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DARKNESS TO LIGHT - DEATH TO LIFE

"In the beginning darkness was over the surface of the deep...and God said 'let there be light' and there was light" ...and God separated the light from the darkness...and there was evening and morning one day" (Gen. 1:1-5). God could have spoken everything into existence simultaneously, instead He took six days to create the heavens and earth noting after every day's creation that "it was good" and "there was evening and morning." After each day's creative activity there was declared an "evening", by our calculations a period of darkness then there was "morning" or daylight when the creative activity began again. (The critic would question this because it is not until the fourth day that the "two great lights" and "stars" were created. How then could there be "evenings" of darkness and "mornings" of light before this? The critic misses the point. The two great lights, according to verse 16 were to "govern the day and to govern the night"). After each creative day God declared "it was good" and the next day's creation brought forth something that enhanced the previous days creation making it more glorious than the day before, ending on the sixth day, after the creation of man, when God declared it was "very good".

There was a period of darkness between each day. Here, then, is a principle: it is out of darkness that God brings forth light and, as we shall see, it is out of death that God brings forth life. Nothing symbolizes death as does dirt. "...You will return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return." (Gen. 3:19). Out of the dust of death God brought forth man who became a "living soul" (Gen. 2:7). After the creation was judged to be "very good" God saw something that was not good. "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Gen. 2:18). In order to do this "God caused a deep sleep to fall upon man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh and fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from man..." (Gen. 2:21,22). Out of the darkness of the "deep sleep" God brought forth "the glory of a man" (I Cor. 11:7). Thus light (glory) was brought forth out darkness and life was brought forth out of death. This is not to say that the "deep sleep" was death, rather, contrary to most modern religious thinking, death is said to be "sleep" throughout both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. In every case in which Jesus and the Apostles refer to the death of the individual, they use the term "sleep".

There is a principle in Scripture that shows it is out of death and darkness that God brings forth life and light. It was after the blackness of the flood and the death of all life on the earth (not in the Ark) that God established the Noahic Covenant which promised "never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen 9:15) and new life began upon a new earth. The next event recorded in Genesis is the death of the earth's language and the death of the world's unity. The first nine verses of Genesis 11 tell the story: "Now the whole earth used the same language and same words" (ver 1). They said "Come let us build for ourselves a city and a tower...and let us make for ourselves a name lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole

earth" (ver 4). "And the Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people, and all have the same language....Come let us confuse their language...' so the Lord scattered them abroad over the whole earth and they stopped building the city" (ver 6, 8). It is after the death of the one language and the death of the unity of the people who longed to "make for themselves a name" that God called Abraham and promised that He would make his name great and all the families of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:1-3), thus reversing the death suffered at the tower of Babel.

When Joseph's brother sold him to the Midianites who then sold him to Potiphar in Egypt they convinced their father Joseph was dead. Then "Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days" (Gen. 37:34-36). To his father Jacob, Joseph was dead, and his father grieved as if he were actually dead. This was perhaps the darkest time in Jacob's life, but out of Jacob's darkness came light, and out of the message of death came the message of life. Jacob was reunited with his son, and out of all this deception and tragedy the nation of Israel was born. This principle is further illustrated in Joseph's life in Egypt. Being falsely accused Joseph was put in prison for a period of two years (Gen.39:19,20; 41:14). Out of the darkness of prison, the Lord being with him, Joseph was exalted by Pharaoh by making him second in command over all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:40-44). After the years of suffering in Egypt and the death of all the firstborn in Egypt (the Egyptians literally and Israel figuratively in the Passover lamb) the Sinaitic Covenant was given and the people of slavery (darkness), became the people of God (light). It was after four generations, 430 years later (Gal. 2:17), and the iniquity of the Amorite was complete (Gen 17:16) that God's promise to Abraham began to be fulfilled. Thus light and life came out of darkness and death.

The covenant made at Sinai was reinstituted by Moses in Deuteronomy after the death of Israel in the wilderness. The story is told in the book of Numbers. After the twelve spies returned from exploring the land only two of them, Joshua and Caleb insisted they could take the land. The negative report of the others caused the people to rebel and as a result God said: "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, when I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test and have not listened to My voice shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned me see it" (Num. 14:22, 23). Further in numbering the people it is stated: "But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron who numbered the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, 'They shall surely die in the wilderness.' And not a man was left of them, except Caleb and Joshua" (Num. 14:24, 30). Out of this death in the wilderness a new nation was born and in the book of Deuteronomy ("The second Law") Moses, for the benefit of those who had not experienced Sinai, rehearsed the Covenant God made with the nation.

