



**Revelation 3:5** He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and **I will not blot out his name out of the book of life**, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

**Revelation 13:8** And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, **whose names are not written in the book of life** of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

**Revelation 17:8** The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, **whose names were not written in the book of life** from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

**Revelation 20:15** And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

As we can see, the main thrust in these passages is clearly to motivate people to life in faith and righteousness by conveying that faith and righteousness are the only way to receive “everlasting life” and in turn that people will miss out on “everlasting life” if they are wicked. Consequently, the question arises, don’t these statements prove that the wicked do not receive “everlasting” or “immortal life,” but only the righteous do? In other words, don’t these statements necessitate that the wicked will not exist forever, but will be annihilated from existence?

### **#1 – Life Contrasted with Separation**

Here we arrive at the critical question of what “life” and “eternal life” entail. This question is of paramount importance to this entire study. So far, we have identified “eternal life” or “everlasting life” with immortality. And scripture, of course, demonstrates that it is correct to equate immortality with these terms. However, although immortality is an undeniable, core component of the “life” that the saints will forever have through Jesus Christ, immortality is not the only component of what scripture means by life. In other words, scripture does not define life as strictly meaning existence. There is one other major component to “life” in scripture and John 5 actually provides evidence to that fact.

**John 5:28** Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all that are in the graves shall hear his voice**, 29 And shall come forth; **they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation** (2920).

First, as we can see verse 28 states that the wicked will receive “the resurrection of damnation.” The English word “damnation” might conjure up images of annihilation in Hell, although it should be noted that the word in itself is by no means a synonym for the termination of existence. Even in English, it primarily conveys condemnation without any particular connotation about the punishment associated with that condemnation. Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, for

example, defines “damnation” as the “act of damning” and, in turn, defines “damning” as “causing or leading to condemnation or ruin.” Merriam-Webster even provides the sample phrase “presented some damning testimony,” which is a phrase that might be used in a courtroom regardless of the particular crime or punishment.

Second, the Greek word for “damnation” in John 5:28 is “krisis” (Strong’s Number 2920). The primary definition of “krisis” is “a separating, sundering, separation.” Although “krisis” is typically and appropriately translated as “judgment” throughout the New Testament, the concept of judgment as an act of separating remains essential. Below are a few examples.

Number one, Matthew 25:31-32 describes that “When the Son of man shall come in his glory” then “before him shall be gathered all nations.” Notice the idea of the nations being “gathered” or brought together for judgment. Verse 32 continues to say that “he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” Verse 33 then goes on to say that “he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.” The word for “separate” is “aphorizo” (Strong’s Number 873), which means “to mark off from others by boundaries, to limit, to separate.” Although “krisis” is not used in Matthew 25, nevertheless the passage still depicts judgment as inherently an act of separation.

Number two, in Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 John the Baptist describes Jesus as one “whose fan is in his hand” who will “gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” The Greek word for “fan” is “ptuon” (Strong’s Number 4425), which means “a winnowing shovel.” Wikipedia.org defines “winnowing” as “an agricultural method developed by ancient cultures for separating grain from chaff.” Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 tells a parable with similar imagery in which angels gather the righteous but also “gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” Of course, the passage also identifies the destination of the wicked as “a furnace of fire,” which is similar to John the Baptist’s reference to “unquenchable fire.” And although we are still examining the exact effect that the “unquenchable fire” has on the wicked, it is clear that John the Baptist and Matthew 13 depict Jesus’ authority to judge as one that inherently involves an act of separation and removing the ungodly from Jesus’ kingdom.

Number three, in John 3:19-20 we again find the word “krisis.” In this passage, Jesus explains “this is the condemnation.” The word for “condemnation” here is “krisis.” According to Jesus, the “krisis” is that “light is come into the world” but men “hateth the light, neither cometh to the light.” Here “krisis” is directly depicted in terms of the light coming near but mean keeping their distance from it.

Third, it should also be emphasized that John 5:29 is actually contrasting the “resurrection of life” with “the resurrection of separation.” In other words, “life” is contrasted with “separation.”

Consequently, not only is the Greek word “krisis” defined as “separation” but scripture depicts judgment in terms of separation, not just in terms of a distinction, but in terms of actual physical separation with the sheep going on one side and the goats on the other and with the wicked being gathered out of the kingdom. And ultimately, the scriptural concept of life, particularly in the sense of eternal life, is defined in contrast to separation.

## **#2 – “Life” As a Reference to the Features, Experiences, and Relationships of Existence**

In modern contexts phrases like “my life” or “your life” are not limited to the notion of being alive. In addition to using the term “life” to refer to the state of being alive, it is common to use the term “life” to refer to the specific elements of any given person’s particular existence, including their relationships, their possessions, their livelihood, their habits, and even their freedom.

For example, if a man were to lose his family and his home in some tragic event, it would be perfectly normal to say “his whole life was taken from him that day.” In that context, the word “life” would not refer to the state of being alive but rather to the components and common experiences that define the man’s existence, especially those things that he cherishes and values. Or, if a person had a terrible addiction, finally decided to go into rehabilitation, and remained sober from that point forward, we might say, “his whole life changed that day.” And once again, in that context the word “life” would not refer to him being alive but instead it would refer to the manner in which he lived, the type of things that comprised his regular experience.

But the key question is whether scripture uses the term “life” in the same way, not strictly or only as a reference to the state of being alive but sometimes in reference to the experiences, habits, and relationships that define our existence? As it turns out, scripture does use the “term” life in this way.

First, the Book of Ruth 1:1-2 begins with a man named Elimelech who takes his wife Naomi and his two sons to live in the country of Moab during a time of famine in Israel. In verses 3-4, Elimelech dies and Naomi advises her two sons to marry women from Moab. Verse 5 explains that Naomi’s two sons marry but ten years later the sons both die, leaving Naomi and her two Moabite daughters-in-law without husbands. Moreover, these deaths also results in financial hardship for the three women. Consequently, verse 6 explains that Naomi decided to return the land of Israel because she had heard that God had blessed his people with food. One daughter-in-law goes back to live with her parents in Moab but the other daughter-in-law, Ruth, insists on returning to Israel with Naomi. As the rest of the story continues to unfold in chapter 2:1, Ruth goes to work in the fields of Naomi’s closest relative, a wealthy man by the name of Boaz. Events continue to unfold until Boaz marries Ruth in chapter 4:13 and Ruth conceives and gives birth to a son. In light of all this good news, in verse 15 the other women of the area rejoice with Naomi and say concerning the newborn child, “he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age.”

The Hebrew word for “life” here in Ruth 4:15 is “nephesh” (Strong’s number 05315). “Nephesh” is commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to the state of being alive. It occurs in Genesis 2:7 where scripture declares that Adam “became a living soul.” And it occurs in Genesis 9:5 when God warns Noah and his sons that if any man kills another man, God “will require the life” of the murderer. Yet Ruth 4:15 isn’t declaring that this child will restore Naomi to the state of being alive. Naomi was neither dead nor in a state of ill health. In the context of the story, Naomi had lost her husband, both her sons, her hope of financial sustenance, and any chance at a future for her family. When Boaz married Ruth and Ruth gave birth to a grandson, the family, financial support, joy, and hope for the future were restored. In other words, Ruth provides one example in which the Hebrew word “life” does not refer to the state of being alive, but to the collective whole of the experiences, relationships, and manner of our everyday existence, especially the things worth cherishing and without which Naomi considered her life to be empty (Ruth 1:20-21).

Second, in Luke 15 Jesus tells the parable of the prodigal son. Verse 12 describes how the son asks his father for his share of the inheritance. Verse 13 then explains the son “wasted his substance with riotous living.” We will examine this passage in depth later on. But for now, we will focus briefly on this term “living” that occurs in verse 13.

Specifically, it is the Greek term for “living” in verse 13, which is worth noting. (Although the English word “living” appears at the end of verse 12 as well, it is a different term in Greek.) Verse 13 uses the Greek word “zao” (Strong’s Number 2198), which is the same word used in Matthew 9:18 and Mark 5:23 to refer to a young girl being raised from the dead. It is the same word used in Matthew 4:14, when Jesus says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” “Zao” is also used in Luke 24:22-23 when Jesus’ women followers first report that his body was not in the tomb and that he was “alive.” In Luke 24:5, the angels use the word “zao” in reference to the resurrected Jesus Christ when they ask the disciples, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” And Jesus’ uses “zao” in John 4:10 when he tells the Samaritan woman at the well about the “living water” that he could give her. In other words, this is a Greek word that the New Testament uses in reference to the state of being alive, including resurrection and even the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Yet, here in Luke 15, the term “zao” is being used to describe the kind of experiences and habits that defined the prodigal son’s time away from his father’s house. This is another clear example demonstrating that the ancient Jewish people used the term “life,” not just in reference to the state of being alive, but in reference to the experiences, relationships, and manner of our everyday existence.

Third, in Luke 17 Jesus compares the circumstances of his return to the circumstances in the days of Noah and Lot.

**Luke 17:26** And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. **27** They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. **28** Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; **29** But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. **30** Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. **31** In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. **32** Remember Lot's wife. **33** Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

The critical detail from Luke 17 can be found in verses 33 where Jesus warns, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." When this verse is read by itself, we might conclude that the word "life" refers simply to the state of being alive. However, in the context it is clear that the term "life" refers to the experiences and even the things that define our everyday experience. Verses 27-28 refers to the eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, and building that comprised the regular experiences of people in the days of Noah and Lot. And in verse 31, Jesus explains that if a man is on the roof of his house when Jesus returns, that man should not go back into his house to get his "stuff." Nor should the man in the field return home for his things. In verse 32, Jesus says that anyone who goes back for their things is similar to Lot's wife. When Lot and his family were fleeing from Sodom in Genesis 19:15-17, 24-26, Lot's wife turned around and looked back toward the city and was punished by being turned into a pillar of salt. Given these contextual details, the notion of seeking to save your life or being willing to lose your life necessarily includes the experiences, relationships, habits, and even the "stuff" that define your everyday experience.

Fourth, Acts 26 and 2 Timothy also attest to the fact that Jewish people thought of "life," not strictly in terms of the state of being alive, but in reference to the habits and experiences that define everyday existence.

**Acts 26:4** My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; **5** Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that **after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.**

**2 Timothy 3:10** But **thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life,** purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, **11** Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

In Acts, we see the phrases "My manner of life from my youth" and "I lived as a Pharisee." And in 2 Timothy, Paul asserts that Timothy "hast fully known" Paul's "manner of life." All three of these phrases convey the idea that "life" doesn't just

refer to the state of being alive, but to the experiences, habits, and other elements that comprise our everyday existence.

Fifth, several passages in the New Testament contrast the sinful habits and experiences of people before they believed the Gospel and became Christians to the righteous deeds that Christians should perform. Examples of this trend include Colossians 3, Titus 3, and James 5. As we can see, these passages use terms like “lived in” and “living in” to refer to the experiences and habits that define our existence.

**Colossians 3:5** Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; **fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:** 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 **In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.** 8 **But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.** 9 **Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;** 10 **And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.**

**Titus 3:1** Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. 3 **For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.** 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

**James 5:5** **Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth,** and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

Another example of this trend occurs in Galatians 2:19-20. Multiple times in just two verses Paul uses the terms “live” to contrast the habits, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs that were part of his existence prior to Christ with the new habits, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs that came after he became a Christian.

