



*"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."* (Mark 12:27)

## THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

### DUAL MEANINGS

In Scripture, the terms "living" and "dead," both, can have dual meanings. Sometimes these terms refer to biological life and death, and other times they refer to spiritual life and death. At times they obviously refer to the flesh. Other times they refer to the spirit (being awake and aware as opposed to being dull and unaware).

We see these terms used in Scripture as well as in typical everyday expressions. It is essential that we recognize this. Otherwise we can get confused.

Bible readers have less difficulty grasping these terms when they refer to our natural flesh (biological life and death). However, when they refer to our spirit, in the sense of being either awake and aware, or being dull and unaware, the point may often be missed.

Here are some examples: See Ephesians 2:

*5. And we, being dead to transgressions, He makes alive together with Christ, (by grace you are saved).*

*6. And He raises us up together and makes us sit together in heavenly (high) places in Christ Jesus.*

Here Paul refers to people biologically alive, but they are being raised to higher spiritual life in Christ.

See also Romans 6:

*6. Knowing this, that our old man (the fleshly self) is crucified with Him (Jesus) ....*

*8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe also that we shall live with Him:*

*9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more. Death has no more dominion over Him.*

*11. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus.*

Also Romans 8:

- 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, walking not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.*
- 12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.*
- 13. For if you are living according to the flesh, you are about to die: but if by the spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

Again, in Colossians 3:

- 1. If you then be raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.*
- 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the dirt (i.e. lower things).*
- 3. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*
- 5. Put to death therefore your members which are of the dirt.*

And 1 Peter 1:

- 23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding Logos (communication) of God.*

And 1 Peter 3:

- 18. ... that He might bring you to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the Spirit:*

These are clear and unmistakable references to spiritual life vs. spiritual death. Once this principle is understood, you will find references throughout the Bible. Some are biological references. And some are spiritual references.

Also Moses taught of spiritual life:

2. *And Moses called to all Israel, and said to them, You have seen all that Yahweh did to Pharaoh before your eyes in the land of Egypt, and to all his servants, and to all his land;*

3. *The great temptations which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles:*

4. *Yet Yahweh has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.*

Deuteronomy 29:2-4

Moses pled with his people to choose "life" which he equated with "blessing," and to reject "death" which he equated with "curses." Clearly these are spiritual qualities, not biological. He was explaining spiritual life to people who were already alive biologically.

19. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live:*

20. *... for He is your life ...*

Deuteronomy 30:19, 20

In John 3:6-7 the two distinctions (biological -vs- spiritual) are clearly defined.

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

7. *Marvel not that I said to you, "You must be born again."*

Also John 8:12:

12. *Then speaks Jesus again to them, saying, "I am the light of the world: he that is following me walks not in darkness (i.e., death), but will have the light of life.*

Also Paul tells us in Romans 6:

4. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Again in 1 Corinthians 15:

15. *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

16. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*

These are obvious references to spiritual life and death in the 1st century. Here is a reference to the apostle Paul. He was arrested and taken to Rome because the Jews wanted to prevent him from teaching that "the dead were

being raised." Paul protested his arrest. What was the "hope" Paul was preaching?

6. *... of the hope and raising of the dead I am being judged.*

Acts 23:6

21. *Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them (the Jewish elders), "Touching the raising of the dead I am called in question by you this day."*

Acts 24:21

6. *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God to our fathers:*

7. *... concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews ...*

8. *Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you that God is raising the dead?*

Acts 26:6-8

20. *... for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*

Acts 28:17-20

God was raising the dead. The Jewish elders did not want this since they contrived to murder Jesus. The fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead was unacceptable to the Jewish hierarchy.

The "raising" that Paul was proclaiming (the hope of Israel) was not a future "resurrection" as the Pharisees taught - much like the churches teach today. They would not have hated Paul for teaching about a future "resurrection" like the one they taught. This point is crucial. Paul was teaching about a different "raising" - one that was occurring right then. It was a spiritual raising. A "new birth." This was the point of contention. Paul was teaching that the followers of Jesus were being born from above.

Nicodemus, one of the Sanhedrin, had asked Jesus:

4. *... How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

John 3:4-5

Of course, this teaching raised the issue of the nature of God's Kingdom, and who murdered Jesus. It was a major question of the day. If the only entrance into God's Kingdom was through Jesus that meant that Jesus was indeed who He had claimed to be. This meant the Jews hated and murdered God's Son. The Jews needed to stifle Paul's teaching that Jesus was raising the dead.