The principle of life out of death is seen one more time in the Old Testament. Because of the sin of Solomon (I Kings 11:11-13) the kingdom of Israel was divided and became two nations;

Judah and Benjamin ruled by Rehoboam, Solomon's son, better known as the southern kingdom, and Israel, the northern kingdom, the other ten tribes, ruled by Jeroboam. In the course of time the two kingdoms die as first Israel and then Judah were taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. The Scripture details the history of Judah in Babylon, but not concerning Israel in Assyria who became known as "the ten lost tribes". Donald E. Gowan in *Theology of the Prophetic Books: the Death and Resurrection of Israel* states that the Prophets did not say, "Repent and God will spare you," but "God is going to kill you, but if you are faithful, He will resurrect you on the other side of the judgment you must undergo." This death and resurrection of the nation is best portrayed and illustrated in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel where he was taken to a valley filled with bones which were very many and very dry. He was told to prophesy over the bones and when he did they came together and were clothed with sinews and flesh and the spirit came into them and they lived and stood on their feet a mighty army. Then God says: "These bones are the whole house of Israel, behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' Thus says the Lord God 'Behold I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves...and I will put my Spirit within you, and you will come to life...' (Ezek. 37:11-14). The captivity of Judah lasted seventy years just as Jeremiah had prophesied (Jer. 25:11, 12; Dan. 9:2). Then the prophecy of Ezekiel: "Behold I will open your graves and cause you to come out of your graves and I will bring you into the land of Israel...I will make them one nation in the land of Israel...and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms" (Ezek. 37:12, 22) was fulfilled. The record of this is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Light and life was brought out of the darkness of the grave of captivity and the death of the nation.

In the New Testament this principle is stated by Jesus when he said "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24). Paul further states this principle in speaking of the dead: "You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies" (I Cor. 15:36). The death and resurrection of Christ is the greatest illustration in Scripture of how God brings light out of darkness and life out of death. At his death those closest to him were "perplexed" and all hope was gone (Lk. 24:4, 21) and they wept and lamented him and sorrow filled their hearts (John 16:20). The darkness that covered the land when he was crucified was symbolic of the darkness that engulfed the world at this time. The crucifixion was the ultimate culmination of the power of death which by fear had held mankind in slavery all their lives (Heb. 2:14,15). The resurrection was the ultimate termination of the power of death and the restoration of the life lost in the garden of Eden. The darkness of the grave was illuminated with the glory of life restored, not only to Christ but also to the believer.

The Biblical record of the momentous event of how God brought light and life out of the darkness of death's power by the resurrection is summed up in Paul's statement in I Corinthians 15:21: "For by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead." When the creation was ruined by man's disregard to and disobedience of God's law He could have obliterated it all and began over again. However God had an "eternal" purpose (Eph. 3:11) and He determined that sin and death would not

destroy His purpose. Instead of destroying the prince of darkness and death that had caused the problem, he said "...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15). In plain language man had caused the problem so man was going to remedy the problem. However man had sinned and could do nothing to remedy it. The history of mankind beginning with Adam produced no man capable of reversing the power of sin, darkness and death that had been brought upon the world by Adam's transgression. Enter the prophesy made in Genesis 3:15. If light was to come out of darkness and life out of death it had to come through a sinless man. History had produced none, but through the virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born, thus becoming "the seed of the woman" spoken of in Genesis 3:15. This is the importance of the virgin birth. To be born of a virgin, begotten by the Holy Spirit, meant that the first man since Adam's creation was sinless. He did not have the nature of Adam, as all other men but the nature of God. He was what God intended man to be. Having no sin of his own God "made him who knew no sin to be sin our behalf..." (II Cor. 5:21). Thus God gave mankind the opportunity to "turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan [who had the power of death: Heb. 2:14] to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins..." (Acts 26:18). The death and resurrection of Christ, then, is the classic Scriptural example of God bringing light out of darkness and life out of death.

Another example of God bringing light out of darkness and life out of death is portrayed in the experience of the believer. To be in sin is to be in darkness and to be in Christ is to be in light. To be in sin is death and to be in Christ is life. "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land of the shadow of death upon them the light dawned" (Matt. 4:16). "I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn.12:46). "You were dead in your trespasses and sins...even when we were dead in our transgressions He made us alive together with Christ..." (Eph 2:1, 5). "You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). God "has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9). "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom he wishes...he who hears my word and believes on Him who sent me, has eternal life...but has passed out of death into life...an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live (John 5: 21, 24, 25). The prodigal son is described as one who "was dead, and has come to life" (Luke. 15:24).

Another illustration of light out of darkness and life out of death as seen in Jesus' statement in John 12:24 is Paul's picture of the believer dying to the old life of sin and being made alive in Christ. This is illustrated in our baptism as not only our dying to sin but also being buried and raised with Christ so we consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:2-11).

Our final illustration of this principle is the fact that "the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" because it is then the curse will be lifted from the earth and it will be redeemed from the darkness and death it has been subjected to since the sin of Adam (Rom.8:19-23).