**Galatians 2:19** For I through the law am dead to the law, that **I might live unto God.**  
20 **I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,** who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Sixth, we can see evidence of this use of the term “life” early in the Old Testament as well. In Deuteronomy 28-30, Moses declares a lengthy description of the blessings that the Israelites will experience if they obey God’s commands and the curses that await them if they disobeyed God’s commands. Chapter 28:1-15 outlines the blessings that would result from obedience.

**Deuteronomy 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2 And all these blessings shall come on thee,** and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. 3 Blessed shalt thou be **in the city,** and blessed shalt thou be **in the field.** 4 Blessed shall be **the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.** 5 Blessed shall be thy **basket and thy store.** 6 Blessed shalt thou be **when thou comest in,** and blessed shalt thou be **when thou goest out.** 7 The LORD shall cause **thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face:** they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. 8 The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee **in thy storehouses,** and in **all that thou settest thine hand unto;** and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 9 The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. 10 **And all people of the earth** shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they **shall be afraid of thee.** 11 And the LORD shall make **thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land** which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. 12 The LORD shall **open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.** 13 **And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath;** if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: 14 And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Number one, as we can see the list is not only exhaustive but all of these blessings are essentially a description of the good life that was waiting ahead of them if they were faithful to God’s commands. If they obeyed, their life would be prosperous in the city and in the farm area, they would be healthy have many children, their livestock would be health and have many offspring, their crops would receive sufficient rain and grow abundantly, they would collect abundantly at harvest time, their storehouses would be protected and full, they would conquer hostile nations who would learn to fear them, they would rule over the nations, they would have sufficient abundance to lend to many without ever needing to borrow for themselves, and they would succeed at whatever they put their hand to.

Number two, chapter 28:15-68 lists the curses that would characterize their lives if they disobeyed God's word. Given the length of the passage, we will simply summarize its contents here. (Incidentally, chapter 29:10- even extends these curses to the individual level and to subsequent generation, rather than simply the contemporary national population of Moses' day.) Not surprisingly, the list of curses is essentially a reversal of the list of blessings with even more added to it. If they disobeyed, their life would be failures in the city and in the farm area, they would be struck by disease and sickness, they would be struck with blindness and madness, they would fail to produce offspring and so would their livestock, there would be famine and thirst, their betrothed wives would be taken from them, their houses and vineyard would be taken from them, they would not have sufficient rain, their crops would fail, they would have pitiful harvests, the land would dry up, the vegetation would be consumed by locusts, their storehouses would be empty, they would be conquered by hostile nations, they would be oppressed, other nations would take their livestock, harvests, and belongings, their children will would be taken by people of other lands, their nation and their future king would be taken away into exile in a foreign land where they would serve other gods, they would be subordinate to the nations around them, their name would become a curse word among the other nations, they would be forced to borrow, and they will even be taken back to Egypt to be sold into servitude to pay their debts. God will continue all these curses until the nation no longer existed and its people were scattered and intermingled with the rest of the nations.

Number three, the element of exile is worth highlighting. It is mentioned multiple times throughout the passage in verse 32, 36, 41, 64-65, and 68.

**Deuteronomy 28:32 Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people,** and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand...**36 The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation** which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and **there shalt thou serve other gods,** wood and stone...**41 Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity...****64 And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods,** which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. **65 And among these nations shalt thou find no ease,** neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind...**68 And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships,** by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: **and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen,** and no man shall buy you.

The element of exile is important. Notice in particular that verses 35 and 64 specifically declare that the Israelites would serve foreign gods during their times of exile. The contrast here between the blessings and curses is one that inherently involves the Israelites serving God in their own nation where their lives would be filled with all the good things that God had prepared for them or being kicked out of their own land to serve foreign gods and experience great hardship and

oppression. In fact, this is no idle threat. Centuries later, after the nation of Israel splits into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, God exiled each of the two kingdoms into foreign lands for longstanding disobedience (2 Kings 17:5-7, Jeremiah 52:1-16). Both the repetitive warning about expulsion in Deuteronomy and the monumental historic fulfillment of such expulsion with regard to both kingdoms underscores that separation from God, from the kingdom he has prepared for us, and from the blessings inherited in that kingdom is a core component of God's punishment for the wicked.

Number four, after God promises in chapter 30:1-10 to forgive and restore the Israelites if they repent, Moses concludes and summarizes these declarations in chapter 30:11-20.

**Deuteronomy 30:11** For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? 14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. 15 **See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;** 16 In that I command thee this day **to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways,** and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy **God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.** 17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; 18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. 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 thou and thy seed may live:** 20 That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, **and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.**

There are two points worth making regarding these verses.

One, in this passage we once again see the idea of exile and curses contrasted with God's blessings. However, these verses also associate those blessings with a relationship with God and remaining in the land that God had brought them into. The relationship component is reflected in verses 15 and 20 which describe the Israelites "loving the LORD God" and "cleaving to him." The concept of being brought by God into a specific land and remaining there if they obeyed can be seen in verses 16 and 20, which includes phrases such as "God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it" and "that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." This idea of God bringing the Israelites into this land will become more relevant below when we discussed Genesis 2-3.

Two, this passage defines “life” in terms of this extensive list of blessings that God would bestow upon the Israelites in the specific land that God had brought them into. And, it uses the term “death” to refer to the curses and ultimately the expulsion that would result from disobedience. When summarizing these blessings in verse 15, God says, “I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.” Of course, it could be argued that only the word “good” refers to the blessings, not the word “life.” Likewise, it could be argued that only the word “evil” refers to the curses and exile, not the word “death.”

However, such arguments do not work for verse 19 in which God says, “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” Although the first half of this statement does include the terms “blessing and cursing,” the final command only refers to life. God says, “choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” Why doesn’t God say, “Choose life and blessing that you might live and be blessed?” The reason that God does not need to use the word “blessing” in this command is because it is understood that “life” encompasses the blessings as well. It wasn’t just a reference to being alive or not dying, but a reference to experiencing all the wonderful things that God had prepared for them in the Promised Land, if they obeyed him. Conversely, the use of the term “life” in the command “Choose life” implies that the other alternative is “death.” And, since “life” entails the blessings of life with God, then “death” would likewise summarily include the curses and expulsion from God’s presence. Moreover, it is clear from Deuteronomy and from history that the curses of God did not kill the Israelites immediately. To the contrary, the general norm was that sinners would experience lives filled with the curses and would experience life in exile in foreign lands.

Ultimately, like the many passages that we have examined from the New Testament, Deuteronomy 28-30 demonstrates that the ancient Israelites were certainly familiar with using the term “life” to refer not just to the state of being alive, but to the collection of experiences, habits, relationships, and even the “stuff” that define our everyday experience as well as living in the presence of God. Consequently, it is necessary to consider whether a phrase like “eternal life” might likewise be intended to refer, not solely to immortality (the state of being perpetually alive), but also to the experiences, relationships, and even the “stuff” that would define that immortal existence, including living in God’s presence. Moreover, we are also seeing indications that “death” refers to separation from God and living in the absence of his blessings.

### **#3 – “Life” Inherently Refers to Our Relationship with God and Sharing in the Kingdom**

In the previous section, we established that both the Old and the New Testament used the term “life,” not exclusively to denote the state of being alive, but at times to denote the whole gamut of experiences, relationships, and even the “stuff” that define everyday existence. In other words, in scripture, “life” isn’t just the state of existing. It also encompasses the experiences that we have while we are alive. But

in addition to the way the term “life” is used in scripture, there are other ways that the New Testament affirms that “eternal life” entails more than just immortal existence and inherently includes our relationship with God, living in his presence, and sharing in the good things of his kingdom.

Now that we have seen that scripture defines life in contrast to separation, we can examine what the alternative to salvation involves. A good place to start would be the Greek noun “koinonia” (Strong’s Number 2842), which is often translated as “fellowship.” The Online Bible Greek Lexicon defines “koinonia” as “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, and the share which one has in anything.” “Koinonia” is derived from the related noun “koinonos” (Strong’s Number 2844), which means, “a partner, associate, comrade, companion, a sharer in anything.” Bound up in these two Greek words is the idea of a sharing relationship, togetherness and having things in common. These concepts are the opposite of separation. And in addition to being alive and ultimately being immortal, this concept of togetherness and sharing is a core component of the way scripture defines “life.”

First, consider Paul’s use of the word “koinonia” in 1 Corinthians 1.

**1 Corinthians 1:9** God is faithful, by whom **ye were called unto the fellowship (2842) of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** 10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and **that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

Here in verses 9-10, Paul refers to our salvation in Christ in verse 9 with the phrase “ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” and then immediately contrasts that shared gift with “divisions” that were emerging in the Corinthians church. In contrast to division, Paul concludes that he wants the church to be “perfectly joined together.”

Second, the Apostle John uses “koinonia” in a chapter where he also discusses the “life” that awaits the saints in God through Christ Jesus.

**1 John 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and **our hands have handled, of the Word of life;** 2 (For **the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;**) 3 **That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.** 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. 5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**

As we can see, here John describes the life that God has made known through Jesus Christ. Verse 2 defines this as eternal life. But verse 3 also describes this life in terms of the “koinonia” or sharing relationship that we have with the Father, Jesus Christ, and with all other Christians. Through Christ we are not just made immortal, but we are brought into that relationship with God and our separation from God is brought to an end. Verse 7 likewise affirms that our former separation from God is removed and replaced with this sharing relationship when John writes, “we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” So, again we see that the life God offers is not solely eternal existence but also a life lived in a sharing relationship with God rather than separated from him by sin.

Third, this idea of “fellowship” or “sharing relationship” is also echoed in other passages that do not use the specific Greek term “koinonia.” We see it reflect in God’s promises in Revelation 21:7.

**Revelation 21:4** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: **for the former things are passed away.** **5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.** And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. **6** And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. **I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.** **7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.**

Number one, in verse 6 the phrase “fountain of the water of life” is referential to the immortal life Jesus promises in John 4:10-14 and John 7:37-39.

Number two, this passage also makes it clear that immortality is not the only thing that this life with God entails. In verse 7, God declares, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Notice in particular the phrase “all things.” The language of verse 7 ties the relationship of Father and son to our being able to share in the all the good things that God has prepared on the restored earth, not just immortality.

Number three, as we can see below, the rest of this chapter of Revelation is not silent about just what “all things” includes. Verses 9- 26 describe in great detail the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven. Verse 27 explains that “they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” will be able to enter this city in which God will dwell with men, even as indicated in verse 22.

**Revelation 21:8** But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: **which is the second death.** **9** And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. **10 And he**

carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. 18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Number four, it is also critical to note that verse 8 and verse 27 contrast the saints' inheritance in the heavenly city to the wicked who have their "part," their inheritance, in the Lake of Fire. In other words, the saints not only receive immortality but a relationship with God as their Father and an inheritance in the heavenly city and the restored earth while the wicked are excluded from participating in the benefits of the restored earth or the heavenly city where God will dwell with men. Yet both groups have an inheritance. The saints inherit life with God in his presence in the kingdom and all the things that go with it. The wicked inherit the Lake of Fire and separation from God.

