

THE TREASURES OF THE CROSS

Part Four: Death

May 10, 2020

Review from last week: The why of the whole creation project

A. God, having no needs, created us simply out of the overflow of Trinitarian love. More specifically, I suggested we were created as a lavish expression of love for the Son from the Father. More specifically, I suggested, we were created to be a “suitable bride,” or, if you will, “a chosen beloved,” for the Son, which means to say we were made for an intimate, unique, special, partnering relationship with Jesus, and this was indeed the extravagant expression of the Father’s love.

B. For the chosen beloved to grow into a love worthy of the Son, there would need to be a process for that “potential innocent love” to grow into “actual mature love” through the test of freedom--of being able to choose otherwise. And so the world was created as the greenhouse for the chosen beloved’s love to grow real--or not.

The story of the Chosen Beloved Begins with the first humans: Adam and Eve

A. Adam is given LIFE (Genesis 2:7) and put in the greenhouse for love to grow real.

B. LIFE is more than just existing with a beating heart and breathing lungs. The Tree of LIFE represents its fullness (Genesis 2:9). In the Genesis we see LIFE as having three major components:

- ⇒ Intimate relationship with God
- ⇒ Filled with goodness (image of God, Gen 1:27; the “very good” of Gen 1:31)
- ⇒ Authority and power to have dominion (Genesis 1:26,28; 2:15)

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE SAGA OF THE CHOSEN BELOVED

LIFE Gen 1-2	DEATH	AFTER FALL Gen 3	In Egypt Ex 1-5	In Israel Josh- Klngs	Failure Again Kings-Prophets
Intimate Relationship with God					
Filled with goodness, in and out					
Reigning with authority and power					

The chosen beloved is given the test which, if passed, will begin the actualization of their love.

A. Do not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, because if you do, you shall surely die: Genesis 2:17.

B. Question: is this statement predicting an “imposed legal consequence” or an “intrinsic consequence”?

- ⇒ Example of the difference. Speeding down a country road.
- ⇒ An “imposed legal consequence” is a ticket of \$200. Arbitrary. Legal scheme.
- ⇒ An “intrinsic consequence”: car can’t hold the curve, you crash and die.

C. Restating the question. When God says, in the day that you eat of the tree, you shall surely die, does He mean:

- ⇒ “I impose a death penalty on that action. I will send you to the electric chair.”
- ⇒ “The very act, like drinking poison, will surely kill you.”

OR

- ⇒ “I will need to kill you.”
- ⇒ “It will kill you.”

D.I believe the statement is one of intrinsic consequence, similar to saying, if you step off that cliff edge, you will die, because reality just works that way. The action carries its own penalty. There is no need to insert a legally imposed consequence. And here is my logic:

God is LIFE. To move near to God is to be covered with more and more LIFE. To move away from God is to move away from LIFE. The further one travels from the sun, the colder and darker it gets. Simple.

DEATH is not the end of existence. DEATH is the absence of LIFE, specifically the loss of the three characteristics of abundant full LIFE (relationship with God, full of goodness, and exercising the human destiny to reign) I would argue that DEATH is the loss of those very things, as we shall see in what happens next.

And this DEATH is not a simple either/or state, but rather it is a CONTINUUM. When one is moving AWAY from LIFE, they are in the stream of DEATH. There are degrees of severity of DEATH, with each worsening degree an increased loss of the things that make up abundant and full LIFE. Ultimate death, the very idea of hell, is an existence without God, without goodness, and complete enslavement.

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Filled with goodness, in and out	Pollution, stain, decay, corruption, stink				
Reigning with authority and power	Enslavement and subjugation to dark powers				

The chosen beloved fails to actualize love.

A. Adam and Eve succumb to idolatry (Gen 3:1-7), which is exchanging God for something less, and in this case, the idolatry of self (desiring to discern what is evil and what is good on their own terms, through their own eyes, filtered through their own experience of the world).

B. They fall into the awful continuum of death, and we see immediately the loss of three things mentioned above that were characteristic of the LIFE they were given at the beginning:

- ⇒ Lose relationship with God. Hide from God. Expelled from garden. Genesis 3:8, 23
- ⇒ They lose goodness. They experience shame and cover their nakedness. Gen 3:10
- ⇒ They lose their dominion, as childbearing pain and thorns oppress them. Gen 3:16-19

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C. Summary: they are cut off from the Tree of Life. Gen 3:24

God Embarks on a Plan to Rescue the Chosen Beloved, His Precious Love-Gift

A. God will choose a subset of humanity, a representative “chosen beloved”--now hopelessly stuck in the continuum of death--and create a space within the continuum of death, mitigating that death with special provisions, so that this representative people could point the way to the rest of the world to get back on track toward actualizing the love needed to fulfill His dream of the global chosen beloved as His love-gift for His Son.

