

The unabridged writings of Fred Morris, Manna Publications

The meaning of...

LIFE AND DEATH

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

MAN MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

Life and death are opposites. All life comes from God who created the first man and woman. And all death also comes from God. Death was a judgment that God pronounced on the first man and woman because they did not obey His command (Genesis 2:14).

God has given us the history of creation in the first chapters of the Bible. Many do not believe the creation story, written in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. But these skeptics have no better way to explain how this world came about, or where human beings came from.

LET US MAKE MAN

Read: Genesis 1:26- 28

God said, "Let **Us** make man in our image...and let them rule..." (Genesis 1:26). "Let there be..." was God's word to the matter He had created. Then He said, "Let **Us** make...." when He made Adam and Eve.

'Us' may mean the Trinity, or God as three persons. Or it may mean that God spoke to the hosts of heaven who stood ready to obey His commands (Genesis 3:22; 11:7; Psalm 8:5; Isaiah 6:8).

Trees and animals cannot know God, so He created human beings who could know Him. God wanted a relationship with intelligent beings, not robots. He wanted persons He could love - a family who would love Him!

ONLY GOD IS IMMORTAL

When God created man, He "breathed into his (the man's) nostrils the breath of life, and the man (the Adam) became a living being" (2:7).

Only God has immortality. That means God lives forever. He had no beginning and He has no end. We say that God is immortal. But God is loving and kind and He gave some of His immortality to the man He created. He made the first man from the earth and breathed His eternal life into the mortal clay body, creating an immortal being that would live for ever.

There was something very intimate and personal about God's act in creating Adam. As an artist signs his painting, so God stamped His imprint on His own work. God made man 'in His likeness or image' (Gen 1:27).

Man has spirit. He can commune with God because God gave him spirit as well as a body. Man's body dies and turns to dust, but his spirit lives on forever.

MAN IS NOT LIKE THE ANIMALS

When God said that He made man "in His own image..." (Gen 1:27-28) He meant that human beings are very different to the rest of creation:

- a) Man is a rational being. He can reason and plan (Isaiah 1:18).
- b) Man was created to rule over creation.
- c) In his moral conscience, man was created righteous. He had a right relationship to God who is holy and just (Ephesians 4:24).
- d) Man is like God in that he has a three-part nature - body, soul and spirit (1 Thess 5:23).
- e) God gave man an immortal spirit. Man's body will die and turn to dust, but his spirit will live on forever and ever.

Only some of God's 'image' was put upon man. We could think of it as the image of a king on a coin, or the likeness of one's face in an artist's drawing. The 'image' is not the person; it is only a likeness to that person.

Both men and women were created "in His (God's) own image..." The Hebrew word 'man' is generic and means both man and woman (1:27).

TALK ABOUT:

1. What made man different to all the animals (1:27)?
2. What was the likeness (image) that God put on man?
3. Was God's image put on woman also?
4. What did God say about the things He created (Gen 1:31)

God told the man and woman to rule over, or be the caretakers of the garden. Adam was the leader of his family and of all created things. Adam is pictured as 'king of the earth.' He served his creator and cared for the garden.

God gave Adam and Eve work to do and a special command. Paul said, "Do all (your work) to the glory of God..." (1 Cor 10:31). Adam and Eve ruled over the animals in the garden and God saw all that He had created and He said that it was good.

At the very beginning, God marked out a tree that stood in the middle of the garden. He said to Adam, "You must not eat the fruit of this tree, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen 2:16-17).

Every day God came to the garden in the cool of the evening. He walked and talked with Adam and Eve just as you do with your best friend (Gen 3:8).

HIDING FROM GOD

One day Adam and Eve were nowhere to be seen. They were hiding from God. They thought God would not see them, but God knows and sees everything.

A terrible thing had happened. Satan, the devil, had come into the garden and told Eve she could eat the fruit that God told them not to eat. She ate some and gave some to Adam to eat.

At once their spirits were cut off from God. God had warned them not to eat the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but they did not obey God's command. The beautiful fellowship they had with their Creator was broken; their spirits died within them.

