

THE LINE OF LIFE

in the Bible

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There are a great many subjects that run as lines throughout the Scriptures. Readers may study, for example, the line of redemption, the line of prophecies, or the line of the kingdom as distinct objects of inquiry in the Old and New Testaments. Some Christian traditions prioritize a particular line and make that line the standard by which they interpret the entire Scriptures. For Lutherans, the Bible is understood according to the line of law and gospel; for the Reformed, it follows a line of covenants between God and humanity; for the British Brethren, it coheres along the line of historical dispensations. While these are valid topics of study, we submit that none of them is the line according to which the Scriptures can be grasped in their fullness. What, then, do we propose is the line that unites the entire Scriptures, in light of which all other lines must be apprehended?

Speaking to the disciples before His public ascension, the Lord Jesus revealed God to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), and by this revelation we understand God to be foremost a God of life. As the One who has the divine life “in Himself,” the Father “gave to the Son to also have life in Himself” (John 5:26), and the Spirit is designated “the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2). As the “only Begotten” (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9), Christ the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; therefore, the Father is properly a father because He has a Son begotten of His life, and the Son is properly a son because He receives the life of the Father and is thereby His Father’s expression (John 14:9). It is thus our conviction that the designations of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* necessarily indicate an organic identity in the Godhead. Based on this view of God, we contend that the primary line according to which the Word of God should be interpreted is the line that is according to the intrinsic being of God. Lines such as law and gospel, covenants, and dispensations, therefore, are not adequate standards of interpretation to comprehend the depth and breadth of the

Scriptures, for God is not, in His essence, law and gospel, covenants, or dispensations. In our estimation, the only line that opens up the Scriptures according to God’s own inner being is the line of life, for God Himself is life, and He carries out His eternal economy, His eternal purpose, in Christ by dispensing Himself as life into His elect to produce the church, the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 3:8-11). Indeed, the line of life as the line of God’s economy concerning Christ and the church is the central and controlling revelation of the Scriptures.

At the beginning of the Bible is the tree of life with a river flowing forth from Eden to water the garden (Gen. 2:9-10); at the end of the Bible is the tree of life with the river of water of life flowing from the throne of God to supply the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1-2). The two ends of the Bible are thus the initiation and the consummation of the revelation concerning life in the Scriptures. The line of life that develops between these two ends is not merely a hermeneutical principle; it is, more intrinsically, a seed that grows, matures, and ripens as a harvest of life for the eternal testimony of the God of life. To fully appreciate the line of life, we must see this line as it is revealed from the beginning to the end of the Scriptures.

The Line of Life in the Old Testament

The Old Testament offers compelling evidence that God is a God of life, that His purpose is focused on life, and that He wants His people to partake of and live by life. Genesis 1 and 2 present not only a record of God’s creation but, more intrinsically, a revelation of the God of life. By His speaking, God generated many forms of life on the earth (Gen. 1:11-12, 20-21, 24-25). By bringing forth such abundant, vibrant, productive life through His creative acts, God testifies that He is