

Thank God for Jesus Christ. By faith in his name we have gained access to the life of God. I have broken this teaching down into sections so that it won't seem so overwhelming. My prayer is that you will be made whole and empowered through its teaching.

LIFE IS FOUND IN GOD

Our God is the true and living God. He never has been nor will be dependent on any other for life, for he has life in himself. He is God the creator, Lord of heaven and earth, the source of life.

Right from the start this statement stands in conflict with the atheistic worldview of our culture. Such a worldview perceives everything beginning with inanimate matter and energy. Impersonal matter and energy are the ultimate and then over billions of years without creator or intelligent design there arises, not only the intricate interdependencies of biologic life but also this glorious thing called living personhood.

For Christians this is reversed. First there was the true and living God, eternal without beginning or end, the "I AM that I AM" who is, who was and is to come. In him is life, by his word creation came into being, from him material creation was animated with life and the power to procreate. By him man was formed from the dust of the ground. Into man's nostrils God's life was breathed and man became a living soul. Life is found in God.

See the following scriptures:

(Dan 6:26) ***I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.***

(Jer 10:10) ***But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King.***

(Joh 5:26) ***For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.***

(Act 17:24-25) ***The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.***

(Gen 2:7) ***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.***

DYING YOU SHALL DIE

In the account of creation, God placed man (Adam and Eve) into the Garden of Eden and granted them full access to enjoy fruit from every tree except one. Fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden. God created man as a free moral agent and did not restrict Adam and Eve's capacity to make a wrong choice. The tree whose fruit was forbidden was as accessible to them as any other even though God knew the consequences and personal cost their bad choice would involve. God told Adam that in the day they ate the forbidden fruit, they would die (Gen. 2:17).

The Young's Literal Translation of the Bible states that this phrase "***you shall surely die***" in the Hebrew is literally "***dying you shall die***" (Gen. 2:17). In other words, death was progressive.

When God said that they would surely die, one might expect that Adam and Eve would have experienced some fatal toxic reaction from the ingesting the forbidden fruit. But Adam and Eve did not fall down, foam at the mouth, convulse and then die.

ALIENATED FROM THE LIFE OF GOD

The death man experienced was not a fatal toxic reaction. In eating the forbidden fruit, man chose to foolishly and ungratefully ignore his Creator and his dependence on God's goodness. The onset of death began with his alienation from the life of God affected by the choice he made. His heart callous, his mind deluded, man plunged the darkness of living disengaged from God's life.

Eph 4:17-19 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (18) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (19) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity

Gen 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, (17) 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."

Rom 1:21-22 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

Rom 8:5-8 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. (6) For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (7) For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. (8) Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Death then describes the moral corruption of living alienated from the life God, seeking life from creation rather than the Creator, controlled by ones natural desires. And finally it describes an eternal state of judgment for those who continue to live in this state, refusing to accept God's salvation from it.

You may be puzzled that in talking about death I have not yet described the aging process involving loss of vitality, degeneration of cells, vulnerability to sickness and the painful reality of physical death. I wanted to look at this separately under the heading Barred from the Tree of Life.

BARRED FROM THE TREE OF LIFE

Gen 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever--" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Exercising their freedom of choice in the quest for an independent, godlike wisdom, Adam and Eve foolishly chose to eat the one fruit God had forbidden. As a consequence until the day his body returned to the dust mankind's experience would involve constant satanic hostility, sorrow and pain in child bearing and child-raising, strife in the marriage relationship, and wearisome toil to produce food for survival from an earth that was cursed.

However, life was still within Adam and Eve's grasp. The tree of life was endowed with such properties as would provide immunity to the physical process of aging and death. And had man enjoyed continued access to the tree of life he would have been able to sustain his life and perpetuate wickedness indefinitely. Man had to be cut off from the tree of life. ***"lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever"***

It may be that the longevity of life attributed to the early years of humanity was a direct result of the properties of this tree still present in the production of human cells. During that period wickedness became so prevalent that God first cursed mankind with a shortened life span (Genesis 6:5,13) and finally destroyed the then known world with a flood saving only Noah and his family. Thus, within a lifespan of 120 years, man would age and die.

THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE AND THE TREE OF LIFE RESTORED

In the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to the Apostle John when he was exiled on the Island of Patmos we read these words:

(Revelations 22:1) ¹ ***Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side (on this side and on that) of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding***

its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

In it is a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem and of the throne of God and the Lamb. Flowing out from throne was the river of the water of life. On this side and that of the river, nourished by the Water of Life, was the Tree of Life whose life cycle was so accelerated that fruit bearing occurred monthly rather than a seasonally. Not only was the life cycle accelerated but the leaves of that tree contained curative properties for global ailments.

I want to call your attention to these: the source of the river of the water of life which is the throne of God and the Lamb. Here the flow of God's life answering to the thirst of man's soul is met. Then, growing on this and that side of this river, the tree of life grows in abundance, nourished by the water of life. The life giving properties of the river water are accelerating the life cycle of the tree of life causing it to produce perpetual fruit and the curative properties found in its leaves. And through this I want you to be captivated by the essence of divine life - "zoe", the very life that Jesus has to offer in abundance.

There are three main Greek words translated "life".

- bios = biology, the physical, earthly expression of life
- psuche = personality or soul, individual, personal expression of life
- soe = zoology seems to be a more noble or eternal expression of life, the vitality of life which the scriptures use when describing divine life.

IN HIM WAS LIFE

Into the darkness of this world, came the *logos* (Word) of God piercing the darkness of a world alienated from the life of God with the light of life.

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) The light (of life) shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (See also John 8:12; 1 Tim 1:10

When the disciples encountered Jesus, they encountered the essence of life itself. It was life they saw in him, life they saw in his touch, life they heard in his words, life they experienced in his presence and it was this life that they wanted to share with everyone around them

1Jn 1:1-2 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- (2) the life was made manifest, and we have seen it (the life), and testify to it (the life) and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—

Adam's was a living soul made alive by the breath of God, but Jesus Christ is a life giving spirit.

1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening (life giving) spirit.

Rev 1:17, 18 "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

He told Martha John 11:25 that he was not only the resurrection but the life. Those who die believing in him will live again and those who live believing in him will never die.

Israel experienced the miracle of manna from heaven, they ate their fill but all of them died. Jesus is the bread from heaven that gives perpetual life to the world. His body was broken and his life poured out unto death, that those who by faith receive him, receive life.

John 6:51 **"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."**

John 6:53 So Jesus continues, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."**

Jesus told Thomas that not only give us access to the Father and brings us into contact with the reality of God but also reconnects us with the life of God.

John 14:6 **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

Jesus told the woman at the well that Jacob's well could only offer water that would leave her thirsty again, but he was the source of water wells up with perpetual life.

John 4:13,14 **"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."**

Paul wrote that **if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.** (Romans 8:11)

Jesus told his audience in John 10:10 that he had come to give them life, life that was full and overflowing. Anything that robs, kills or destroys life is a thief. ***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.***

John 5:39-40 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, (40) yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

We have the scriptures. In the midst of the spiritual darkness and the moral corruption of this world, the light of life has shone. The life of God is found in Jesus Christ, Those who receive righteousness

through him pass out from under the reign of death into the reign in life through Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17) But The clearest evidence that we have passed from death unto life is that our lives are poured out in love for others. (1 John 3:14)

Under the power and fear of death, we live self-absorbed, self-consumed lives seeking something that will satisfy the thirst we have for be fully alive. We pile one evil on top the other; we don't go to the fountain of living waters, but instead try to turn possession, relationships, achievements etc. into life giving containers.

Conclusion: You have the scriptures. You know the source of life. Now I challenge you to bring your thirst to Jesus and drink. Open your heart and pour out your hurt, pain, longings disappointments, and desires to him. Let him show you how many ways you have been seeking to find life outside of him and where that has led you. And then drink in his life, discovering the refreshing waters of forgiveness and comfort, grace and peace, joy and strength, love and acceptance, healing and hope. Drink deeply. There is always more.