

The Book of Life

Hope for a dying civilization

By Daniel Knauft

The will to live is a normal, intense human desire. Even though many people aspire to discover the "fountain of youth," like a mirage in the desert, again and again it alludes even the brightest minds. The mortality rate for humans living on the blue planet is 100 percent. Generation after generation through the centuries now rest in countless graves. At the end of the 21st century nearly all of the 6 billion-plus people alive today will have died. The problem of death is beyond humans to solve on their own.

The Bible, however, gives credible answers to the mysteries of human existence. And one of the reasons the Bible is embraced by people around the world is that it speaks directly and compassionately about the universal problem of death.

The Bible is an authoritative lifeline to the human family. It's opening pages picture the luscious tree of life which our parents, Adam and Eve, lost access to through distrust of their Maker. The Bible then closes with the tree of life, with its life-giving nutrients, completely restored to the rescued human family:

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, . . .

Revelation 22:1-3 NKJV

The Promise of Life Restored

On the occasion of the death of Lazarus when Jesus arrived on the scene in the town of Bethany, he brought comfort and hope when he said: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). He went on to demonstrate it by bringing Lazarus back to life after he had been dead in the tomb for four days.

Jesus Himself demonstrated His power and supremacy over the grave by His own resurrection following his death by crucifixion. The Bible's promise is that anyone who will place their trust in Jesus may also be resurrected from the grave:

This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son [Jesus] and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on

the last day.

John 6:40

So the Bible and the reality of Jesus is the answer to our basic human need. And the Resurrection at the return of Jesus to our world is the “gold standard” by which a person may come back to life again. The reality is that there is no other credible hope offered anywhere. Search the world over and nothing measures up to the moral stature and integrity of the person of Jesus Christ. Those who ignore the Bible and the historic reality of Jesus do so at the peril of their own lives. So complacency or denial is a high price to pay. Humans fictionalize heroes like Superman and Spiderman. But these words of the resurrected Jesus are not fiction:

Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades [the grave].

Revelation 1:17, 18

Right now you are on the mind of Jesus. Through the impressions of the Holy Spirit He is urging you to break away from doubt and self-will in order to grasp this Hope for yourself. Just move forward now telling Him you believe and accept His offer of everlasting life. As you do this you have moved from the realm of death to the new status of life in Jesus. From this point on you can act as if you had left prison’s death row (John 5:24).

Enter the Book of Life

To some it is surprising that the Creator God would be personal and intimate with each person who lives on earth. But notice the endearing tone of expression He uses toward fallen humans:

Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

Isaiah 49:15,16 NKJV

So it should be no surprise that the Bible talks several times about a Book of Life in which God places the exact names of people who choose everlasting life as it is offered by Jesus. The apostle Paul writes to believers in the city of Philippi:

I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

Philippians 4:3 NKJV

Note these additional Bible references from a variety of writers who refer to the Book of Life: Moses, Exodus 32:32,33; David, Psalm 69:28; Malachi 3:16; Jesus, Revelation 3:5; and John, Revelation 13:8; 20:12.

Why the Book of Life?

In our age of sophisticated technology, a book with pages seems archaic for an Omniscient God. Fortunately, God speaks in the Bible in terms that earthlings understand - hence, the Book of Life.

God knows every detail of a person's life and He knows a person's inner motives. He has a way to designate the people who respond to His promptings and are loyal to Him. Humans may not be aware, but, "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19, NRSV). And they are in God's Book of Life. This is God's "lost and found."

In the conflict between good and evil, God has decided that a public record in heaven is important to the on-looking universe. Many angelic beings are involved in affecting a person's salvation. Jesus gave this inside look: "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7). Every person who makes a decision for salvation receives recognition and personal, on-going attention.

Those people registered in the Book of Life from all the generations going back to our first parents in the Garden of Eden will be the ones who are resurrected or translated when Jesus returns to our planet in all His kingly glory (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

How may you be listed?

Here are the Bible's clues:

- 1) Jesus said: "He that heareth [listens from the heart] my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life (John 5:24).
- 2) Jesus said: "Whosoever. . .shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 10:32).
- 3) Jesus said: "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7).

Three ideas emerge: a saving relationship with Jesus based on heartfelt belief, open acknowledgment and repentance that leads to a changed life.

Yes, a person's name can be blotted out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5). God does not register fake or fraudulent experiences. Even after coming to salvation in Christ a

person has free choice. It is one thing to fall in love; it is another thing to stay in love. So, also, it is one thing to become saved and your name to be listed; it is another thing to stay saved. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). It is important to decide for Jesus at the beginning, and also to finish with Jesus at the end.

Remember, God is not trying to keep people from being listed in the Book of Life. He is anxious to get people in! He has made provision for every one. The only way anyone can miss is if they resist. In the end people from every age; from every nation, language, clan, tribe and sub-group will be listed in the Lamb's Book of Life. They are all pardoned by the sacrificial blood of Jesus.

There's room for you!

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