Number five, it is striking that one of the few passages that mention the Lake of Fire actually depicts it in contradistinction from the saints enjoying a relationship with God as their Father, dwelling in God's presence, and experiencing the blessings that God has prepared for them in his presence. The juxtaposition

between these two states itself suggests that the Lake of Fire should be understood as a place of separation for those who are not in a relationship with God as their Father and who will not experience his blessings. Of course, that in itself does not disprove that the Lake of Fire annihilates the wicked from existence. But it does depict the Lake of Fire in terms that do not require annihilation but merely separation from God and all of his blessings.

Fifth, given these facts, it is not surprising to see how Jesus defines life in John 14:6.

**John 14:6** Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

Here Jesus identifies himself as not only as the source of life, but also as “the way” to the Father. In the same breath, he speaks of “life” and “coming to the Father.” In contrast to separation, Jesus seems to associate “life” with being in God’s presence.

Sixth, Jesus also provides another insight regarding the definition of “eternal life” in John 17.

**John 17:1** **These words spake Jesus,** and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, **Father, the hour is come;** glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that **he should give eternal life** to as many as thou hast given him. 3 **And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**

Here Jesus specifically says “this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God.” With these words, Jesus doesn’t define “eternal life” solely as living forever, but also as “knowing God” in the sense of being in a proper relationship with God as our Father.

Seventh, the fact that this restored relationship is so critical to our “life” in Christ Jesus is also reflected in the numerous passages in the New Testament which refer to Christ Jesus or God being “with us.” (See Matthew 26:29, 28:20, Romans 15:33, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 14, Philippians 4:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, and 2 Timothy 4:22.) Likewise, in Romans 8, Paul contrasts the wicked and the righteous in terms of this relationship and inheritance that the saints have with God. In verse 14-18, Paul describes the relationship between the saints and God in terms of a Father and his children and, as such, we have “joint-heirs” sharing in the inheritance that Christ Jesus himself will receive from God. But in contrast to that relationship and inheritance, in verse 7 Paul explains that those who continue in disobedience are in a state of “enmity” with God. And in Ephesians 2:12, 17-19, Paul contrasts our being without Christ and without God before we believe in Christ and repent of our sins with our being near to Christ, having access to the Father, and being part of the household of God after we believe and repent.

Eighth, the New Testament describes the reward of the saints specifically in terms of their residing in God's presence.

Number one, in John 14 Jesus promises that he will "come again" and "receive" his followers with the end goal being "that where I am, there ye may also be."

**John 14:1** Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 **In my Father's house** are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you.** 3 **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**

Number two, speaking similarly of the coming of the Lord, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 Paul explains that when the Lord returns he will resurrect the dead saints and gather them together with the living saints so that "we shall ever be with the Lord." And he concludes in verse 18 that this is hope is a great comfort and encouragement for Christians in this life.

**1 Thessalonians 4:15** For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that **we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord** shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then **we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** 18 **Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**

Number three, speaking of those who come out of great tribulation, Revelation 7:15 says that they "are before the throne of God" and God "shall dwell among them."

**Revelation 7:14** And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 **Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.**

Number four, Revelation 14:4 describes saints another time and declares that "they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes," again indicating that these saints reside in the presence of God.

**Revelation 14:4** These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are **they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.** These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Similarly, Revelation 21:3 describes the city of God which descends to the earth as a place where God the Father and Jesus Christ will live among the saints even while verse 27 states that the wicked are kept out (Revelation 20:27).

**Revelation 21: 2** And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven**, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, **Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.** **4** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away... **27** **And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

In conclusion, the New Testament is clear that the life we have in God through Christ Jesus is not immortality alone. Rather, the life we have in God through Christ Jesus is defined also in terms of the sharing relationship with have with God, being in God's presence, and our inheritance and participation in the good things of the kingdom of God. And, of course, we have already established earlier from scripture that at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the entire mortal creation will be made incorruptible and immortal. In other words, not only does the term "eternal life" refer to this sharing relationship with God but the specific things that we will share through our inheritance will ultimately be the incorruptible features of a transformed earth that itself has been liberated from processes of decay and death. In scripture, "eternal life" is properly defined both as immortal existence as well the experiences, relationships, and things that comprise and define eternal existence. In other words, both existence itself as well as the experiences, relationships, and things that define that existence are all eternal and, as such, together comprise "eternal life."

Consequently, the fact that life inherently includes this sharing relationship opens the door for the possibility that the exclusion of the wicked from "life" does not refer to their exclusion from immortality. Instead, it is possible that the exclusion of the wicked from "eternal life" refers to their exclusion from a sharing relationship with God in which they will inherit and participate in all the enjoyable things of the eternal kingdom on the restored and immortal earth. This parallels the Old Testament where God defined death as casting his people away from his presence and his blessings in the Promised Land. As we continue forward, we will continue to explore more evidence that in scripture, the concept of eternal life pertains particularly to the experiences, relationships, and things that comprise existence.

#### **#4 – From the Beginning Life and Death Refer to a Sharing Relationship or Separation**

Although we have already examined evidence from the New Testament and from Deuteronomy, it is important to note that Genesis itself teaches that "life" doesn't

just mean to be alive. From the very beginning of scripture, it is a fundamental concept that “life” also entails being with God both in the sense of being in a proper relationship with God and also in the very literal sense of being able to dwell in the very presence of God and enjoy the many benefits, which he intends for us. We can see this right away in Genesis 2-3, which records the creation of Adam and Adam’s first sin.

**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. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed...15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day (03117) that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**

First, it is clear that verse 7 describes Adam becoming a living being, but this event is then immediately associated with God “putting the man” in the Garden of Eden. Verse 15 repeats this statement, saying, “And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” It is impossible to deny the parallel to God’s commands in Deuteronomy 28-30, which came at the end of the Exodus journey. Just as Adam was created elsewhere and then brought into the Garden of Eden, God took Israel from Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land. The fact that God did not just bring Adam to life, but put him in the Garden of Eden is a foundational concept and its relevance is clarified when Adam sins.

Second, no sooner does verse 15 reiterate that God took the man into the garden than verses 16-17 immediately follow with God commanding the man not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Here we have Adam coming to life juxtaposed to the threat of death. And we have the account of Adam being brought into the garden placed directly in between those two opposing concepts of life and death. Lastly, we have the fact that Adam is in God’s presence when he is in the garden. This is supported by several exegetical details. First, God gave commands to Adam. This indicates that Adam was in God’s presence to hear the commands (Genesis 2:16-17). Second, God creates animals in front of Adam and brings them before Adam for Adam to name them (Genesis 2:18-20). Third, God forms Eve from one of Adam’s ribs and then present Eve to Adam (Genesis 2:21-22). And fourth, Genesis 3:8 states that Adam and Eve heard “the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” Adam and Eve must have been familiar with this they immediately recognize this is God and hide from God, which indicates that they’d experienced this type of visit from God before.

Genesis 3 records what happens when Adam and Eve first sin and continues to expound on these themes of life, death, and location.

**Genesis 3:1** Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die:** 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6 **And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.** 7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. 8 **And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.** 9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and **I hid myself.** 11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? **Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?** 12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. 14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 **And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days (03117) of thy life;** 18 **Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;** 19 **In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.** 20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. 21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. 22 **And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:** 23 **Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.** 24 **So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.**

Third, verse 8 informs us that “the LORD God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.” Moreover, verse 8 specifically uses the phrase “the presence of the

LORD God” and states that God’s presence was “among the trees.” It is clear from the text that the garden of Eden was the place that God deliberately brought Adam for the purposes of having Adam in God’s presence so God could interact with him. Again, this is parallel to what God did regarding the nation of Israel during the Exodus. As we noted earlier, Adam was not made in Eden, as we saw in Genesis 2. Adam was brought to life elsewhere and then brought into the garden. We see this fact attested to again here in chapter 3:23 which says, “the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” In short, verses 8 and 23 confirm the fundamental concept that when God gave man life, he brought man into his presence so that he could interact with the man. Consequently, from the very beginning, life is inherently associated with having a relationship with God, being in God’s presence, sharing those good things that God made for us to enjoy, just as Adam and Eve did in the garden.

Fourth, it is also worth noting that even before God actually rebukes Adam, in verses 8 and 10 Adam and Eve are already hiding from God’s presence as a result of their sin. Separation from God is interwoven into the consequence of sin.

Fifth, notice that verses 17-19 describe Adam’s punishment in terms of Adam having to work very hard to produce sufficient food for himself and his family. Consequently, here we can see that the punishment for sin involved not only expulsion from God himself, but the loss of access to God’s provisions.

Sixth, in verse 17 God addresses Adam to explain the consequences of Adam’s sin. In chapter 3:17, God confronts Adam and says, “thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it.” In other words, the first thing that God says is to remind Adam of the command that God gave to Adam in chapter 2. As we noted earlier, in chapter 2:16-17 God specifically commanded Adam “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.” And at that same time in chapter 2, God also spelled out the exact punishment for disobedience, saying, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Then immediately after reminding Adam of the command here in chapter 3:11, the first consequence that God pronounced on Adam for disobeying that command concludes with “cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” Notice the specific phrase “all the days of thy life.” “Days” is plural. It’s connected with the word “all,” which infers there would be many days left in Adam’s life. Using the same Hebrew term “yowm” (Strong’s Number 03117) that occurs in the phrase “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” God is now pronouncing that Adam will live for many more days after breaking God’s command and eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In fact, Genesis 5:1-5 records that Adam lived 800 years after the birth of his son Seth, who was born after Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 4:1, 25). Clearly, Adam’s body did not die on the day that he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Yet God had promised him “thou shalt surely die.” This point is significant so we will repeat it. God tells Adam that on the day he eats of the tree of knowledge he would die, and

yet Adam did not physically die on the day he ate of the tree of knowledge. Instead he lived for another 800-900 years or so.

The fact that God uses the same word “yowm” in chapter 2:16-17 and in chapter 3:11 raises an issue. In chapter 2:16-17, God said that Adam would die on the very day that he sinned. But in chapter 3:11, after Adam sins God pronounces that Adam would not experience the death of the body that same day but it would instead be many days before Adam experienced the death of the body. So, was God misleading Adam in chapter 2? Or, did God really mean what he said in chapter 2 but then later mercifully changing his mind?

We can't conclude that God's words in chapter 2 were misleading, because that would undermine the idea that the serpent was the one acting deceptively when he told Eve she would not die for eating of the tree of knowledge. Nor can we conclude that God changed his mind, because then that would also suggest that the serpent was accurately predicting God's behavior rather than deceiving Eve. Ultimately, it's hard to believe that God didn't fully intend to do exactly what he warned Adam in chapter 2. But the only way for God to mean that Adam would indeed die the same day that he sinned and yet also declare that Adam would not die bodily for many days after he sinned is if there was some other kind of death that Adam would indeed suffer the very same day that he sinned. If Adam's expulsion from a relationship with God, from God's presence, and from God's provisions were itself understood to be a kind of “death,” and end to the life that Adam previously had, then God's statements in Genesis 2 and 3 reconcile perfectly.

Moreover, in light of these facts, it could even be argued that Satan's deception inherently centered on a denial or obfuscation of the fact that separation from God and all his provisions is itself a form of death. His effort to persuade Eve that there was no imminent threat of death inherently involves leaving separation from God entirely out of the picture when it comes to the idea of death. Thus, Satan tricked Eve by focusing on death solely in terms of the death of the body and simultaneously excluding the very form of death that God had promised Adam would experience the very same day that he ate of the tree of knowledge.