Sadly their sinful nature passed to their children, and to their children and to everyone who ever lived. So that God said, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). One part of God's glory is his holiness; God is perfect and without sin.

TALK ABOUT:

1. If everything God created was good, why are there so many bad things in the world?
2. Can we walk and talk with God like Adam did? Why not?
3. Why is man able to have fellowship with God?
4. Can the animals have fellowship with God?

DID ADAM KNOW DEATH?

Perhaps Adam had no idea what death was or how it would change the way he related to God. Death comes to our bodies when we grow old or have a sickness and die. But our spirits are dead from the day we are born. Paul wrote, "Death reigned from the time of Adam..." (Romans 5:14).

He also told the Ephesians, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world." (Eph 2:1-2).

Death or separation from God had taken over man's mortal body and there was nothing Adam could do about it. That day God put Adam and Eve out of the garden. God cursed Satan and the ground and he punished Adam and Eve.

The greatest punishment of all was being cut off from having fellowship with God. They had sinned against God, and God hates sin. He is pure and holy and no sinner can approach God (Romans 3:23).

Amidst all the sadness and gloom, God made a promise – the first promise recorded for us in the Bible. God told Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel" (Gen 3:15).

THE FALL OF MAN

Read: Genesis 3:1-10

Adam and Eve's sin changed the history of the world and changed our own lives! For we are all children of Adam. Death came to Adam and death comes to us. Adam's body did not die then, he lived on for many years!

Every person born into this world receives their sin nature from Adam. Because of our sin nature, we are 'sinners' by birth and by action. If we do not receive Christ as our Saviour, we cannot be 'alive' in our spirits or have fellowship with God.

God said everything He created was "very good," so it is wrong to think that Adam's world was hostile, with a demon behind every tree and rock. In the garden, Adam enjoyed a perfect world (Gen 1:31; Mark 10:18).

In sinning against God man lost everything:

- a) His fellowship with God.
- b) His garden paradise.
- c) His authority over nature and over his own family.
- d) All hope for the future.

God gave man up to his own ego. In his blindness, man saw himself as righteous and God as unjust. As long as man thinks this, he will never reach out for God (Rom 3:10-11; 2 Cor 3:14-15).

Adam tried to redeem himself. He put on an apron of leaves and thought he had 'covered' his sin. But fear of God overcame him and he hid in the bushes (Gen 3:10).

TALK ABOUT:

1. Do you think Adam knew evil lurked nearby?
2. Was Eve alone when Satan spoke to her?
3. How easy was it for Satan to tempt Eve?
4. What makes us feel shame and try to hide from God (John 3:19)?

DID YOU EAT...?

Read: Genesis 3:11-15

God asked Adam, "Have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from?" (Gen 3:11) God knew what Adam and Eve had done, but He asked for an accounting (Rom 14:12). God commands us to repent and confess our sins (Acts 17:30). If we do not obey, we come under His judgment (John 3:36).

Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Men blame others for their sins when they themselves are to blame.

The first curse was spoken to the serpent Satan. God said to Satan, "Cursed are you above all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life" (Gen 3:14).

Next God spoke to the woman. She would bring new life into the world, but not without pain. In this life, the woman's glory is complete when she gives birth to a child. Little girls talk of being 'mother' and play with their 'babies.'

Eve was the mother of all human life.

A CURSE ON THE GROUND

God had given Adam dominion or headship over creation. Now creation would rebel against his rule:

- a) The soil and the elements.
- b) The animal kingdom.
- c) Even his wife and his offspring would turn against him!

Before this, Adam was 'king.' Now he was a slave to the earth. The immortality he had vanished with the words, "to dust you will return" (3:19).

TALK ABOUT:

1. Why is it so hard for a man to see his failings?
2. Did Adam and Eve understand death (2:17)?
3. What excuse did Adam give for eating the fruit (3:12)?
4. Does God ever tempt us to sin (James 1:13)?

THE PROMISE OF A REDEEMER

Read: Genesis 3:15

God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (3:15).

