

THE TREASURES OF THE CROSS

Part Six: The Great Rescue

May 24, 2020

Life and Death (from Week Four)

LIFE	DEATH
Intimate relationship with God	Separation from God
Goodness flowing inside out	Corruption, pollution, stain, decay, death-stink
Reigning over creation	Enslavement to dark powers

Review from last week:

- The cross is fundamentally a rescue mission as an expression of the free love and forgiveness of God for the sake of Jesus.
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The Rescue Mission has three targets:

Defeat the dark powers of sin, devil, and death in order to undo our enslavement, and set us free to return our original destiny of those who reign under God's rule.

- Key verses: Hebrews 2:14-15; Colossians 2:15

Cleanse us thoroughly from the corruption and pollution of sin with its resultant stink, decay, and death stink.

- Key verse: 1 John 1:7; Revelation 7:14

To **bring us back** to the Father in Himself, thus reconciling us, and inaugurating our adoption, and returning the Chosen Beloved to its track of being prepared for its role as the bride of Christ.

- Key verse: Ephesians 2:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18

A. DEFEAT THE DARK POWERS (Christus Victor)

The garden sin of Adam and Eve was an abdication of their commission to rule, leaving a vacuum which was usurped by Satan. Satan becomes “the ruler of this world” (John 14:30).

Satan is the Father of Lies (John 8:44). The way he gains influence over a person is by permission, when a person accepts his lie. Every sin (which means to miss the mark) is at heart the tacit acceptance of a lie (this way is better than God’s way). Each sin results in an attachment point that the devil and his company can “latch onto” and yank us around. In this way, sins are like eye-hooks that we screw into ourselves, giving the devil and other impersonal forces of evil places to hold on and enslave us. This is a similar concept to strongholds (see 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The picture of the eye-hook explains why “death could not hold Jesus” (Acts 2:24) , sinless as He was.

Jesus’ freedom in the realm of death (in the Greek *Hades*), like a prisoner who could not be held by any door or key.

Into death Jesus comes full of life (even though He has physically died), and with life mixing with death, just like darkness flees when the light is turned on, so death--the primary power of sin and the devil--was destroyed from the inside out by the unleashing of the fire of unquenchable life and self-sacrificial love, both forces utterly antithetical to the very nature of evil. Thus like a fire in the heart of the dry timbers of a loveless, self-centered hell, Jesus’ life and love triumph over the grace, the rulers, the powers, sin, and death itself.

Scriptural basis: see Revelation 1:18, 12:11, Hebrews 2:14, 1 Corinthians 15:54-56, 2 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 2:8, Philippians 2:10-11, Colossian 2:15, Ephesians 1:7, 1:20-22, Galatians 1:4, 1 John 3:8, Luke 11:20-23

B. CLEANSING OF THE POLLUTION (Blood Sacrifice Model)

To come into the presence of God we need to be “clean”, as is befitting to a holy God. We are to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). It’s not that God cannot come into the presence of sin, like an elephant spooked by a mouse, (he is everywhere in the world even now), but it is that sin cannot come into the presence of God and continue to exist, for God is a consuming fire of Life with a capital L, (Hebrews 12:29), like the sun, and anything contaminated even in the least bit with death, will simply evaporate in His presence.

Here is why sin and death are inextricably connected. Every sin, great or small, is a movement away from life into death. That is by definition true. It is automatic. Step away from the heater and you feel the cool draft. Sin is moving away from the God of life resulting in death. Remember death is a continuum.

When life is removed, things always decay, breakdown, fall apart, into ooze that stinks and stains.

The OT sacrificial system was a gracious provisional system given to Israel as a kind of life-zone in which the corruption of death (because of sins) could be held at bay. The idea was simple: apply life to death. Life is stronger than death. Life swallows up death, evaporates it, washes it away, cleans it up, leaving behind space in which God’s burning life can come safely without consuming death-tainted objects and people.

