

*Does the  
Bible Say  
the Soul is  
Immortal?*

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**THE DESIRE  
ACCOMPLISHED  
IS SWEET  
TO THE SOUL.  
-PROVERBS 13:19**

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# Looking at the Old Testament First

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The Hebrew word for  
“Soul” is “Nephesh”



# The Soul/Nephesh Can Refer to All Living Creatures

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*“And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures. [nephesh]”  
(Genesis 1:20, ASV).*

*“And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, — And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature [nephesh] that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you.” (Genesis 9:8-10, ASV).*

The Bible here takes the soul / nephesh to be life itself. The soul / nephesh belongs to all creatures, including animals.



# Is the Soul/Nephesh Immortal?

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*“And it came to pass, when she [=Rachel] was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; for now thou shalt have another son. And it came to pass, as her soul [=nephesh] was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. 35:19.” (Genesis 35:17-19, ASV)*

The text says that *nephesh* left Rachel when she died. *This seems to indicate that the soul is immortal.* But could the passage mean that the “force of life” (not necessarily an immaterial, eternal soul) left Rachel and that’s why Rachel died? Does the passage clearly say that the soul is immortal?



# The Old Testament Says that Souls/ Nephesh Can Die

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*“It came about when he [=Abram] came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I (“my soul,” **nephesh**) may live on account of you.” (Genesis 12:11-13, NASB)*

*“The soul [=nephesh] who sins will die” (Exekiel 18:4, NASV).*



# Looking at the New Testament

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The Greek word for  
“soul” is “psyche”



# The New Testament Says that Souls Can be Destroyed

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*“Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul [=psyche]; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28, NASV).*

*“Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save the soul [=psyche], or to destroy it? (Luke 6:9)*

If Jesus thought the soul was immortal, why would he admit that the soul can be destroyed?



# A Look at the Book of *Revelation*

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*“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul [=psyche] died in the sea.” (Revelation, 16:3)*

If souls are immortal, why would the book of Revelation say that “every living soul died in the sea”?



# A Doubt and an Answer

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But if souls are not immortal, how can Christians believe in the possibility of eternal life?

Many Christians believe that, at some point after death, **bodies will be resurrected.** *But the resurrection of the bodies does not require the immortality of the soul.*





# If the Idea of an Immortal Soul Does Not Come From the Bible, Where Does it Come From?

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The idea of an immortal soul was developed in great detail by the Ancient Greek philosopher Plato who lived in the fourth century BC.



# Plato on the Soul's Immortality

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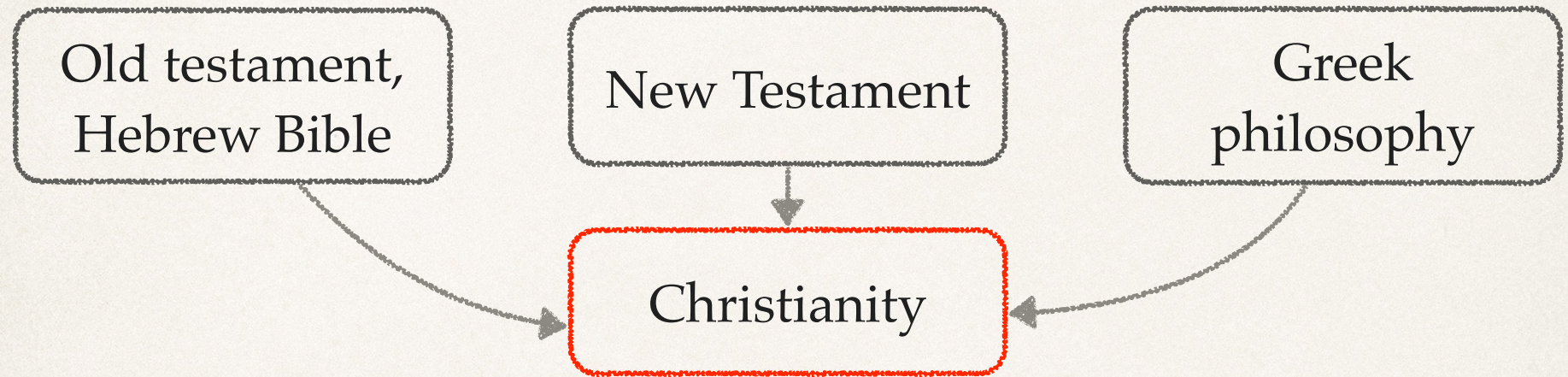
*“Socrates — Haven’t you realized  
that our soul [=psyche] is  
immortal and never  
destroyed?”*

*(Plato, Republic, 608d)*

If you are interested,  
have a look at Plato’s  
work called *Phaedo*. In it,  
Plato gives several  
arguments that the soul  
is immortal



# The Sources of Christianity



The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not explicitly stated in the Bible

Christian theologians took up the doctrine of the immortal soul by Greek philosopher Plato and used it to read and interpret the Bible.

*NB: This is controversial.  
Do your own research  
and prove me wrong!*



# Some References

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For a defense of the claim that the doctrine of the immortal soul cannot be found in the Old Testament, see “Immortality of the Soul” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, available at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

On the soul’s immortality in Greek philosophy, see “Ancient Theories of the Soul” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>