God's promise comes like a pause amidst the curses. It was spoken more directly to Satan, but it was also spoken to the man.

The forces of God were always set against the forces of Satan. God did not have to do any more. His plan was always there in Heaven (Eph 1:4).

The world under Satan's control hates God's people and tries to destroy them (Matt 10:17-22). It has always been so! It was always so in world history and true of our own times.

God's promise was a prophecy veiled in hard words. It was fulfilled when Christ died on the cross. The woman's 'offspring' or 'seed' (singular) refers to the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus (Gal 3:16; 4:4). "Offspring" also means all Eve's 'children' who believe in Christ. They are all believers of every age who make up the Body of Christ, the Church.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

God said Satan would "Strike his heel" and that the Redeemer would "bruise his head" or crush it. Both phrases speak of the struggle that was to come. Satan:

1. Tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4).
2. Terrified Him in His agony (Matt 26:38).
3. Tempted Judas to betray Him (Luke 22:3).
4. Moved Pilate to condemn Him to death (John 19:6).

Peter said the sufferings of Christ continue in His saints. They "fill up the sufferings" of their Saviour (1 Pet 2:20-25). The 'war' with Satan will go on until the end of time!

Christ, **THE HEAD**, is now in Heaven, beyond the devil's reach. So Satan persecutes Christ's **BODY**, the Christian Church. Satan bruises the 'heel' left here on earth. That is why Jesus prayed for **HIS BODY** and thanked the Father for protecting them (John 17:10-11).

Satan tramples on the woman's seed. But her 'offspring,' the sons of faith, have always been more than conquerors through Christ (Rom 8:37).

LIFE IN JESUS

So at the very dawn of history, Almighty God spelled out the final doom of Satan who represents death and the final victory of His Son, Jesus Christ, Jesus represents LIFE.

Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross, but He rose from the dead and went back to heaven to take His throne (Acts 1:9). At the cross, Jesus dealt a fatal blow to Satan's kingdom, a wound to Satan's 'head' that will never be healed (Col 2:15). And He offered eternal life to all who would believe in Him (John 5:24).

TALK ABOUT:

1. What did God's promise in Gen 3:15 mean?
2. Who did the 'seed of the woman' point to (Gal 3:16)?
3. If Christ is the **HEAD**, who is the **BODY**?
4. When will **HEAD** and **BODY** be joined?
5. Are you a member of Christ's **BODY**?

GOD WANTED A FAMILY

In Genesis 3:15 God promised a Redeemer. Christ came as the Redeemer of sinful men and women. He came to save them from their sins. He came to gather a family of true worshippers.

All the promises God made are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul said, 'Look to Jesus Christ!' All God's promises are 'Yes' in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20).

At that time Adam named his wife 'Eve' (Gen 3:20). This word had the meaning of 'woman' or 'she-man' ('Isha' feminine of 'Ish' man, Gen 2:23).

Later the word became a proper noun and probably means 'living.' Eve was the only hope Adam had that human life on earth would continue.

Now the name Adam was associated with death (1 Cor 15:22). Eve had the name of a living soul, for she was the mother of all human life.

TALK ABOUT:

1. God tests us to prove our faith; Satan tempts us to make us fall (1 Peter 5:8).
2. How does God test us (Deut 8:2)?
3. Our sin nature makes us want to go our own way. Paul said, "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18). What did Paul mean?
4. Satan sets war in the hearts of his sons. They fight against the 'sons of light,' they persecute and kill. Who are Satan's 'sons'?

THEY WENT OUT

Read: Genesis 3:22-24

The King of Heaven spoke: "Man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:22). Hosts of angelic beings stood before His throne (Rev 5:11-12). There was a great counsel in Heaven.

In the garden below, Adam could still reach out his hand and take the fruit of the TREE OF LIFE and live forever as a sinner. God could never allow that to happen! "He (Adam) must not be allowed..." God commanded. And He sent Cherubim to hurry the man and woman out of the garden and close the way back (Gen 3:24).