Hopefully you can see the importance of being able to distinguish between references to biological life and spiritual life. The Hebrew texts, as well as the Greek texts, use these same words for both kinds of "life" and "death." The meanings are not differentiated by the words, but rather by the context. In other words, it requires discernment.

## STARTING IN GENESIS

God created Adam with biological life. Then He added to Adam spiritual life (Genesis 2:16-17). That "life" gave Adam the ability to understand, communicate with God, and to oversee the area (or city) called Eden. It gave Adam a spiritual upgrade higher than before.

This upgrade that God gave to Adam was an awareness of truth - ability to perceive and appreciate truth. It was very much like a person today being "born again" to new life in Christ. Indeed, Jesus is called "the second Adam" in that sense. It is an upgrade in spirit and awareness.

44. ... *There is a natural (fleshly) body, and there is also a spiritual one.*

45. ... *The first man Adam is a living soul (flesh); the last Adam (Jesus) is a life-giving spirit.*

49. *And as we bear the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the heavenly image.*

1 Corinthians 15:44-45

Our biological bodies bear the image of Adam, but spiritually we are reborn in the spirit of Christ. Adam had a choice. But he chose the flesh instead of the spirit. This caused him to lose his spiritual upgrade. But Jesus (the second Adam), when tested, chose life (Matthew 4).

God had given Adam law to guide him. The main tenet of the law was that Adam was not to partake of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." This was a peculiar way of saying that Adam was not to decide for himself what was right or wrong. He was warned not to invent his own law. He was supposed to learn and apply God's law, but not decide for himself what is good or evil.

However, the serpent beguiled Eve, and then Adam, into thinking they could be "as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). This is a cardinal principle that explains the greatest sin men can commit. Men, by nature, like to make their own laws. Thus, every sin and transgression of mankind has its root in this one great sin - men try to be gods by making their own laws.

God warned Adam that this sin would cost him his life. His death would be on the day he chose to be his own god.

17. *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die.*

Genesis 2:17

Adam chose to believe the lie of the "serpent" (the false prophet). Adam and Eve went ahead and made the wrong choice, and they lost their gift of higher life. They died "in the day" they disobeyed.

Now, this presents a problem for anyone who doesn't understand the principle of spiritual life. Adam "died" the very day he chose to be as God to make his own laws. But yet we read that Adam lived to the ripe old age of 930 years (Genesis 5:5). Obviously, The natural Adam did not die that

day. But he did die! How did he die? He died spiritually. He lost the higher life God had added to him. He lost it when he opted to think of himself as a god to make his own laws. He lost the gift of higher life God had given him.

## THE CHANGE

Hopefully you can see that there are two expressions of "life" - one kind of life is biological, and the other is spiritual. Any other interpretation of these passages makes no sense at all. Inability or refusal to grasp this fundamental truth blinds men as Adam was blinded by lies. Indeed it blinds them to the message of the Bible - God's truth.

Biological life for man is the life in the flesh. Biological life comes naturally at birth. It requires no spiritual insight. However, spiritual life is the the added motivation (drive) that changes the natural (fleshly) man and compels him to learn of God. The spirit of God is mental force that directs us each day to look to God. In contrast, a natural man has no such drive. But to be awake and aware, a higher man has a spirit that drives him to pursue higher goals than merely breathing and eating.

This is the change. One spirit points us one direction. The other spirit points us in another direction. It is the drive, the essence, that makes us who we are - either a thoughtful, loving, valuable creature, or a natural brute beast incapable of higher reason, purpose, and Godly love.

When we awake to our higher calling it change us. We become new creatures with different drives compelling us to higher thoughts and considerations. We see things differently, and we pursue higher values. We have new and different capacity for appreciating the things of God.

This changes us somewhat like falling in love changes us. It changes how we think - how we see things. It gives us new and higher awareness. Love can give you new and noble goals in life - it allows you to experience agape love (selfless/higher love). Agape love is not mere personal or sexual attraction. Agape love opens your eyes and your heart. It is the kind of love that empowers a mother when her child is born. Her thoughts turn to the protection and care of her baby. It happens in the heart of the father as well, but possibly to a slightly lesser degree. This is true love, and it changes us. It changes us somewhat like holy spirit changes us when we are born again in Christ and we are given new and higher spirit. It is a good change, and it causes us to be better people with better spirit.

