

“Three Kinds of Life for the Three Parts of Man”  
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An Excursus to *Spirit, Soul, Body: The Blueprint of Man in the Image of God*  
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Project one28 Publishing  
P.O. Box 531  
El Dorado, KS 67042

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## THREE KINDS OF LIFE FOR THE THREE PARTS OF MAN

Occasioned by Section One of the booklet *Spirit, Soul, Body*:

The trees are central characters in the story of Man – here [Gen. 2:8-9, 15-17] and continuing into Genesis 3. Regular trees do not give knowledge or spiritual life, so these trees were clearly both natural and supernatural. The very act of eating is a parable to teach us that we need to receive sustaining life from a source outside of our creaturehood. These trees offered food for the three types of life, corresponding to the three parts of Man. We know this because New Testament Greek employs three different words for life in consistent contexts. *Bios* speaks of the body's physical life. *Psuchē* means the soul or soul-life. *Zōē* is the spirit's life given by God's Spirit. The normally delightful and nutritious trees could be eaten by Adam and Eve's bodies in the same way we now do for *bios*. But God drew special attention to two trees and placed them center stage in the Garden. The first is the Tree of Life, which the New Testament calls the Tree of *Zōē* (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). The Tree of Life was digested in the spirit and enlivened the spirit. The second special tree was named the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which was eaten in the soul and grew the soul (through the mind).

***Bios*** (pronounced *bee'-ahs*) speaks of the physical life.

We derive the English word "biology" from it. Mark 12:44 is a demonstrative verse for the contextual definition of this word: "For they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had *to live* on." Also, Luke 8:14, "And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this *life*, and bring no fruit to maturity." *Bios* means the temporary life in this world.<sup>1</sup> "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of *life*, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1 John 2:16). Interestingly, *bios* is so connected to this world and its economic system of *living*, that NASB translates it as "wealth" in Luke 15:12: "and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his *wealth* between them" (also verse 30 and "goods" in 1 John 3:17; contrasted with *zōē* in Lk. 12:15).

***Psuchē*** (pronounced *p-soo-kay*) means the soul or soul-life.

John 12:27 reads, "Now My *soul* has become troubled...." The soul is the seat of personality and, therefore, represents the whole of the life of Man. Therefore, it is used for *life* in verses such as John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His *life* for the sheep." (Jesus makes clear in verse 18 that this is a voluntary action; the will resides in the soul, and so He freely wills the death of His *soul-life* while entrusting His *spirit-life* to God [cf. Luke 23:46]). Perhaps the best verse to illustrate the distinction between soul-life and spirit-life is John 12:25, "Whoever loves his *life* [*psuchē*: soul-life] loses it, and whoever hates his *life* [*psuchē*: soul-life] in this world will keep it for eternal *life* [*zōē*]."

***Zōē*** (pronounced *zoh-ay*) is the life given of God's Spirit.

"It is the Spirit who gives *life*; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are *life*" (John 6:63, cf. 2 Cor. 3:6). *Zōē* is "the *life* of God" (Eph. 4:18). "In Him was *life*,

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15:19 is a verse that seems to contradict this division of *bios* and *zōē*. "If we have hoped in Christ in this *life* [*zōē*] only, we are of all men most to be pitied." Still, Paul did have *zōē* in this life. I do not believe 1 Tim. 4:8 is a confusion because godliness transcends *bios* and *psuchē* to participate *presently* in *zōē* (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

and the *life* was the light of men" (John 1:4, cf. Col. 3:4). *Zōē* is the life missing in our spirits since being cut off from the Tree of *Zōē* (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19) in the Garden of Eden. "Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no *life* in yourselves" (Jn. 6:53). The first Adam became a living soul, but the last Adam, the second Man, Jesus Christ became a *life*-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). *Zōē* is the life we receive when we are born again by "the Spirit of *zōē*" (Rom. 8:2). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent me, has eternal *life*, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into *life*" (Jn. 5:24, cf. Rom. 8:10). The Gospel is a message of *zōē* (Phil. 2:16, Acts 5:20; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10). Believers' names are written in the book of *zōē* (Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). By the Spirit of the resurrected Christ, we can now walk in newness of *life* (*zōē*, Rom. 6:4). "When Christ, who is our *life* (*zōē*), is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4 NASB). Hallelujah!