

# LIFE AND DEATH.

By George Eldred Marsh

Church of God in Christ Jesus  
Marshalltown, Iowa.



Of ALL words, none are so pregnant with solemnly interesting meaning as those little monosyllables, *LIFE* and *DEATH*. Few words are of more common occurrence in the Bible, and certainly none sustain a more significant relation to the human race. They are the Scripture terms which express the respective future destinies of the righteous and the wicked—the term *Life* designating the reward awaiting the faithful in Christ; and its correlative *Death*, the desert of every sinful and unpardoned creature.

Has it ever been suggested to the reader, that the meaning which is put upon these words, as used in the Bible, is altogether *different* from the meaning which is attached to them in common conversation? One has only to reflect a few moments, to be reminded that the Bible is supposed to employ these words in a singularly *technical sense*. *Life*, in the theology of the churches means *Eternal Happiness* and *Death* means *Eternal Misery*. Such is not however their meaning in conventional usage.

Without attempting any scientific definition, it will suffice to say, that the meaning of the term *LIFE*, refers to that condition of active existence, which is proper to its subject; and the meaning of the term *DEATH*, is the opposite, or the suspension or destruction of all that is peculiar and proper to the living being.

This definition, will generally be allowed in regard to the inferior animals, although an exception is claimed in behalf of man. But on what ground and authority is this exception claimed? It was the custom until very recently, to claim a two-fold authority for the assertion that *death* in its relation to the human being, is not what it is in relation to the rest of the animal creation; that while it *destroyed* the latter, it served to *perpetuate* the former, by introducing him to a new and imperishable condition of existence. This two-fold authority was: 1). the independent reason and 2). Scripture revelation. The former is now discarded by the learned, as insufficient to establish this assumption, by proving too

much, and the latter therefore, being the only, authority in this question, the appeal is exclusively to it.

Standard theological writers admit that there is no distinct declaration in the Bible, that man's condition in death, is different from that of a brute—that although the brute perishes in death, the man still lives in a disembodied condition of being; but some among them maintain that it is inferable from certain passages of Scripture—and others, who are not satisfied with accepting this important doctrine as a mere *inference*, and which is therefore, disputable, content themselves with the summary method of boldly affirming that *it is taken for granted in the Bible*, and that the Bible should be studied with the clear recognition of man's constituted deathlessness or immortality, as a being capable of existence apart from his present material organization or body.

Now it is this belief that man is an immortal being by natural constitution— a being whose essential personality lies in an indestructible soul or spirit, that leads the mind so pre-occupied to *qualify and pervert the language* of the Bible. The Scripture terms, *perish, consume, destroy*, have a qualified or Biblical sense put upon them, and so have the terms LIFE and DEATH.

It is easy to see how this qualification is brought about. If man is an essentially *deathless* being by natural constitution, then he cannot *literally perish, be consumed, destroyed, and* neither can he *literally DIE*. And as the term *Life* is used to express the future *reward, a boon* to be bestowed upon the righteous, it must be understood not in a *literal*, but in a *figurative* sense, because literally it cannot be needed by man who, it is assumed, has an inextinguishable *life* within him.

It is one of our chief objects in the establishment of this journal, to expose the mischievous presumption that man *is* immortal; and to develop the Bible doctrine that he *may be* only on the fulfilment of certain well-defined conditions. We essay to prove, by explicit Scripture testimony, that man is constitutionally a *mortal* being, and that immortality is not possible to the present human constitution—that he needs to be “born again,” to be divested of the *NATURAL*, and *created a SPIRITUAL being*, otherwise he has no life that can resist and triumph over death, much more that he will live by natural constitution forever. And, as we have positive proof of this express verbal testimony, we challenge the right of tampering with the terminology of the Bible, on the bare authority of presumption. We ask, very emphatically, for the *authority* for the extraordinary conversion of the most plain and familiar words from their common to a peculiar and non-natural sense. If there be authority, then let it be produced from the *Bible* itself. If the Biblical

sense of the word LIFE is *Happiness*, and of DEATH the meaning is *Misery*, then we need to be so informed, because, as the Bible is written in the language of men, it is necessary that it should employ words in the sense in which they are universally accepted.