ADAM LOST GOD

Adam did not want to leave the garden. God had to "drive him out!" (Gen 3:24). And he would never be able to go back. Cherubim with flaming swords guarded the way. Cherubim also guard God's throne in Heaven (1 Kings 6:23-28; Ezek 10:1).

So Adam went out into a world beyond the garden. Out to live with a physical body and a spirit that was dead toward God, a life cut off from the blessing of the Almighty.

We can't imagine what that was like. It was an evil world, full of demon spirits because Satan is "the prince of this world" (John 12:31).

Every time Adam thought of the garden in Eden or looked back, he was blinded by the light and glory of the angels (Cherubim) and the flaming sword that turned this way and that!

MAN LONGS FOR PARADISE

From that day until now, man has longed to get back into paradise. He is never satisfied with his work, his wife or his lot in life and he keeps knocking on the 'door' of paradise. He would do anything, he thinks, to get back to the 'perfect life' that he enjoyed in Eden.

The paradise of God remains, but no one can take 'fruit' from the Tree of Life, unless he repents. Then, God's forgiveness opens the way for God's Spirit and life to come and fill the one who repents. The book of The Revelation tells of eternal paradise. There doors are wide open and the sign above them reads, Whosoever will may come (Rev 22:2-5).

TALK ABOUT:

1. Were God's words spoken to Adam to shame him or to help him repent (3:22; Psalm 83:16)?
2. Why did God drive Adam and Eve out of the garden?
3. How can men and women enter the 'paradise of God'?

HOW TO ESCAPE DEATH

To enjoy life with God's blessing, we must obey His commands. Moses told the people of Israel, "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live...for the Lord is your life..." (Deut 30:19-20).

How would the people of Israel 'choose life'? By obeying God's commands. That is how man chooses eternal life. We freely choose to follow Jesus Christ and live according to God's word. God is the source of all life – Jesus Christ is our TREE OF LIFE!

The garden in Eden itself was a picture of Heaven. Christ, the Tree of Life, was in the centre of the garden of God. He is also 'the river of life' that flows out from the throne of God. (Psa 46:4; Ezek 47:1; Rev 22:1).

God sent the Son so that we could have Life! (John 6:63). LIFE is the 'fruit' of Christ's work. He came that we might have life and that more abundantly (John 10:10).

TALK ABOUT:

1. What command did God give Adam and Eve?
2. Did Adam and Eve obey God's command?
3. Why did God put them out of the garden in Eden?

THIS OLD BODY

After a long life, Adam's body died and his sons buried him. Because Adam sinned against God, our bodies will die and be buried, too. This old body will turn to dust, just as God said (Gen 3:19).

That does not mean that a person's spirit will die. God said, "The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7).

Man's spirit will live on. For those who love God, He has prepared a new home in heaven. Jesus told His disciples, "I am going (to heaven) to prepare a place for you. If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3).

When the trumpet of the Lord sounds, there will be a great resurrection. The dust of the bodies that lie buried in the ground will spring to life. Daniel wrote, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

THE RESURRECTION GAVE PAUL HOPE

As we get older and all our joints hurt, those who love the Lord look forward to going to heaven to be with Jesus. God has a place “reserved for them.” Peter called it “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power...in this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials” (1 Peter 1:4-5).

The new home which was waiting for him in heaven, gave Paul great hope. He wrote, “Now we know if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling...For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by Life” (2 Cor 5:2-4).

Paul thought of his old body as a tent falling down because it was so old. He had lived in his body many years, but now it was rotting away and would soon fall down. Or it was like an old robe. He did not want the robe to be taken away from him and to be left naked. He wanted to be clothed with his new, resurrection body.

TALK ABOUT:

1. If he had obeyed God, he could have lived in the Garden forever?
2. Can we be sure we are going to the new home God has prepared for us in heaven?

SPIRITS DON'T HAVE BODIES

We know that every spirit is made by God (Zech 12:1). Long before the earth was created, angels in heaven rebelled against God and lost their place. Some we know are evil spirits. They follow Satan and obey him.