Seventh, although Adam does not physically die the same day that he breaks God's command, the rest of the chapter does indeed go on to explain what punishment God does enact that very same day that Adam sins. As we can see in verses 22-24, “the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” and “he drove out the man.” In fact, verse 22 suggests that there was a sense of urgency to the expulsion, which is indicated by the phrase “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” In other words, God wanted to prevent Adam from having any additional time or opportunities to eat of the tree of life from that point forward. So, God took immediate action. For disobeying God's command, God expelled Adam from the very place that God had previously brought Adam in order to fellowship with God and enjoy God's blessings.

Eighth, here again the parallels to God's proclamation to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28-30 is obvious. Just like Adam, if the Israelites disobeyed God's commands, God would deprive them of all the good things that he'd prepared for them to experience over the course of their lives and also expel them from his presence in the special place that God had brought them. The similarities between Genesis and Deuteronomy are not just coincidence. This becomes apparent when we consider the number of specific parallels.

Number one, in Genesis 2 God forms Adam from the ground elsewhere outside Eden. In Deuteronomy 32:18 God refers to the formal creation of the nation of Israel through the Exodus and the covenant that he gave them and God describes this process by saying that he "begat" Israel and "formed" Israel.

Number two, after God forms Adam, he relocates Adam and brings him into the Garden of Eden. The Book of Deuteronomy pertains to the period of time at the end of the Israelites Exodus journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. And like Adam, during the Exodus journey, God brings Israel from one location into a new location full of provision for them and where he would dwell with them.

Number three, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, where God would at times walk and visit with Adam. When Adam is expelled from Eden in Genesis 3:23-24, he places cherubim to the east of the garden to protect the way back in, which indicates that the entrance and exit was on the eastern side of Eden. On this point, it is worth noting that when the Israelites later built the Temple in Jerusalem, they constructed and decorated it to reflect the Garden of Eden, including plant motifs, angels depicted at entrances, and an eastward entrance and exit. (More information on the intentional similarity between the Temple and the Garden of Eden are outlined in our study "The Priesthood and God's Plan for an Enduring Kinsman Redeemer," which can be found in our Redemption section.)

Number four, in Genesis 2 God gives Adam a command. In Deuteronomy 28-30, God commands the Israelites to keep all of his statutes and judgments.

And number five, after God gives Adam his command, he warns Adam that on the very day he breaks that command, Adam will die. In Genesis 3, we see that the only punishment that Adam experiences on the day that he sins is expulsion from God's presence and provision in the garden. After reminding the Israelites to keep all his commands, in Deuteronomy 28-30 warns them that if they do not keep his commands, the punishment will include expelling them from his presence and the land of provision into which he had brought them.

These similarities establish that God intended to establish a theme in scripture that "life" entails a relationship with God, God's presence, and God's blessings and that "death" entails separation from a relationship with God, separation from God's presence, and separation from God's blessings.

Ninth, Old Testament phrases such as "land of the living" are also relevant to the current question. This phrase can be seen multiple times in passages as early as

Job 28:13, but also including Psalm 27:3, Psalm 52:5, Psalm 116:9, Psalm 142:5, Isaiah 38:11, Isaiah 53:8, Jeremiah 11:19, Ezekiel 26:20, and Ezekiel 32:23-27, and 32. The very existence of the phrase is interesting because the need to specify a given land as “the land of the living” implies a counterpart understanding that there is also a land, or location, where the dead reside. But among these many occurrences of this phrase, a few are particularly interesting, specifically Psalm 52, Jeremiah 11, and Isaiah 53:8.

**Psalm 52:5** God shall likewise **destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living.** Selah.

**Jeremiah 11:19** But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and **let us cut him off from the land of the living,** that his name may be no more remembered.

**Isaiah 53:8** **He was taken from prison** and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? **for he was cut off out of the land of the living:** for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Number one, let’s start with the connective tissue in the immediate context. Both Psalm 52 and Jeremiah 11 place the phrase “land of the living” after phrases like “pluck thee out of,” “root thee out of,” and “cut him off from.”

Number two, further insight can be gained from the specific Hebrew vocabulary terms in these verses.

One, Psalm 52 uses three phrases in succession. In the phrase “destroy thee for ever,” the word “destroy” is translated from the Hebrew word “nathats” (Strong’s Number 5422) which is conjugated in the Qal rendering, which actually means “to pull down” or “break off.” In other words, the English translation “destroy” is not necessarily warranted. The next phrase, “pluck thee out” is translated from the Hebrew word “nacach” (Strong’s Number 5255), which means “to pull or tear away.” And finally, the phrase, “root thee out” is translated from the Hebrew word “sharash” (Strong’s Number 8327), which means “to uproot.” As we can see, all three of these phrases refer to removal from one location to another, not to annihilating something. In fact, this interpretation is confirmed by two additional components of this verse. The phrase “pluck thee out” actually concludes with the phrase “of thy dwelling place,” which further underscores that the basic idea here is one of relocation from one dwelling to another. Likewise, right after the initial phrase “destroy thee for ever,” we find the simple phrase, “he shall take thee away,” which is translated from the Hebrew word “chathah” (Strong’s Number 2846), which means, “to take hold of” or “take away” or even “pile up. Here again, we find the essential concept or relocation. If only one or two of the phrases in Psalm 52 referred to relocation and the others conveyed annihilation, then the case might not be so compelling. But for all of these elements to convey

relocation is fairly conclusive. Psalm 52 is talking about relocation from the land of the living to another location.

Two, Jeremiah 11 is similar. Verse 19 begins with metaphorical comparisons to slaughtering livestock or destroying a tree, which are no doubt meant in reference to killing the author's mortal body being put to death. However, the verse concludes with the phrase, "him off from the land of the living." The Hebrew word for "cut off" "karath" (Strong's Number 3772), which primarily means, "to cut," which fundamental conveys separation, not annihilation. Here it is conjugated in the Qal rendering, in which case it means, "to cut off, cut off a body part, to cut down, etc." In order to convey "destroy" or "perish," "karath" would have to be rendered in the Hiphil rendering, which it is not here in Jeremiah 11:19. Other occurrences of "karath" are also informative. Genesis 17:14, for example, records God's command to Abraham regarding circumcision. Although the word "karath" is not used with regard to the act of "circumcision," "karath" does occur in the last half of the verse when Abraham is told that any man who is not circumcised "shall be cut off from his people." The parallel nature of the imagery here is obvious. Circumcision is an act which literally involves cutting off and removing part of the body. And God is telling Abraham that any man who is not circumcised would likewise have to be removed. It is unlikely that God is telling Abraham to kill every man who refused to be circumcised, but rather to simply separate them from Abraham and his household.

Three, Isaiah 53 is famously a passage prophesying the sacrificial death of the Messiah. So, here we find the phrase "cut off from the land of the living" in a chapter about death. However, our point here is not to disassociate the phrase "cut off from the land of the living" from the death of the body. To the contrary, that connection is unavoidable. But the question is whether or not the phrase "cut off from the land of the living" conveys that the death of the body entails, not a cessation of the individual human spirit, but a relocation of the human spirit to another place. By applying this phrase to the Messiah, Isaiah 53 affirms that conclusion.

If Isaiah 53 were referring to any other person, it might be an open question whether or not this phrase refers to annihilation from existence or to relocation. But because Isaiah is talking about the Messiah, we know that his death did not entail any cessation of existence but rather merely relocation. Even as 1 Peter 3:18-19 explains that when Jesus was "put to death in the flesh," he "went and preached unto the spirits in prison" from the "days of Noah." Between his death and resurrection, Jesus' disembodied spirit descended into Sheol to release repentant sinners who had previously not been allowed to leave and go to God's presence until their atonement was provided. Therefore, when Jesus was resurrected, Matthew 27:52-53 tells us that he resurrected the Old Testament saints with him. And Ephesians 4:8 explains that when Jesus "ascended up on high" returning to the Father in heaven, "he led captive captive." In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail against his church. The word "church" is the Greek word "ekklesia" (Strong's Number 1577), which is a compound word formed from "ek" (Strong's Number 1537), meaning "out

of” and “kaleo” (Strong’s Number 2564), which means “to call.” In other words, Jesus was promising that the gates of Hell would not prevail against those he was calling out of it.

Next, we turn to the vocabulary of Isaiah 53:8. The phrase “cut off” is translated from the Hebrew word “gazar” (Strong’s Number 1504). Similar to “karath,” “gazar” primarily means “to cut” or “divide” in the sense of “cut in two.” When conjugated in the Niphal rendering, as it is here in Isaiah 53:8, “gazar” can mean either “separated” or “destroyed” or even “decreed.” On this point, the online dictionary provided by [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) tells defines “gazar” as “a primitive root; to cut down or off; (figuratively) to destroy,” which is interesting because it denotes that “destroy” is actually a figurative application of “gazar,” not a literal one.

And finally, among other occurrences of “gazar,” a few are helpful, especially 2 Chronicles 26:21.

**2 Chronicles 26:21** And **Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD:** and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

2 Chronicles is interesting because it states that before he died King Uzziah “dwelt in a several house” because he was “a leper.” The word “several” here is “chophshuwth” (Strong’s Number 2669), which means, “separateness.” In other words, he was living in a different location because he was a leper.

But even more interesting is that this description of Uzziah living in a different house is followed by the phrase “he was cut off from the house of the Lord.” Here the phrase “cut off” is the Hebrew word “gazar.” Since the verse begins by informing us that this description of Uzziah’s circumstances before he died, not when he died, we can see that the phrase “cut off” does not refer to Uzziah being killed. In fact, the situation with Uzziah relates to commands regarding leprosy outlined in Leviticus 13:44-46. These protocols required that “a leprous man” would go to the priest and once it was determined that he had leprosy, the priest would pronounce him “unclean.” Verse 46 of Leviticus 13 concludes by saying, “All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.” In other words, the leper was required to “dwell alone,” which is why Uzziah was dwelling in a different house. This pronouncement by the priest would also effectively prohibit the leper from participating in Temple rites. Consequently, the fact that the pronouncement came from the priest and would impact participation at the Temple is why 2 Chronicles says that Uzziah was “cut off from the house of the Lord.”

Ultimately, what is interesting about 2 Chronicles is that here we have an instance in which “gazar” is used to describe someone being separated from others by simply being relocated to a different place. Here is it worth noting that the phrase

“land of the living” is itself inherently a term referring to a location. The application of this same word “gazar” to the phrase “from the land of the living” confirms that the phrase “cut off from the land of the living” was meant to convey that when the body dies, the human spirit goes to a different location in much the same way that King Uzziah did before he died when he was living with leprosy. In fact, the presence of this phrasing within Jewish culture as recorded in the Old Testament most likely relates to how Jesus and Paul described the human body as a house in which a spirit (whether a human spirit or a demonic spirit) can exit and also return, as we saw earlier from Matthew 12:43-45, Luke 11:24-26, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, and Philippians 1:20-25. In short, the phrase “land of the living” reflects the historic Jewish understanding that when a man died, instead of being annihilated, he simply went to reside in another location or “land.” Moreover, the occasional association of the phrase “land of the living” with verbs that mean divide or cut, such as “karath” and “gazar,” reinforces that the Jewish people conceived of death fundamentally as a division or separation of the conscious human spirit from the body.