When its words have a metaphorical sense, they will be *natural* and *obvious* metaphors, otherwise the language of the Bible, which we would presume was designed to be the vehicle for communicating its truths, would be a vesture to conceal them. The extraordinary sense put on the simplest and most common place words of the Bible, by its professional expounders, obliges every earnest and intelligent man to demand their authority for this strange conversion of language. If the Bible be accompanied by a glossary of equal authority to itself, let it be produced. Nothing short of an inspired glossary ought to satisfy an intelligent Bible student, that to *perish* means to *preserve*, to *destroy* means to *keep alive in misery*, that *eternal life* means *eternal happiness*, and that *death* means a *perpetual existence in torment*. Custom has reconciled people to these obvious absurdities!

When Christ said, "I am the Bread of Life," surely He could not mean that He was the Bread of *happiness* independent of life. Had He meant this, He could have expressed His meaning in suitable language when He said, "as the Father has *life* in Himself, so also has He given to the Son to have *life* in Himself," etc. Are we to substitute *happiness* for the word *life* here? When He said, "I have come that you might have *life*," etc., did He mean that He had only come that we might have *happiness*?

Paul says, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having a promise of the current *life* that now is, and also [having a promise] of *that life* which is to come." Here he evidently compares the present with the future life. If, therefore, the future *life* is to be understood as if written "*eternal happiness*," then consistency demands that the present *life* shall have the same meaning; and thus we make the Apostle to say, "Godliness" has the "promise of the *eternal happiness* that now is, and of that *eternal happiness which is to come*." Why not accept the term *life* in its *natural* and obvious signification? According to the popular mode of interpreting Scripture, we ought to read the Apostle's words as if written in the following way: "If you *live* [*be eternally happy*] after the flesh, you shall *die* [*be eternally miserable*], but if you mortify the deeds of the body you shall *live*, [*be eternally happy*"]. If we must understand the word *live* at the end of this verse in the strangely figurative sense expressed in the brackets, consistency of interpretation requires that it should have the same meaning at the beginning of the verse. The sheer nonsense which such a consistent interpretation makes, is apparent

enough. Again, “For to be carnally minded is *death [eternal misery]*, but to be spiritually minded is *life [eternal happiness]*, and peace.” In this last quotation, we have a tautology through substituting the word happiness for life, viz: “*happiness* and *peace*.” The word “peace” contains the idea of *happiness*, why then should the word *life* be deprived of its natural meaning; for a meaning which does not properly belong to it, especially when that which is substituted is conveyed by another word already conjoined?

We urge our readers to be very jealous for the integrity of the Word of God. They ought to be suspicious of that scheme of theology which is obliged to vindicate itself by tampering with the terms of revealed truth, and we trust they will be. Here is a plain and most important declaration, “He that has the Son hath *Life*, and he that hath not the Son of God *hath not life*.” Let our readers seriously propose to themselves why these words should not be *literally* accepted. We put it to them to show just cause to themselves *why* that the Apostle John here meant that *only* the faithful disciples of Christ shall *live forever*, and that they who refuse to believe in, and follow Christ shall be *CUT OFF* from life, or be everlastingly obliterated from being? By accepting these words in their *literal* sense, we are taught by the passage, a doctrine in obvious harmony with the Christian revelation, which declares that “he that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap *corruption*; but he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap *life everlasting*.”

The portion of the wicked is to reap corruption—to be destroyed—to perish—to die! this is their future punishment; the portion of the righteous is to have an eternal life in a glorified state, which is the gracious gift of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, “the resurrection and the life.” “This is the record that God has given to us; eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not the life.” 1 John 5:11, 12.



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[blpartain@gmail.com](mailto:blpartain@gmail.com)

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