The OT sacrifices then foreshadow what Jesus does on the cross relative to the world’s sin that has created massive pollution of decay and stink in every human and throughout the very created order (see Romans 8:20-22). Jesus blood is Life. And His life is offered as a true force that can swallow up the sin-caused death pollution everywhere in the world, takes it away like the Scapegoat of old (see Leviticus 16:20-22) covering death with life, washing the death stain and stink away.

Think of a modern day blood transfusion, in which a person’s tainted blood is taken out, and fresh healthy blood is pumped in and starts rushing through a person’s body, and the whole body comes back to life.

Scriptural basis: This is why the cross is talked about as cleansing us (1 John 1:7), freeing us (Rev 1:5), bringing us near to God (Ephesians 2:13), redeeming us (Ephesians

1:7), purifying our consciences (Hebrews 9:14), making peace (Colossians 1:20), and why Jesus said that unless we drink His blood there will be no life in us (John 6:53).

C. BRING US BACK TO GOD

Explanation to the idea of incorporation. We are in Christ (John 17:23,26; Romans 6:1-11, Ephesians 1:3ff, 2:4-6, etc. and as Christ rises out of death, we rise with Him and into the presence of the waiting Father.

Explanation of the age old idea of the “Harrowing of Hell”, and the iconography of the East. Certainly the language of the NT is very vague on this notion, but there we have it in the Apostles’ Creed, “He descended into Hades”, this picture of Christ going down into death to bring Adam and Eve up out of the grave and return us to the waiting arms of the Father, like in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Scriptural basis: Thus Jesus brings us to God (1 Peter 3:18), and we are ransomed (Mark 10:45, 1 Peter 1:19). We are raised up with Christ (Romans 6:4, Ephesians 2:6), reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:19), delivered from/delivered to (Hebrews 2:15, Galatians 1:4)

D. THE NOW AND THE NOT YET

If Jesus on the cross defeated the powers of sin, Satan, and death, why then do we still physically die? And if Jesus cleansed us from sin, why do we still sin and what about the fresh pollution with each sin?

One way to think about it: Satan has been kicked off his usurped throne (no longer ruler of the world) but he continues his work as a terrorist hiding out in caves. There is coming a day when he and his forces will finally be judged and put away for good.

Another way to think about it: after the war was over in SE Asia, millions of mines were left behind in the country, continuing to do damage if stepped on. Even after the victory, there is a long process of mopping up. V-Day (May 8, 1945) came nearly a year after D-Day (June 6, 1944)

The truth is that we will all still physically die (unless Jesus returns first), but now physical death is not a sign of death still in control or having the last word, but it is now a

sloughing off of the old compromised body in preparation for the new resurrection body that we will all receive.

And as far as the sins we still commit, hopefully as we grow in grace we make some progress in the life of faithful obedience, but even when we sin we still have the life-blood of Jesus flowing through us which remains forever powerful to swallow up, cleanse and forgive our sins, as it says in 1 John 1:9. What is important for us to remain grateful and humble, willing to confess our sins, which is to eagerly expose them to the life blood of Jesus. And as for matter, confession of sin also works to remove the little eye-hooks we keep sticking in ourselves--thus removing opportunities for the devil and for evil to gain any kind of influence over us.

E. THE TWO CORPORATE BODIES

At the end of time there will three corporate entities: the Trinity, the Chosen Beloved and the Anti-Christ. All three are corporate persons: we are in a large story of corporate persons, and our individual story will belong in one of them. As Moses said long ago, the invitation remains for the whole world: choose life or death.

To choose life is to accept humbly the incredible gift of the cross and to enter joyfully into the corporate body of the Chosen Beloved: no longer under the power of sin, Satan, and death, pure and dressed in radiant linen, and reconciled in relationship to God, children of the Father, Bride to the Son, filled with the Holy Spirit.

To choose death is to willfully and stubbornly reject the cross and the Person of Jesus, and to insist on autonomy, to insist on the freedom to choose one's own way, to determine for oneself good and evil, to find on sovereign in his or her own kingdom---which is, sadly, a move away from the author of life, into separation from God, into the corruption and decay of death, and into a slavery under dark powers fueled by the great illusion of independence and autonomy.

Revelation 22:17: The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who desires take the water of life without price.