Tenth, the striking contrast between Genesis 3 and Jesus’ proclamation in John 14 must be noted. Genesis 3:22-24 records that the very same day that Adam sinned, God expelled him from God’s presence in the garden and placed angels to guard “the way of the tree of life,” all as a result of a lie that the devil told to Eve. But in John 14:6, Jesus declares that he is “the way, the truth, and the life” and through him men can come to the Father. Through the truth that Jesus taught and through his sacrificial death and resurrection, Jesus opens up the way to life and to the presence to God. Just like in Genesis 2-3, we can see that Jesus’ words in John 14 depict a “complete” life not simply as a matter of being alive in a body but about living in God’s presence and with all the good things he has prepared for us.

Eleventh, Adam and Eve are not the only early and prominent example cementing the notion that separation and exile is the quintessential component to God’s intended punishment for sin. We also see this in the example of Cain.

**Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain,** and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. **2 And she again bare his brother Abel.** And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. **3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.** **4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.** And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: **5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.** **6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?** **7** If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. **8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.** **9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?** And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper? **10** And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. **11** And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath

opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; **a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.** 13 **And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.** 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; **and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.** 15 **And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.** 16 **And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.**

Number one, as we can see from Genesis 4, when Cain commits such a significant sin as murder, not only does God refrain from killing Cain but in verse 15 God goes so far as to put a mark on Cain to prevent others from killing him. Instead of death, for this great offence God punishes Cain with exile from God's presence, as we can see in verses 12-16. In fact, it is striking how much Cain's exile resembles the essential elements of Adam's exile. As we can see by comparing Genesis 4:16 with Genesis 2:7-8 and 3:8, 23-24, Cain and Adam are not only both exiled, but they are both expelled from the presence of the Lord and they are both expelled to the east of Eden. These similarities indicate a repetition of the basic principle of exile, not just in general, but in specific terms.

Number two, of course, exile does not remain the divinely mandated punishment for murderers for the entire course of human history. After the Flood in Genesis 9:5-6 we find the first record of God enjoining upon men the authority to justly put murderers to death. And this authority for men to justly put one another to death for sins is certainly expanded by God in the Law of Moses to include sins other than murder. But does the fact that God also mandates execution as a punishment for murder nullify the notion that the treatment of Cain supports exile as God's intended punishment for sin?

To answer this question, we must consider how God's requirements in early Genesis change at later points in history. For example, in Matthew 19:1-9 Jesus acknowledges that Moses permitted divorce and remarriage but then Jesus restores God's original standard regarding marriage as set forth in Genesis 2. So, in Jesus' interpretation God's ultimate standard was revealed in early Genesis, despite the modifications to God's requirements as revealed in the later covenant of the Law of Moses. Likewise, although Moses' Law required sinners to be put to death under the testimony of two or three witnesses in Deuteronomy 17:6, in Matthew 18:15-16 Jesus replaces Moses' command regarding execution of sinners with a command to instead expel sinners under the testimony of two or three witnesses. It is reasonable to conclude that like the issue of marriage in Matthew 19, in Matthew 18 Jesus is restoring God's initial standard regarding punishment as set forth in early Genesis. As such, despite God's authorization to Noah and Moses that sinners should be put to death, the evidence from Cain continues to suggest that God's ultimate standard as exemplified in early Genesis is for exile.

Number three, it might also be suggested that the prohibition against killing Cain was just a unique and unexplained incident and as such should not be taken as an indication of any principle of divine punishment. But two points should be highlighted here.

One, it is worth noting that any interpretation, which requires characterizing noteworthy or prominent details of a passage as irrelevant or arbitrary, is already operating on unsure footing. The fact that God marks Cain in response to Cain's plea is certainly a peculiar and noteworthy component of the story. Likewise, the fact that the author of Genesis 4 decided to include those details strongly suggests that God views those details as relevant, in which case they should not be dismissed as nonconsequential. As 2 Timothy 3:16 explains, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Two, just a few verses after God punishes Cain with exile and forbids anyone from killing Cain, in verses 23-24 of Genesis 4 we find an account in which Lamech kills someone. While the circumstances of how this killing took place are not outlined in detail, the passage does take the time to record that Lamech reached the conclusion that God's prohibition against killing Cain should extend to him as well. Here we must ask why this incident with Lamech is included at all. Since there is so little detail provided and the entire account spans only 2 verses, it is reasonable to conclude that this narrative was specifically included in order to denote that God's prohibition against killing sinners applied generally to men, not just uniquely to Cain.

(Incidentally, the ritual of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement, which is described in Leviticus 16:1-34, may also recapitulate and enshrine the incident of the murder of Abel and exile of Cain. The book of Genesis was given to the people of Israel by Moses at the time of the Exodus when Israel was receiving the commandments regarding the priestly service that is recorded in Leviticus. In the case of the Atonement day ritual, two goats are selected and taken before the Lord in the tabernacle or Temple. One goat is killed there before the Lord as a sin offering. The goat that is killed before the Lord corresponds to what happened with Abel. Then, the sins of the people are confessed and "placed on the head of" the other goat, the scapegoat, which is taken into the wilderness. This scapegoat not only corresponds to what happened with Cain but it also effectively enshrines in priestly practice the idea of exile as a primary punishment for sin.)

Ultimately, like the expulsion of Adam and Eve, these statements in early Genesis regarding Cain suggest that during the earliest centuries after creation, men understood that exile was a fundamental part of God's punishment of sin.

In summary, God told Adam he would surely die on the same day he disobeyed and yet Adam's body did not die for at least another 800 years. However, physical separation from God's presence and from all the good things that God had prepared from Adam did indeed happen the very same day that Adam sinned. It is hard to avoid the implication that although Adam continued to live bodily for

hundreds of years after he sinned, in scriptural terms Adam's life was incomplete from the very moment that he was cast out of God's presence. On that day, the life he had with God in the garden was taken from him. All of the experiences, the provision, the relationship that defined his existence up to that point, that "life" was now gone. To use Adam as an illustrative example, in order to restore to Adam the life that he lost when he sinned, God would have to bring Adam back into a relationship with God, back into the presence of God, and back into the many provisions that God had bestowed on him in the garden. And as we can see in passages like John 14:6, Jesus' refers to himself as the "life" right alongside referring to himself as the "way" back into the presence of God. This shows that when Jesus' bestows "eternal life" on his followers, that eternal life most certainly entails a restoration of our relationship to God as our Father and access to his presence, which is exactly what Adam lost on the same day when he sinned. In addition, these passages firmly establish that, biblically speaking, beings that are physically and consciously alive can, in fact, already have entered into one of the biblical aspect of death. In biblical teaching, "death" doesn't only reference the death of the body, but it also refers to the loss of a relationship with God, living in his presence, and enjoying the blessings and provisions he provides.

### **#5 – All Death Is Simply Separation, Both Bodily Death and the Second Death**

As we begin this section, it is important to address a potential alternative definition of death. To be specific, is death simply a synonym for the end of existence or non-existence? In other words, when the bible says someone is dead, does it mean they are "gone" in the sense that they no longer exist? Is that what "death" essentially means?

Here two fundamental problems arise with such a definition of death, one theological and the other historical or perhaps pragmatic.

First, on the theological side, if we define "death" as non-existence or the cessation of existence, then we would have to consider the implications of a simple statements such as, "Jesus Christ died." Certainly, no Christian could accept the notion that Jesus Christ ceased to exist. Even Jesus' body continued to exist when he died, an issue which we will touch on more momentarily. So, although we can say with certainty that Jesus died, we can also say with equal certainty that in no sense did Jesus cease to exist. Consequently, we are forced to admit at least some nuance to the biblical meaning of the concepts of "death" or "dead," which cannot be reduced straightforwardly or clearly to simple non-existence or cessation of existence.

Second, on the historical or pragmatic side, we are confronted with the existence of mummies, which present are rather intriguing obstacle for the notion that "death" or "dead" means non-existence or the cessation of existence. Encyclopedia Britannica defines a mummy as a "body embalmed, naturally preserved, or treated for burial with preservatives after the manner of the ancient Egyptians." Wikipedia's article on Mummy explains, "Mummies of humans and

other animals have been found on every continent,[1] both as a result of natural preservation through unusual conditions, and as cultural artifacts. Over one million animal mummies have been found in Egypt, many of which are cats.[2]” (It is worth noting that mummies can form naturally and do not require creation from artificial methods.) Encyclopedia Britannica’s article on the famous Egyptian King Tutankhamun notes that he “flourished in the 14th century BCE” and “reigned from 1333-23 BCE.” Yet his dead body has survived in a mummified state into modern times where “Medical analysis of Tutankhaten’s mummy shows that he shares very close physical characteristics with the mummy discovered in KV 55 (tomb 55) of the Valley of the Kings.”

Of course, our point here is absolutely not to use the existence of mummies to prove that the body is immortal. To the contrary, it is readily admitted that the human body generally decomposes and can be essentially reduced to the type of fine soil-like particles from which it was made. However, the existence of mummies makes it impossible to define “death” or “dead” in terms of a cessation of existence precisely because a mummy is inarguably a dead body, yet despite being dead, it continues to exist. No one would look at a mummy and conclude that because it exists, it must therefore be regarded as alive.

At this point, the objection could be raised that mummification is a foreign concept to scripture. And, if ancient biblical authors weren’t aware of mummies, perhaps it is unfair to expect those authors to conceive of death in terms that would be reconcilable with the existence of mummies. To answer this question, we turn to a very early biblical text from Genesis itself.

**Genesis 49:33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. 50:1 And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. 2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days...25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. 26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.**

As we can see from Genesis 49 and 50, after Jacob and his sons come to live in Egypt, Jacob dies and his son Joseph commands the Egyptian physicians to embalm Jacob, who had attained great authority in the Egyptian court. Likewise, when Joseph himself dies, he is also embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (likely by the Egyptians). Before he dies, Joseph requires an oath of the rest of the people of Israel that when God delivers them from Egypt, they will take his bones with them. And, in fact, Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32, and Hebrews 11:22 all record that hundreds of years later in the time of Moses and the Exodus, the Israelites remembered this oath and took Joseph’s bones with them when they left Egypt. In short, the biblical evidence suggests that the Israelites were well aware

of the Egyptian method of mummifying or preserving bodies by embalming and the mummification of Joseph was a memorable event in their collective historical consciousness. In light of the very early nature of these events in the book of Genesis itself, it is simply unreasonable to insist that the biblical authors would have been unfamiliar with the concept that a body could very well be dead and yet would not cease to exist. Against this historic, biblical backdrop it is increasingly difficult to imagine biblical authors from the earliest times would have simply conceived of death as a cessation of existence.

So, while it may initially seem appealing to consider whether we ought to simply define “death” and “dead” as non-existence or the cessation of existence, such definitions are impossible on theological, historical, and pragmatic grounds. A body can die and be a dead body and yet still exist. There is nothing common sense or self-presenting about conceptualizing death as a cessation of existence. And if such a definition of “death” does not work even with regard to the body, then it cannot be asserted that “death” necessarily means non-existence when it is applied the human spirit or soul?

At this point, we will turn our attention to an examination of the critical scriptural texts where we find the term “second death.” This phrase occurs 4 times, all of which are found in the Book of Revelation.

First, Revelation 20:14 and 21:8 clearly identify that the “second death” is simply another name for “the lake of fire.”