The natural man is like an earthen vessel - a fleshly piece of pottery. It can be a work finished in form and appearance. However, not until a vessel finds its purpose - not until it is filled with oil, wine, water, or something valuable, does it find its purpose and true potential. In other words, a vessel's true value is not in its natural appearance, but rather in its use - determined by what it contains.

So is it for men. We are earthen vessels of flesh that need to be filled by spirit. As natural fleshly vessels we are wonderfully created and shaped. But our real value is determined by the spirit that we bear. If our spirit is good (holy spirit) we can be useful. Our value is improved. But if we have only natural spirit, or are spiritless, we have not

reached our true potential under God. We need to offer ourselves as vessels unto God in order to be useful and find our true calling. Thus the natural vessel must be changed by what is in it to find its higher value and purpose.

## GOOD SPIRIT - BAD SPIRIT

Spirit is motivation. That is the meaning of the word. A spirited man is a motivated man. "Inspiration" (in-spirit-ation) is spirit (motivation) internalized.

In John chapter three, spirit is defined having a similar effect as wind. As wind blows it pushes things around. Like a sail boat being moved by wind, spirit moves men to think and act. And in the example of a sail boat, just the right wind is good. But a bad wind can wreck a sail boat. That would be an evil spirit (bad motivation).

Men can be filled with good spirit (holy spirit) like pottery can be filled with good wine. Or men can be filled with evil spirit (bad motivation). Thus we are instructed in Matthew 9:17 that "new wine" (representing good spirit) must be put into good/new bottles (new/holy hearts). This describes the new birth in Christ. If men are to have new life in Christ they must be born anew - become new vessels with new intentions. Otherwise they are unfit for the spirit of Christ - just as old bottles are unfit for new wine.

New wine, in this case, represents new spirit to motivate the new man.

Evil spirits (bad motives) are also called "demons" or "devils." An evil spirit (bad motive) is not a living being. However it is sometimes portrayed as having a personality (see Luke 11:24-26).

## NO TURNING BACK

62. ... No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingship of God.

Luke 9:52

4. For it is impossible to those once enlightened and tasting of the heavenly gift, and made partakers of holy spirit,

5. And tasting the good word of God, also the power of the age that is imminent -

6. And then falling away, to restore them back to repentance, crucifying to themselves the Son of God again, exposing Him to shame.

Hebrews 6:4-6

## TRULY THE LIGHT IS SWEET

The repentant and reborn life is the good life. Why would anyone look back?

18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to

the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19. To proclaim the welcome year of the Lord (the release).

The good and welcome news was not what churches teach. Jesus was not leaving us for a couple thousand years. No! The good news was that He is our new King, and He gives us new LIFE and liberty from the things that blind and bruise us.

18. And Jesus came to them, and spoke, saying, ALL AUTHORITY in heaven and the earth is given to me.

20. ... and behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age.

Matthew 28:18 & 20

He ascended his throne and received his Reign. He is our King of New Jerusalem - the city of life.

10. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly."

John 10:10

This is the age (eon) of Jesus' Reign. He is giving us life. The life He gives us is called "eonian life."

Do yourself a big favor. Do a word study of the Greek word "eonian." You can find this word in any Greek lexicon. The KJV translates it "eternal." That doesn't do it justice.

"Eonian" is from the word "eon." An "eon" is an "age." Look it up. "Eonian" is an adjective meaning "of an age."

When something is "eonian" it is of an age. An eonian king is king of an age. Eonian life is life that pertains to an age. An eonian promise is of an age (an eon).

**Eonian life is life of this eon** - this age of Christ's Reign. This is the New Covenant age. Jesus is reigning and giving "life." Jesus told Martha "I am the raising and the life" and "those believing in me will live" (John 11: 25).

11. And this having known the time, that it is the hour to awaken out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than we suppose.

Romans 13:11

Paul was given new life on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Paul said that "scales" fell from his eyes. This was Paul's way of saying that he was given new spiritual insight to perceive spiritual things. He was reborn and was able to see and perceive the things of God.

The consistent story in the Holy Scriptures, from beginning to end, tells of the gift of "life" - the power of God to give life and light to men. Adam was given life - spiritual life. He lost that spiritual life the day he rebelled against God. Since that day, man has been torn between life and death. Between enlightenment and darkness.

God offers life. He sent his Son to lift us up to life. Jesus is God's Communication (Logos) giving us knowledge of salvation. He lifts us from darkness (spiritual death) to be born again in new spirit.

In Christ we have life abundant.

*Ben Williams*