B. God chooses Abraham to be the Father of the people that will embody what it means to love God rightly, and through them lead the whole world back to actualizing love for God!

C. At the end of Genesis we see this particular chosen beloved (Israel) very much stuck in “death,” there in Egypt. Notice how all three aspects of DEATH mark the situation of the people of Israel in Egypt:

- ⇒ Lost relationship with God. 430 years of silence. Exodus 12:40
- ⇒ Lost goodness. Bitter lives as brick makers in the mud. Exodus 1:14
- ⇒ Lost dominion. Slaves under Pharaoh. Children murdered. EXodus 1-5

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Filled with goodness, in and out	Pollution, stain, decay, corruption, stink	Experience shame. Cover nakedness.	Vocation as brick makers in the mud.		
Reigning with authority and power	Enslavement and subjugation to dark powers	Oppressed by birth pain and field thorn.	Slaves under the brutality of Pharaoh.		

D. God brings out His people, makes a covenant of love with them (akin to a marriage), and then makes provisions to hold death at bay, even while they are in the continuum of death (until such a day will come when God can destroy the power of death itself) Something like an embassy in a foreign country. God sets up a death-resistant zone in the middle of the death continuum and He makes provision for the three aspects of death that we have seen since the garden fall:

- ⇒ Lost relationship? God comes and “dwells” in Tabernacle and Temple
- ⇒ Lost goodness. Sacrificial system “cleans” the pollution as life-blood covers death.
- ⇒ Lost dominion. A free nation surrounded by but independent from the rule of neighbor-powers when Israel remains idol-free

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Filled with goodness, in and out	Pollution, stain, decay, corruption, stink	Experience shame. Cover nakedness.	Vocation as brick makers in the mud.	Animal sacrifice cleanses people and land	
Reigning with authority and power	Enslavement and subjugation to dark powers	Oppressed by birth pain and field thorn.	Slaves under the brutality of Pharaoh.	Political autonomy when idol-free	

E. Israel repeats the pattern of Eden. Idolatry (exchanging God for lesser things) leads to DEATH instead of Life (remember Moses had set before the people the choice of LIFE or DEATH! See Deuteronomy 30:15-20). And so instead of preserving this LIFE space

(within the greater continuum of DEATH, where Israel could have truly progressed in actualizing love), they go even further down the continuum of DEATH

- ⇒ Lost relationship? God leaves the Temple in Ezekiel 10 & 11 and doesn't return.
People go into exile, just like leaving the garden!
- ⇒ Lost goodness. Sacrificial system destroyed, restored, corrupted.
- ⇒ Lost dominion. Israel is invaded by Assyria, then Babylon, then later the Greeks, Ptolemaies, Seleucids, and finally Rome.

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Filled with goodness, in and out	Pollution, stain, decay, corruption, stink	Experience shame. Cover nakedness.	Vocation as brick makers in the mud.	Animal sacrifice cleanses people and land	Sacrificial system is destroyed, rebuilt, corrupted; injustice rampant.
Reigning with authority and power	Enslavement and subjugation to dark powers	Oppressed by birth pain and field thorn.	Slaves under the brutality of Pharaoh.	Political autonomy when idol-free	Assyria, Babylon take down Israel. Greeks, others, leading to Rome.

And now the stage is set for Jesus on the cross. The Jews of Jesus day continued to feel the oppression of death around them: the prophets had been silent for roughly 400 years since the days of Malachi (and interesting parallel to the long slavery in Egypt!). The Temple was under Herod's rule, who along with the High Priest managed the politics of the day and which resulted in inevitable forms of corruption (to which Jesus responded when He dramatically cleared out money changers from the Temple area). Rome was in full control of the land and the people. There was a longing for a Messiah to come and break the silence of heaven and bring deliverance and salvation from all the forms of corruption, oppression, and death. There was a longing for the long exile that

extended all the way back to the Babylonian exile to finally come to an end. To once again enter into the Life that Moses had once offered, if only the people would have obeyed. Somehow forgiveness of Israel's failure was needed to set things aright. No wonder John the Baptist triggered such crowds. Perhaps the silence was ending and forgiveness and deliverance would soon follow! And onto this stage Jesus arrived and He said, " I have come that you might have LIFE and have it to the full (John 10:10).

Jesus on the mysterious cross will provide a rescue from the DEATH continuum that will be complete, not temporary, and will restore humans to their destiny of becoming His chosen beloved--his bride--a relationship of intimate, unique, Koinonia and partnership in which true love splashes back and forth and ultimately expands outward in ways we cannot yet even imagine. But that is for next week!