**Revelation 20:14** And **death and hell** were cast into **the lake of fire. This is the second death.**

**Revelation 21:7** He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But **the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,** shall have their part in **the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**

(On a side note, Revelation 21:7 exemplifies a difficult challenge facing the idea of universal salvation. The contrast between verses 7 and 8 make a clear distinction between God’s children who “inherit all things” and those who “have their part in the lake which burneth with fire.” As we explained in an earlier segment, in the phrase “have their part,” the Greek word for “part” is “meros” (Strong’s Number 3313), which means, “a part due or assigned to one, a lot.” We find the same Greek term in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:12, where the younger son asks his Father “give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,” which clearly depicts inheritance. Likewise, Deuteronomy 10:9 and 18:1 state that the tribe of Levi would “have no part nor inheritance” with the rest of the tribes of Israel due to their unique role in the priesthood and religious service. The Septuagint even translates the Hebrew word for “part” in Deuteronomy 10 into the Greek word “meros.” As we can see, this is language of “their part” and “his portion” relate to the idea of inheritance. Consequently, Revelation is depicting

two different sets of inheritance. And it is clear from the context, that each individual inherits either one or the other in a mutually exclusive situation. If someone were to be deemed a child of God and fit to inherit all things, they do not receive an inheritance in the Lake of Fire. Conversely, those who are assigned their portion in the Lake of Fire are clearly designated not to inherit all things that God has for his children.)

Number one, the identification of the “second death” with the lake of fire raises a question regarding what the lake of fire is. However, during an earlier section entitled “Introduction to Hell and the Immortal Spirit” we already established that the lake of fire is simply a place where at some point in the future the subterranean fires of Hell will one day break forth to the surface of the earth. The bible indicates that this lake of fire will be visible in the geographic area known as the valley of Hinnom, which is south of Jerusalem.

Number two, these two verses list who will be cast into the lake of fire. Chapter 21 does not provide any specific names but instead uses generic descriptions to identify the types of men who will be placed there. Although generic, all of the terms designate wicked humans. Chapter 20 on the other hand identifies two very specific angelic figures, referring to them by the titles “death” and “hell.” It might be tempting to interpret these as metaphorical references to the concepts or phenomenon of death and hell. Furthermore, it might be argued that the notion of casting “death” into the Lake of Fire was intended to signify the end of the phenomenon of death. However, there are three problems with such an interpretation.

One, it should be noted that such an interpretation would hardly refute the immortality of the wicked. To the contrary, if the phenomenon of death were overcome and ceased to exist, such an event would just as likely entail the resurrection of the wicked dead to an immortal state. In other words, if we take this verse to indicate that the state of death itself is destroyed, this could just as easily indicate the universal end of mortality for mankind as a whole, which would in turn indicate that all men are made immortal, no longer subject to physical death.

Two, the notion of casting “Hell” into the lake of fire cannot mean that Hell as a concept or phenomenon comes to an end particularly because verse 10 of Revelation 20 states that the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” where they “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” The language of verse 14 asserts that the fire and brimstone are the source of the torment and that the torment as well as the fire and brimstone last forever. This is similar to Revelation 14:10-11, which states that the wicked will be “tormented with fire and brimstone” and “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” Once again, the smoke and the torment are presented as the result of the fire and brimstone. The fact that the torment and even the smoke rise forever demonstrates that the fire and brimstone last forever also.

Three, even if it could be argued that “forever” does not literally mean time without end but simply a long period of time, Revelation 20:14 still prohibits the possibility that Hell ceases to exist at the end of the millennium or the Final Judgment. The problem is that Revelation 20:14 is describing what occurs at the end of the millennium at the Final Judgment. Consequently, even if “forever” only referred to a long time, not eternity, the fire and brimstone and smoke and torment would all have to continue for some long duration that starts, rather than ends, at the Final Judgment. So, there is simply no way that the language of Revelation 20:14 can signify that Hell ceases to exist at the Final Judgment.

Moreover, we can be assured from scripture that in Revelation 20:14 the terms “death” and “hell” are not intended as references to concepts or phenomenon but are instead intended as titles for particular wicked angels who are cast into Hell.

One, Hebrews 2:14 states that Jesus came to “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Two, 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 refers to “death” as an “enemy” on par with all of the other enemies that Jesus will conquer when he comes to reign. The Greek word for “enemy” in 1 Corinthians 15 is “echthros” (Strong’s Number 2190), which means “hated” but designates “hostile” and “opposing.” In Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Jesus tells a parable in which he uses the word “echthros” to refer to an “enemy” who opposes his work by sowing “weeds” among the good seed sowed by Jesus Christ. In verse 39, Jesus specifically says “The enemy that sowed them is the devil.”

Two, in Luke 1:67-74 we find “echthros” again when John the Baptist’s father, Zacharias, proclaims that the Messiah would save Israel from their enemies. Zacharias’ words harken back to the expectations set forth in Daniel, which frequently depicts the people of God as persecuted by worldly kingdoms until the Messiah comes to deliver them and conquer their persecutors and political adversaries. In fact, of all the 30 other places where “echthros” occurs in the New Testament apart from 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, nowhere does the New Testament ever use “echthros” to refer to a non-living phenomenon or an impersonal concept. It always refers to an individual person or group of persons.

Three, Revelation 9:1-10 describes a great multitude that is let out of the bottomless pit and verse 11 states that “they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.” The Greek word “Abaddon” (Strong’s Number 3) comes from the Hebrew word “Abaddown” (Strong’s Number 011) which refers to a “place of destruction, destruction, ruin.” We’ve already seen that the New Testament at times uses the word “tartaroo” (Strong’s Number 5020) when referring to Hell and that Britannica online said that “tartaroo” was “originally used for the deepest region of the world, the lower of the two parts of the underworld.” Here, Revelation 9:1-11 describes an angelic king over the subterranean place of destruction. Consequently, just as Hebrews 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 clearly identify that the devil has authority over death, Revelation 9:11 is equally clear that there is another wicked angel who has authority over Hell.

Four, both “death” and “hell” are depicted as riders on horseback in the seals of Revelation 6. This passage bears some resemblance to Zechariah 1-2’s description of angelic beings riding in chariots pulled by horses.

For more information on “death” and “hell” as references to angelic beings, see our study entitled “Angels in the End Times,” especially part 3. This study series can be found in our Eschatology section. Among other things, the “Angels in the End Times” study series demonstrates that in the bible, including the Book of Revelation, the titles “Death” and “Hell” are used to identify the chief adversarial angel as “Death” (Hebrews 2:14-15) and another high-ranking, satanic angel as “Hell” or “Abaddon” (Revelation 9:11).

Five, Revelation 19:20 and 20:10 inform us that the beast and the false prophet are “cast alive into the lake of fire” and that the devil was also “cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are.” Revelation 19:1-3 similarly informs us that the devil will be placed into the bottomless pit (where “Abaddon” had previously been) for a thousand years. Here we see that the devil will be cast into the same place where the angelic king known as “Abaddon” was imprisoned prior to Revelation 9. Likewise, at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the devil is released (Revelation 19:3 and 7). The fact that terms “death” and “hell” are intended to refer to wicked angels is demonstrated by the fact that “death” and “hell” are cast into the same place that the beast, the false prophet, and the angel known as “Abaddon” are also cast. In the descriptions provided in scripture, the bottomless lake of fire is not a place where concepts or phenomenon are thrown, but a place where living beings are thrown and imprisoned, just as Jesus indicates in Matthew 25:40-41.

In light of these facts, when Revelation 20:14 states that “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire,” which “is the second death,” we know that it is referring to the fact that these two angelic enemies being cast into Hell.

Second, Revelation 2:11 and 20:6 specifically denote that the resurrected saints will not be subjected to the second death, the lake of fire.

**Revelation 2:11** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith **unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**

**Revelation 20:6** Blessed and holy is **he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

(Incidentally, we have already noted that the “first resurrection” mentioned in chapter 20:6 refers to the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the millennium in contrast to a subsequent resurrection that occurs at the end of the millennium. As we have also already noted, the resurrection at the end of the millennium seems to include, not just the wicked from all ages, but also righteous individuals who lived and died during the millennium.)

Ultimately, although these four passages in Revelation do inform us that the “second death” refers to the lake of fire and inform us who is placed into the lake of fire, so far the details that we have examined from these passages do not tell us what happens to individuals once they are in the lake of fire. As we move forward, we will continue to investigate the question of whether or not beings condemned to the lake of fire, which is the second death, are annihilated by it.

And this leads us back to the issues we’ve been examining in the last four segments above. So far, we’ve focused on reconciling scripture’s declaration that the wicked do not receive eternal life with scriptural evidence that the wicked are resurrected as immortals to share the punishment of the wicked angels. As we have shown, scriptural statements about eternal life do not exclude the wicked from receiving immortality. Instead, they refer to the wicked being separated from God’s presence, the permanent loss of any relationship and fellowship with God, and being deprived of the blessing and provisions that accompany these things. But what about the term “second death?” It might be suggested that the term “second death” inherently requires that the wicked will cease to exist.

There are two critical points that need to be addressed.

First, the argument that the term “second death” inherently conveys annihilation is rooted in the perception that bodily death also involves the cessation of existence. However, in previous sections we have established from scripture that the soul does not cease to exist upon the death of the body. Instead, scripture records that in the present age when the body dies the soul is transported away from where the body is buried to either Sheol within the earth or to a location in the presence of Jesus Christ with God in heaven. As such, even bodily death merely denotes a separation of the soul from the physical body. That’s worth repeating. In scriptural terms, the death of the body is a separation of the soul and body, not a cessation of human existence. Consequently, it is incorrect to conceive of death fundamentally as a cessation of existence, even with regard to bodily death. And because bodily death does not denote a cessation of existence, comparisons to bodily death do not in any way necessitate that the “second death” of Revelation entails a cessation of existence either. Of course, the fact that bodily death and the “second death” both employ the term “death” does necessitate a conceptual similarity between the two concepts. But the similarity is that both forms of death are primarily defined as separations.

Second, in the four sections above, we have seen that eternal life in Christ Jesus is not just defined in terms of immortality, but that “eternal life” entails a restored relationship with God, restored access to God’s presence, and restored participation in the good things that God has prepared for the saints. Moreover, “eternal life” is frequently contrasted with separation, including separation from a relationship with God, separation from God’s physical presence, and separation from God’s provision. And, as we will now demonstrate, the “second death” is also properly defined as separation from a relationship with God, from God’s

presence, and from his provisions and blessings in the coming kingdom of God on earth, rather than as a cessation of existence.

At this point, we will turn our attention to scriptural texts which further demonstrate that the “second death” is really just a reference to separation, not the separation of the body from the soul that occurs in bodily death, but a separation of the resurrected, immortal individual from a relationship with God, from God’s presence, and from God’s provision and blessings in the kingdom.

First, we have already seen death defined as separation in Genesis 2-3 and 5. In Genesis 2, God decreed that Adam would die the very same day that he sinned. However, Genesis 5 demonstrates that Adam did not die bodily for over 800 years after he sinned. Therefore, God’s decree that Adam would die the same day that he sinned was fulfilled when God condemned Adam and cast Adam out of his presence and provision in the Garden of Eden to a land where Adam would have great struggle to provide for his family. The first form of “death” that Adam experienced was his separation from relationship with God, from God’s presence, and from God’s provision in the Garden of Eden. He did not experience the type of separation that occurs when the body dies until centuries later. The scriptural evidence that the wicked will be raised immortal demonstrates that when it comes to the wicked God will undo the separation of bodily death. But the fact that the wicked are thrown into Hell as immortals demonstrates that the separation from a relationship with God, from God’s presence, or from God’s provision will remain forever. In short, the second death refers to the type of death that Adam experienced the same day that he sinned, not the death that Adam experienced over 800 years after he sinned.

