

BETWEEN THE LINES™

DEEPER LOOK STUDY GUIDE

Life & Death... God's Plan A/Plan B

The Genesis Contrast...

We are so saturated with death as reality and part of our existence that, I fear, we are barely capable of imagining existence without that second part of the equation of our study. Let's go back to Genesis to see if we can just scratch the surface of a world that knew no decay or deterioration or death.

Plan A... to Plan B

Genesis 1:11	The first appearance of life-forms, the vegetation.
1:20	The animal kingdom's first living representatives, aquatic life and birds.
1:24	Land creatures are called forth to life.
1:27	The human species comes from a unique creative modality.
Genesis 2:17	The first statement that life may not equate to eternal existence.
Genesis 3:3	Eve reaffirms that Divine understanding.
3:4	The serpent-enemy proposes a rival universal "truth."
3:7	How interesting! They don't die then, but there is an immediate change.
3:15	God proposes a resolution. Plan B will be only temporary.
3:19	After that pronouncement death is guaranteed, but limited.
3:21	Many commentators have assumed this represents the first death act.
Genesis 4:4	Humanity is now involved in the death of a third party.
4:8	Humanity experiences death, firsthand, for the first time.
4:14	Cain knows he hasn't seen the last of death.

L'chaiym... To Life!

Even if you're only minimally aware of the classic movie/play, *Fiddler on the Roof*, you've heard it many times- "*L'chaiym!*" "To life!" Tevya and his compatriots shout it over and over.

You may not know that this concept is actually a long-held and integral theme within Judaism. One of the most significant prayers of their ritual is often tied to the death markers of plague and deliverance in *Pesach* (Passover) when the adherents repeat many times, "*Z'acher l'chaiym.*" Lord, "remember us to life!"

Perhaps one of the best sources for making this a dominant theme of life and belief may come from the wonderful benedictory of Moses. Envision the old father of the nation as he's pronouncing his farewell admonitions. He's in the shadow of the mountain where he's going to die. The nation can smell the fresh green vegetation of the river bank that they will soon traverse.

May I take you through a composite of nine varied translations of this scene? This is colorful.

In Deuteronomy 30:15-20 the old patriarch raises his hands and shouts,

"See I have set before thee this day (KJV) life and welfare, death and misfortune (Moffatt) life and prosperity, death and disaster (Jerusalem) because I command thee to-day to love Jehovah thy God (ABPS) and that Jehovah thy God may bless thee. (ASV) If, however, your heart turns away, and you give no heed (AAT) if you are allured to worship foreign gods, bowing down to them (Moffatt) then I warn you here and now that it will be to thy ruin (Knox) without living long on the land which you are crossing the Jordan to invade for conquest. (AAT) I call Heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you (KJV) the blessing and the curse (ASV) that you and your descendants may live. (RSV) By loving the LORD your God... and holding fast to Him (Torah JPS) for that means life to you and the length of days (RSV). Thou hast no life, no hope of long continuance, but in Him. (Knox)

Final Life/Final Death

There's no denying it, Revelation 20 engenders up a lot of emotional Biblical positioning. There are those who hold it to be part of (what I consider to be) an elaborate conjecture that has been called "Rapturist Dispensationalism" in contemporary theological discussion. My tone betrays me. I find no Textual justification for this position in Biblical eschatology.

What does this have to do with a discussion of "Life & Death" in our considerations? It's the passage that concludes the Bible's discussions of death and dying. It also inaugurates the ultimate, uninterrupted eternal life for His children.

If this chapter actually DOES deal with such cosmic themes, then perhaps we ought to go to the passage and see if it will explain itself...

- Revelation 19-** The chapter clearly speaks of Jesus making a final entrance to bring the world as we know it to an end.
- Revelation 20:1-3** Satan is put out of business for 1,000 years. This is not a second stage of anything.
- :4** His redeemed (both translated and resurrected) fulfill the promise of I Corinthians 6:2,3.
- :5** Those "slain by the brightness of His coming" (II Thessalonians 2:8) will not have any part of this section of the universe's experience.
- :6** Some die once. Some die twice. Once is o.k. Twice is eternal. Adam, once... Paul, once... Peter, once... Judas, twice.
- :7-8** At the end of the 1,000 years God has a second resurrection. Satan is back in business with his loyalists, but only because God has an eternal intention in final and ultimate resolution to the rebellion of sin.
- :9a** How self-delusional and insane sin is. Who, in any right mind, would assume at this time that God is not invincible? The scene is set for a last, desperate attempt at mutiny in the universe.
- :9b-10** God will eradicate sin wherever it is found. If it is cherished and embraced the adherent will go up in smoke with it.
- :11-13** The ultimate and final judgment concluded, the verdict in, God will mete out eternal reward, for good or... (Curiously, Ezekiel 28:18 somewhat describes this as a moment when sin self-destructs.)
- :14-15** Death is destroyed. Hell itself is consumed. (Ezekiel 28:8-19 says that evil comes to ashes and, eventually, non-existence. Malachi 4:1 describes it as stubble without roots after the flame has died down. Verse 3 also uses the analogy of "ashes." Revelation 14:11

In Conclusion...

It truly seems to me that this is an absolutely vital and conclusionary section of the Word if we're going to consider life and death. The pattern is eternally resolved by these final acts of God. At that time the universe will reverberate with one voice,

Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!

-Revelation 15:3