Evil spirits can attack and harm us. When He was on the earth, Jesus cast these evil spirits out of people. The evil spirits knew who Jesus was. “Whenever the evil spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, “You are the Son of god” (Mark 3:11), “But Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell who He was.” Jesus did not want the testimony of evil spirits.

Jesus left the crowds behind and crossed the lake Galilee. At Gardara, on the other side of the lake, a man with an evil spirit came to meet Jesus (Mark 5:1-20).

Beside the Sea of Galilee there were tombs and caves where people buried their dead. The wild man lived there. The people in the nearby town tried to tie him up with chains, but he was very strong and angry and he broke the chains and ran off.

JESUS WAS HIS ONLY HOPE

Jesus was the man’s only hope and perhaps he knew that. “When he saw Jesus at a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of Him. Then he shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God. Swear to God that You won’t torture me.’ For Jesus had said to him (the evil spirit), ‘Come out of this man, you evil spirit’.” (Mark 5:5-8).

Luke says the demons asked not to be sent into the Abyss (Luke 8:31). This was a place where other evil spirits were held in chains against a future judgment day (Jude 6; Rev 9:1-2).

Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is legion,” he replied, for we are many.”

‘Legion’ is a Latin word which means a troop of six thousand men. In this context it may mean ‘many demons.’

They were many and they were very strong. Who can stand before a legion of demons? We are no match for Satan and his demons. Only in the Lord and the power of the blood of Jesus can we have victory over Satan.

Then the demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them,” for a large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside nearby.

Jesus said they could go into the pigs. The evil spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs. They rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

The man saw them run into the lake and he knew he had been set free.

TALK ABOUT:

1. Why did Jesus tell the demon spirits not to tell who He was (Mark 3:12)?
2. Did they obey Him?
3. When Jesus crossed the lake, who did He meet?
4. What happened next (Mark 5:1-20)?
5. When the man was in his right mind, what request did he make?
6. What did Jesus tell him to do?
7. Why did he need to go back to his family?

WHY THIS STRANGE EVENT?

You may wonder why God told us about this strange event in Jesus' ministry. The demon possessed man was a terror to himself and to his neighbours. He knew he needed Jesus. And Jesus was his only hope. No one else could deliver him from the devil's power. The devil is a cruel master, but Jesus can set you free.

The demon spirit did not want to be 'naked' so they asked Jesus to send them into the pigs. The pigs were probably kept for sacrifice to the chief idol of the town.

At Christ's command, the demons came out of the man. Their war against God was over. They had no power to stand against the Most High God, and we can believe they were destroyed in the lake.

The man who had been healed sat down at Jesus' feet. The people of the town were afraid of Jesus and begged Him to leave the place.

The man wanted to go with Jesus. He was quiet now and he wanted to follow Jesus. He had no friends, no food and no work. "Let me come with You," he asked Jesus.

"Go home to your family," Jesus told him, "and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19).

For many years his family had been deprived of a husband and father. When Jesus healed him, it was like a man coming back from the grave. The man's body was alive and healed and his spirit was made ready to meet God. The man was "made whole."

TALK ABOUT:

1. Moses warned the people of Israel to choose life (Deut 30:19-20). Did they?
2. Who is our "Tree of Life?"
3. Have you eaten the 'fruit' of that Tree?

THE SPIRIT OF MAN

God has told us very little about where man's spirit goes to await his or her resurrection body. I take my theology from the words of Jesus. When Jesus was crucified He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46). But to the dying thief on the cross He said, "This day, I will be in paradise with you" (Luke 23:43).

Paradise is the word for a Persian garden. The hanging gardens of Persia were some of the wonders of the then known world. So Jesus would be in paradise with the spirit of this man. That very day their spirits would be enjoying fellowship, not in some intermediate state doing nothing, waiting for the coming of the resurrection.

The hymn writer gave us a true picture of the believer's spirit after death when he wrote:

Into the love of Jesus
Deeper and deeper I go,
Trying to find the answer;
Why He should love me so...

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