Second, Luke 15’s parable of the prodigal son also substantiates that scripture uses the term “death” to refer to a state of separation from a relationship to the Father, from the presence of the Father, and the Father’s provision. We already examined the Prodigal Son earlier in order to demonstrate that the Jewish concept of “life” at times referred not merely to the notion of being alive or existing, but to the circumstances, experiences, and relationships that comprise everyday existence. However, the passage also tells us something about how the Jewish people understood the term “death.”

**Luke 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more**

**worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.** 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 **But the father said** to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this **my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.** And they began to be merry. 25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. 29 And he answering said to his father, **Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment:** and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31 **And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.** 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for **this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.**

Number one, as we can see in verses 11-14, the parable describes a father who has two sons. His youngest son sets out to enjoy “riotous living” and so he leaves his father’s house for a faraway land and ends up losing all of the material goods that his father provided for him. In verse 19, the son even recognizes that because of his bad behavior, he is no longer worthy to be called his father’s son. This parable perfectly reflects the separation that Adam and everyone else who sins experiences. They lose their relationship with God. They cease to abide in God’s presence. And they lose access to God’s ongoing provision for them.

Number two, the separation experienced by the youngest son is contrasted to the older son. The older son was faithful and never left his father’s house. We see this reflected in verse 29 where the older brother tells his father, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.” In verse 31, the father himself replies to the older brother, describing the rewards of his faithfulness, saying, “Son, thou art every with me, and all that I have is thine.” Once again we see all three components. One, the father’s use of the term “son” demonstrates that older brother retains the “father-son” relationship, which his unfaithful brother had lost through the pursuit of sin. Two, the phrase “thou art every with me” reflects the physical proximity that the older son enjoyed with regard to his father’s presence. Three, the phrase “all that I have is thine” reflects the material provision that the older brother retained from his father for his faithfulness. Once again, we see that scripture always depicts our life in God in terms of these three components. And death is also depicted in terms of separation from these three components.

Number three and most importantly, when the younger son realizes his pitiful condition and decides to return to his father's house to ask for mercy, in verse 24 the father replies "my son was dead, and is alive again." And we see the same language again in verse 32 when the father again declares to the older brother, "thy brother was dead, and is alive again." Of course, the younger son is not physically dead in the parable. Nor does he represent those who have died bodily. We know this because the father is using the term "dead" to refer to the state the younger son is in prior to the point where he returns to the father's house to ask for mercy. It is during this time that the younger son realizes his error and decides to repent and ask for mercy. Regardless of whether one believes that wicked men cease to exist when the body dies or that wicked men go to live on in Sheol, both sides readily agree. Those who are physically dead are not afforded such opportunities to repent. Consequently, the younger son cannot represent those who are physically dead. Instead, he represents those who are physically alive, who are living in sin, and who need to repent. Therefore, when the father twice applies the term "dead" to the younger son, we see that in Jesus' own teaching, the word "dead" does not always denote physical death, nor does it refer to the end of existence, but can and does also denote the state of being separated from relationship with God our Father, from God's presence, and from God's provisions for us even while still physically alive, just as was the case with Adam when he sinned.

Third, Ephesians 2 also demonstrates that the term "dead" can at times refer to living in a state of separation from God and his provisions, rather than to the death of the body or any kind of annihilation.

**Ephesians 2:1** And you hath he quickened, **who were dead in trespasses and sins;** **2** Wherein **in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,** according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in **the children of disobedience:** **3** Among whom also **we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh** and of the mind; and were **by nature the children of wrath, even as others.** **4** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,** (by grace ye are saved;) **6 And hath raised us up together,** and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: **7** That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. **11** Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; **12** That **at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:** **13** **But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.** **14** For **he is our peace,** who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; **15** Having abolished in his flesh the

enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 **And that he might reconcile both unto God** in one body by the cross, **having slain the enmity thereby:** 17 **And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.** 18 **For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.** 19 **Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;** 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building **fitly framed together** groweth unto **an holy temple in the Lord:** 22 In whom ye also are builded together for **an habitation of God** through the Spirit.

The fascinating aspect of Ephesians 2 is how it weaves together descriptions of sinners as “dead” with language of separation, relationship with God, and participation in the kingdom of God.

Number one, it should be noted that Paul regards the Ephesian Christians as at least predominantly Gentile in ethnicity. This can be seen in verse 11, where Paul says to these Ephesian Christians, “ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands.”

Number two, in verse 1 Paul says that the Ephesians “were dead in trespasses and sins.” And again in verse 5 he says, “when we were dead in sins.” Verses 2-3 include additional descriptions of sinful behavior, such as “the course of this world,” “children of disobedience,” “the lusts of our flesh,” “fulfilling the desires of the flesh,” and “children of wrath.” Of course, the Ephesians had not died bodily. Yet it is clear that their previous sins had resulted in “death” in Paul’s eyes. Consequently, they are very much like Adam in Genesis 3. They have sinned and are somehow “dead” despite the fact that they have not died bodily, nor have they ceased to exist.

Number three, Paul doesn’t fail to explain in what sense they were dead. To the contrary, the passage is filled with clear indications that once again mirror the expulsion of Adam and Eve. In verse 12 he describes sinners as “without Christ” and “without God in the world.” In verse 13, he describes sinners as “far off.” And in verse 16 he says that sinners are at “enmity” with God and need to be reconciled to God. All of this language depicts the death of sinners in terms of our separation from God, just like Adam was expelled from God’s presence when he sinned in Genesis 3. Just as God decreed that Adam would die the same day that he sinned and then expelled Adam from his presence to live for at least another 800 years, every man who sins is also “dead” in the sense that they are in a state of separation from God despite the fact that their body lives on and they still continue to exist.

Number four, the passage also repeatedly defines our life in Jesus Christ in terms of a restored relationship directly in contrast to our former state of separation. Verse 5 says, “when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with

Christ.” The phrase “quicken us together with” is all one word in Greek. It is the verb “suzoopoieo” (Strong’s Number 4806), which means “to make one alive together.” It is a compound word combining the Greek preposition “sun” (Strong’s Number 4862), which means “with,” and the Greek verb “zoopoieo” (Strong’s Number 2227), which means “to cause to live.” In other words, everything about this word defines life in terms of our “togetherness” and “relationship” with Jesus Christ. And the same is true for verse 6, which states that God “hath raised us up together” and “made us sit together” in Christ Jesus. Verse 16 says we are “reconciled” with God, which is another reference to the restoration of our relationship with God. This language contrasts the state of being “dead” due to sin with a state in which “life” is defined, not solely in terms of being alive or made immortal, but in terms of the restoration of our fellowship with God, which was lost when we sin.

Number five, the language of the passage also contrasts the separation that comes with being “dead in sin” to the idea of having restored access to God’s presence. Verse 13 says that “in Christ Jesus” we “who sometimes were far off are made nigh.” Verse 18 says that we now “have access” to “the Father.” Verse 19 says that we are now members of the “household of God.” And verses 21-22 emphasize the idea of God dwelling with us by calling us a “temple” and a “habitation of God,” which contrasts separation with being in God’s presence, just as we saw with Adam’s expulsion in Genesis 3.

Number six, we have also argued that the idea of “eternal life” doesn’t just refer to immortality, but also the access to the provisions that God has prepared for us, particularly in the kingdom of God. We also saw that when Adam sinned, he lost access to the food and blessings that God prepared for him to enjoy in the Garden of Eden and instead had to work very hard to grow food for himself and his family in the land east of Eden. Ephesians also affirms this element as well. In verse 12 it describes Gentile sinners as being “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” and “strangers from the covenants of promise.” Verse 19 describes the saints as “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” The use of political terms like “foreigner,” “fellowcitizen,” and “commonwealth of Israel” refers back to Daniel’s prophecies to the Israelites in exile that God would eventually restore their nation and send the Messiah to rule the nations. Daniel 2:44 describes the Israelites’ ancient hope that “the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.” Daniel 7:27 explains that “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.”

This language in Ephesians 2 is also remarkably similar to Philippians 3:20-21. Verse 20 declares that “our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” to return. The word “conversation” here is a little antiquated and misleading to modern English readers. The Greek word is “politeuma” (Strong’s Number 4175), which means “a state, or commonwealth of citizens.” In other words, Philippians is referring to our citizenship in the kingdom of God, which will one day come to the earth when Christ returns. In addition,

verse 21 describes the resurrection of the saints when it explains that Christ, “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

Ultimately, Ephesians describes the Gentile Christians as “no longer foreigners” but “fellowcitizens” in “the commonwealth of Israel,” the intention is to convey the fact that through Christ even Gentiles can participate in that coming kingdom of God. And both Ephesians and Philippians contextually define “life,” not solely in terms of resurrection to immortality, but in direct connection to our participation in the kingdom of God and the blessings God has prepared for his people in that kingdom.

In summary, Ephesians confirms our definition that “life” in Christ Jesus entails more than just the immortality of the resurrected body, but also a restored relationship with God and access to his presence. Moreover, Ephesians confirms our assertion that in scripture, the term “death” doesn’t refer to a cessation of existence, nor does it refer merely to the death and decomposition of the body, but it also refers to the state of separation from a relationship with God, separation from God’s presence, and separation from God’s provisions for us, specifically in the coming kingdom of God, just as was the case with Adam in Genesis 3.

Fourth, the Book of Jude provides us with additional, valuable insight into the concept denoted by the term “second death.”

**Jude 1:17** But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; **18** How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, **who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.** **19** **These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.** **20** But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, **21** **Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.**

Number one, in verse 18 Jude identifies the wicked by referring to “mockers” who “walk after their own ungodly lusts.” In verse 19 Jude states that such wicked persons “separate themselves.” In verse 21 he encourages his Christian audience to “keep” themselves “in the love of God.” Here it is impossible to ignore the inherent contrast between the idea of separation in verses 19 and the loving relationship in verses 21. In the very same breath that Jude contrasts our relationship with God to separation, he immediately connects remaining in loving relationship with God to entering into “eternal life.” Consequently, such language defines “eternal life” in terms of our relationship with God and in contrast to separation from God.”

Number two, Jude is a very short book. It consists of only one chapter with a total of 25 verses. This brevity makes it impossible to disconnect the contrast between separation and eternal life in verses 19-21 from the following reference to wicked angels in Hell, which appears in verse 6.

**Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.**

One, notice that verse 6 starts by describing how certain angels “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.” As was the case with Adam when he was created, we can safely conclude that the “first estate” of the angels was indeed a favorable place assigned to them while they are in good standing before God. These angels then voluntarily leave that “habitation” to fulfill wicked intentions. We know their intentions are wicked because the rest of the verse goes on to note that God chains them up in darkness due to these actions. Most importantly, however, the angels’ act of “leaving” in order to pursue wicked intentions is a perfect parallel to Jude’s description of the “mockers” in verse 18 who “separate themselves” in order to “walk after their own ungodly lusts.” Both groups are departing from where they should be in order to pursue something sinful.

