all 276 persons in the ship.



Notice in the table above that souls can eat, and be utterly destroyed. We are told:

*“Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: **the soul who sins shall die**” (Ezekiel 18:4).*

All souls (people) sin, so all souls (people) die. There are no immortal souls. In fact, the word translated ‘soul’ is also used of animals. In Genesis 1:21,24; 2:19; 9:10 the Hebrew word ‘soul’ is translated ‘creature’, referring to animals.

This all proves what Ecclesiastes 3:19,20 says:

“For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return”.

There is no difference in death between a man and an animal. Death is the end of life for them both – they no longer exist after death.

‘Soul’ means ‘life’, ‘person’, ‘creature’

We are all condemned to death because of sin. We do not live on after death. Some believe that their spirit will enter another person, or an animal, or some object after they die. This is not Bible teaching. If there is some form of existence after death, then there would have been no need for Jesus to die for us. But the Bible tells us we that have no hope of life apart from Christ. If we do not understand this, then we will never appreciate the way in which Jesus suffered and died to set us free from sin.

Summary

1. Sin is disobedience to God’s laws and failing to live up to His standards.
2. God made Adam of the dust from the ground and caused him to live by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life.
3. God gave Adam a commandment. Adam and Eve were created with free will and could choose for themselves whether to obey God.
4. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and became dying creatures. Death is the punishment for sin.
5. We are all descended from Adam and so we inherit his nature. We all sin and so we all deserve to die.
6. Death is the end of all life processes. Dead people cannot think or feel anything. There is no part of a person which goes on living after death.
7. The word ‘soul’ means ‘life’, ‘person’, ‘creature’. It is used of people and animals. The phrase ‘immortal soul’ is not found in the Bible.

A verse to learn: Psalm 146:4

When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.

A chapter to read: Isaiah 38



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