

POWER OF PRAISE

by: Liz Wahl Andre'

“And Then Death Entered”

The first mention of death in the Bible was spoken by the Giver of Life to Adam, the first man He created. The Genesis account of creation begins with the description of the formation and separating of light and dark, water and atmosphere, land and sea, stars and sun--like the strokes of an artist on a canvas beautifully blending the background for the main subject. The portrait's intricate detail of grasses and trees, the seas swarming with living creatures, the air filled with birds, and the earth abounding with beasts and creeping things, builds on the backdrop until it crescendos to the pinnacle of creation, God's masterpiece—man.

“God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:26-27) God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). God planted a garden in Eden that was watered by a river. It was filled with trees that were pleasant to the eyes and good for food. God charged Adam to cultivate it and keep (guard) it.

There were two trees in the middle of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ***God commanded Adam, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in that day that you eat of it you will surely die”*** (Gen. 2:16-17). Surrounded by such abundant life, “death” must have seemed a strange concept. This was the first law, and capital punishment was the consequence of breaking it. Satan, taking the form of a serpent, seized upon the law to beguile the woman, tempting her to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent asked her a question, causing her to doubt God's word, ***“Has God indeed said...?”*** Then the serpent boldly called God a liar, ***“You will not surely die.”*** Lastly, the devil accused God of withholding wisdom and knowledge from her,

convincing her that God did not want her to “be equal” to God. The deception was complete and she ate, as did her husband. (Gen 3:1-6)

Suddenly, their eyes were open and they knew they were naked. The glory and light of God that clothed them departed, and they covered themselves with fig leaves, hiding in the trees from the presence of the Lord. Fear, accusation, and self-consciousness filled Adam—Satan’s nature filled fallen man. God cursed the serpent and the ground. He told Adam and his wife of the devastation their sin wreaked upon creation. God made tunics of animal skins to cover them. These skins demonstrated the fatal consequence of sin--sin cannot be covered without the shedding of blood. In His mercy, God drove Adam out of the garden lest he ate of the tree of life and lived forever in a sinful, unredeemable state (Gen. 3:22). Every person ever born sprang forth from Adam’s loins (Acts 17:26), so every man has inherited the sinful, fallen nature of Adam.

The sin and rebellion of man did not take God by surprise. God made provision to “buy man back” from the sentence of hell and death before He created mankind. Jesus, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), stepped out of eternity and came to earth as a Man to die on the cross and pay the penalty for our sin. Jesus is called “The Last Adam.” ***“The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit...The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man”*** (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

This is why Jesus said that a man must be born again before he can see the kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3). Adam and all of his descendants (you and I) died that day in the garden. Jesus died and rose again to serve our sentence and defeat the power of death and sin. Jesus is the “life-giving Spirit” who makes us alive when we repent of our sins and believe upon Him. Jesus came to bring us life, everlasting life, to be enjoyed with the Lord forever. This is the good news of the gospel. Man has to be convinced of his darkened, sinful nature before he realizes his need for the Savior. Man must know that he is a “dead man walking” before he repents and receives the life of God. Next week, we will look at the divine

exchange of life for death that took place at the cross, the grave, hell and the mercy seat of heaven.

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O, Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)

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