Two, it is important to reflect further on the fact that these angels are put in chains in darkness to await judgment. This chaining of the angels conforms to depictions we’ve seen already of Hell or Sheol in Jewish understanding at the time the Bible was written. But more importantly, it shows that although their initial departure into sin was voluntary, God responded to their departure by further separating them and placing them in chains in darkness. In other words, locational separation was a part of their punishment for wickedness. The fact that they are specifically put in chains itself demonstrates that God’s intention was to restrict their movement and isolate them from other parts of creation.

Three and most importantly, it is clear that the angels continue to exist in these unsavory circumstances for the duration of the time that they await judgment.

The first evidence for this conclusion actually comes from Jesus’ remarks in Luke 20:35-36 in which he declares that the angels lack the capacity to die.

The second evidence that the angels continue to consciously exist in Hell comes from presence of the chains. The chains are relevant for 3 reasons.

First, if the fire of Hell annihilates the wicked, immortal angels, then why would it be necessary to chain the angels? God could just cast them into the fire and that would instantly be the end of them. The inherent, undeniable function of chains is to prevent the angels from leaving. But, if the fire of Hell annihilates angels, there would be no need to take efforts to ensure they remain in the fire. Therefore, the presence of the chains itself demonstrates that the angels continue to exist in Hell.

Second, perhaps it could be argued that annihilation is not instantaneous, but takes a few moments or a short period of time in which the chains are used to keep the angels from escaping while annihilation takes place. However, Jude is equally clear that the chains are “everlasting chains.” The Greek word for “everlasting” is “aidios” (Strong’s Number 126), which means “eternal, everlasting.” It is derived

from the Greek word “aei” (Strong’s Number 104), which means “perpetually, incessantly.” In fact, “aidios” is used only one other time in the New Testament. It appears in Romans 1:20 in reference to God’s “eternal power” in which case it clearly means unending. Jude’s description of the chains as “everlasting” demands that the angels are not annihilated after a short time. If so, there would be no need for the chains that hold them to remain forever. The chains could easily burn up after a short duration along with the angels as the fire annihilates them. Consequently, the perpetual existence of the chains reflects the perpetual endurance of those held captive by those chains.

Third, it should also be noted that the chains also demonstrate that the circumstances of the imprisonment are unpleasant enough that the angels would certainly leave if God had not made provisions to force them to stay.

The third piece of evidence that the angels continue to consciously exist in Hell for long ages of time rather than being annihilated comes from Jude’s use of the word “reserve” in the phrase “reserved in everlasting chains.” The Greek word for “reserve” is “tereo” (Strong’s Number 5083), which can mean “to attend to carefully” but also conveys the idea of “to keep one in the state in which he is” in the sense of preservation. Jude 1 uses this same word twice in his epistle. In verse 1, the word “tereo” is actually translated as “preserved” when Jude refers to “them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” Jude uses “tereo” again in verse 21 when he encourages the Christians, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Clearly, Jude intends “tereo” to convey the idea of “preserving.” And his application of that term to the angels in verse 6 demonstrates that they, too, are preserved rather than destroyed as they await the final judgment.

Number three, not only does Jude identify that the wicked angels continue to exist in chains in Hell for a lengthy duration, but he even applies this same punishment to wicked men.

**Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. 7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. 8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. 10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe unto them!** for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of

Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. 12 **These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you**, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, **carried about of winds**; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, **twice dead**, plucked up by the roots; 13 **Raging waves of the sea**, foaming out their own shame; **wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever**.

One, to demonstrate this we have to retrace Jude's steps a little. In verse 4, he begins with the statement, "there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men." His discussion of the wicked angels, of the rebellious Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt, and of Sodom and Gomorrah in verses 5-7 are all intended as examples depicting the punishment of such wicked behavior. In verse 11-12, Jude decries, "Woe unto them!" and identifies that he is specifically referring to men who are present "in your feasts" and who "feast with" the Christians during the communal meal of the early church gatherings. In other words, Jude is referring, not to the mass of wicked mankind in general, but specifically professed Christians who "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness" and a license to sin, just as he says in verse 4.

Two, in verses 12-13 Jude describes these unfaithful Christians as "carried about by winds" and as "wandering stars," which again reflects the idea of "departure," "relocation," and "separation," particularly the term "wandering."

Three, verse 13 concludes with Jude stating that "the blackness of darkness is reserved" for these unfaithful Christians "for ever." The language of verse 13 is remarkably parallel to Jude's description of the wicked angels in verse 6. He uses the same Greek word "tereo," which is again translated as "reserved." And he uses the same Greek word "zophos" (Strong's Number 2217), which is translated as "darkness" in verse 6 but as "blackness" in verse 13. And while verse 6 uses the word "aidios" (Strong's Number 126) to describe the angel's imprisonment as eternal, in verse 13 Jude uses the Greek word "aion" (Strong's Number 165), which like "aidios" is derived from "aei" (Strong's Number 104) and can also denote "'perpetuity of time" and "eternity."

Based on these evidences, it is clear that Jude intends to convey that these wicked men will share the same punishment in Hell as the wicked angels just as Jesus' taught in Matthew 25:41, which we examined earlier.

Number four, Jude's description that the wicked will go into "blackness of darkness for ever" is also similar to several statements from Jesus.

**Matthew 8:11** And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. 12 **But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

**Matthew 22:13** Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 25:30** And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Luke 13:28** There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

There are three things worth noting here. One, in the four passages above Jesus declares that the wicked will “be cast into outer darkness.” Jesus’ use of the term “darkness” as a description for the final residence of the wicked establishes not only that Jesus and Jude have the same concept in mind, but also that Jude received his understanding of this topic from Jesus. Two, like Jude, Jesus here uses the language of being “cast out,” which fundamentally depicts the punishment of the wicked in terms of separation. Three, Jesus describes this place of darkness as characterized by “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” These are actions of conscious beings. As such, Jesus indicates that this punishment entails conscious experience. Moreover, the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” also clearly denotes that the wicked are in an uncomfortable state. To what extent their anguish is mental or physical in nature is not stated here. But we have already discussed biblical teaching regarding suffering in hell and determined that it involves some aspects of both physical and mental suffering. In short, Jude and Jesus depict the punishment of the wicked in terms of separation, conscious existence, and discomfort. (Incidentally, the term “outer” in the phrase “outer darkness” merely denotes a location outside the kingdom, not necessarily a great distance away in the far parts of creation.)

Number five, notice that in verse 12 Jude describes the wicked as “twice dead.” This is remarkably similar to the term “second death” which is used in the Book of Revelation. Of course, the men Jude is referring to have not died bodily. To the contrary, they were still alive and participating in the communal meal of the church. Nevertheless, as Romans 5:12 teaches, by their sins they had justly fallen under the penalty of bodily death, which God established for all sinners at the time when he punished Adam after Adam himself sinned. Having justly acquired that sentence for themselves through their own sins (thereby following in Adam’s prototypical footsteps), it would be appropriate to refer to these wicked men as slated for bodily death, even though they had not yet died bodily. Likewise, by describing these wicked men as “twice dead,” Jude is conveying that these men are slated to eventually receive the second death as well. And as we have seen, contextually Jude has already depicted the punishment of these wicked men in terms of continued existence imprisoned in a state of separation from God, just like the wicked angels.

At this point, two additional notes are worth highlighting.

One, as we pull some of these details together, we can see that when Jude uses the phrase “twice dead” in verse 12, he surrounds it with several other phrases that convey the idea of departure in the sense of movement from one place to another, including “carried about of winds,” “plucked up,” and “wandering stars,” as we noted earlier. The association of the phrase “twice dead” with these phrases suggests that “twice dead” also relates to relocation.

Two, it is also relevant that Jude concludes this series of phrases by associating them with God having “reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” for them. 2 Peter 2:17 similarly states concerning the wicked “to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.” The phrase “blackness of darkness” more naturally appears to be a description of a setting that lacks light. In contrast, it would be less intuitive, less natural, and less demonstrable to suggest that the phrase “blackness of darkness” is some sort of metaphor for non-existence, particularly because the connection between “blackness” and “darkness” to non-existence is not one that is clear cut to say the least. On the other hand, the aptness of the phrase “blackness of darkness” as a description of a location becomes all the more likely in light of the fact that the blackness of Hell (and the Lake of Fire for that matter) is readily explainable in terms of the great smoke such fire would produce, as we mentioned earlier. Previously, we noted that Revelation 9:1-2 describes the bottomless pit as both a “great furnace,” which implies significant fire, and also as containing “smoke” so thick that, once it is released, it darkens the sun. As such, a connection between the darkness of the bottomless pit of Hell, or its eruption on the surface as the Lake of Fire, has demonstrable biblical precedent, whereas the connection of “darkness” to “non-existence” has no such biblical precedent. Moreover, the possibility that Jude or Peter might intended “blackness” and “darkness” to metaphorically represent non-existence is completely refuted by the fact that Peter’s description of the punishment of wicked men follows an opening comparison to the imprisonment of wicked angels in which he specifically mentions Hell by name. This clearly shows that Peter intended his reference to “darkness” in terms of the blackness caused by the smoke of the fires of Hell. And the fact that Jude is using such similar phrasing demands that Jude’s mention of “blackness” likewise referred to the darkness caused by the smoke in Hell. Consequently, Jude’s use of the phrase “blackness of darkness” cannot be used to define the phrase “twice dead” in terms of non-existence.

As we can see, Jude describes wicked humans as separated from God. He contrasts this state of separation for the wicked with eternal life, which is contextually defined as entailing a loving relationship with God. And Jude describes the punishment that wicked men will receive in terms that are equivalent to punishment of immortal angels who continue to exist in the unpleasantness of Hell for a lengthy duration. For this cause, Jude regards these wicked men as slated to receive two forms of death, one of which is clearly bodily death that God has established for sinners starting with Adam himself and the other of which is unavoidably the “second death” of Revelation, which Jude here describes as a state of continued existence in separation from God imprisoned in Hell, just like the wicked angels.

### **Summary: Death Also Refers to a State of Living Separation from God and His Provision**

As we have seen, scripture employs the term “death” as a title for the state of living separated from relationship with God, from God’s presence, and from God’s provisions. This fact greatly helps to explain why Daniel 12:2 states that the wicked will be resurrected “to shame and everlasting contempt.” Jude 1:13 likewise describes the wicked as in a state of “shame” when he refers to the “blackness of darkness” which is “reserved” for the wicked as punishment. Living forever in a state where you are considered unfit to be treated as a son, unfit to be in God’s presence, and unfit to receive God’s provisions is certainly a state of perpetual shame and contempt. Biblically-speaking, such conditions are described as a state of death and this state is experienced by living beings who dwell in physical bodies (both mortal and immortal).

Lastly, since we have shown that Adam and Eve’s separation from God was, in biblical terms, a form of death that they suffered the same day that they sinned, it is interesting to note that when the wicked dead are resurrected bodily at the final judgement, they go from a state of being separated from God prior to judgment to standing in God’s presence for judgment and then ultimately to being separated from him again after judgment. Given that Adam and Eve’s separation from God’s presence is described as a form of “death,” it is all the more fitting that the post-judgment separation of the wicked from God is described by the term “second death,” in effect, a second separation after temporarily being in God’s presence for judgment.