

The NT gives principles, definitions, but the OT gives pictures, descriptions

The story, the story of the eternal God and His image-bearers, begins for Man when God places him in a garden with a tree in the middle, the tree of life. It was in this living paradise that God walked with Adam in the cool of the day. That is, until Adam desired the fruit of the tree of knowledge more than the fruit from the tree of life. In his arrogance Mankind exchanged the life for knowledge of good and evil and as a consequence the tree of life was lost, the Man was exiled from Eden, and paradise was lost.

Long before cathedrals and kingdoms, even before cities and calendars, the sons of Adam were waiting for a deliverer to rescue them from Eden's exile. They knew that they needed a rescuer. They knew the promise, an offspring of Eve would crush the serpent's head, but Abel was killed and Cain was banished. Beauty didn't mark out a single generation before death and dysfunction found the first family. Darkness overshadowed the glories of exploration and exhaustion exemplified the fruitless gloom of the now dangerous night. Generation after generation awaited this promised seed. Would Noah, the remnant, be the one "to rescue us from the work of our hands"? No. Would Abraham, the chosen, be the one to finally return the tree of life to the people? No. Would David, the God-hearted, be the one crush the serpent's head and reign over the earth? No. So, we waited. Generation after generation anticipated his advent, for in this dark world the world needed Him...desperately.

This is the story of God's dealing with Man. It is one story, unchanged and unaltered from the beginning, with two sons, one failing and one victorious, and three trees of life and death and life. It is a story of advent, of the arrival of the one promised in chapter one who would slay the dragon and win the girl, of a war and a wedding, of paradise lost and paradise regained and enhanced. It is the story of history and its hero is Jesus, the seed of Eve, the victorious Son. And His story begins in a garden...

#### 1a. A Tree in a Garden Paradise

- a. Tree of Life (Gen 2:9)
- b. When God made the world, He began with a garden, and in the middle of the garden is a tree, the Tree of Life
  - i. The Tree of Life is an historical symbol of provision in the presence of God, i.e. glorification

#### 2a. Paradise Lost and a Tree Taken Away (Genesis 3)

- a. A Test
  - i. "Don't eat from that tree"
    1. Why?
    2. There wasn't any magic in the fruit, or poison, it wasn't about the fruit at all
    3. v11 – "which I commanded you"
  - ii. God asked Adam/Eve to do something and not do something for one reason: because God said so.
    1. The test wasn't about the danger of the fruit, or something special about the tree, or because it was practical in any way, or exciting, or relevant, or because it benefits you or was helpful
    2. God wanted Adam to do something for His sake, not for their sake, simply because He is God and they were not
  - iii. The test that God placed before Adam and Eve was the test to trust Him enough to do what He said simply *because it was He who said it.*
    1. There is a type of external virtue that is done because it benefits the doer or the receiver of the virtue

- a. Most humanist ethical systems are built around this basic premise
      - i. "Tit for tat" or "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours"
    - b. You can be "honest" because it pays, it's the best policy, otherwise things will go wrong, society won't work, your conscience will feel better
      - i. The motivation behind this kind of virtue is fear
    - c. Another type of external virtue is done because of shame
      - i. "You don't want to be like those people, do you?"
      - ii. You don't want your reputation to suffer
      - iii. The motivation here is pride
    - d. Most of the virtuous deeds done in this world is done out of pride or out of fear
      - i. Ironically, these two motivations are the foundation of sin itself
      - ii. Thus, the world tries to avoid sin by appealing to the foundation of sin, pride and fear
  - 2. Genesis shows us that the reason that God gave the test not to eat of the tree was the test to see if they would humbly and lovingly trust Him and obey His command
    - a. They didn't think God gave them a good enough reason – they didn't think that His word was sufficient enough a reason not to eat
    - b. The minute that they asked, "Why not?" they were already sinning because they had placed their wisdom above God's, placing themselves on the throne of Creation over the One whom created them
    - c. This is the root of all sin: not trusting God's Word, but rather needing, even requiring, a reason beyond the fact that God has said it
- b. A Failure
- i. Thus, Adam chose rather to do it his way than to trust God's command
    - 1. He trusted his own wisdom and his own desires and his own choice rather than the command of God
    - 2. He didn't want to honor God but wanted to honor Himself, thus He failed, and sinned
  - ii. This usurping of God's reign and God's wisdom is the problem of all sin
    - 1. "Who told you..?"
    - 2. That is a question of authority, is it not?
  - iii. This failure is also to a failure to find the goodness of God as sufficient
    - 1. The command of God, the Law of God, the Word of God is beautiful in itself
    - 2. Adam rejected this beauty for something more: knowledge rather than trust
- c. A Consequence
- i. Curse
    - 1. Satan promised destruction
    - 2. Creation cursed to futility (Rom 8)
    - 3. Humanity cursed with death
  - ii. Paradise Lost and the Tree Removed
    - 1. Expelled from the Garden
    - 2. Banished from the Tree of Life
    - 3. Removal from God's presence

### 3a. Promise of a Victorious Obedient Son

- a. To whom was the "first gospel" (*protoevangelium*) proclaimed? - to Satan

- i. Paradise was lost by Man, but the cosmic enemy would be defeated by God's provided Rescuer
  - ii. The story is framed in a cosmic defeat of Satan by God, Man is but a spectator of God displaying His greatness and power and magnificence to His creation
  - iii. Man needs God's salvation from first to last – the test for humanity was over, his part was played out
- b. God promises that the seed of the woman would crush the Enemy's head
  - i. There would be a Man, born of a woman, born under the Law, who would crush the deceiver, pass the test, gain victory over the Enemy, and win the cosmic battle
  - ii. So, we see here that the reason Adam and Eve were not destroyed that day, why God showed mercy, was because He had a person whom He had already planned before the Fall itself, who would bring Rescue and Victory in His story
    - 1. 2 Tim 1:9 – the giving of God's grace was before the ages began, but has not been revealed at the coming of Christ Jesus!
      - a. Think about this – God gave before Creation was created
    - 2. Eph 1:4 – He [God] chose us in Him before the foundation of the world
    - 3. Rev 13:8 – Believers' names written in the Lamb's book before the foundation of the world
      - a. There was a Lamb's book before the Fall ever took place
      - b. Thus, God had purposed to send His Son before Adam ever failed and paradise was ever lost
      - c. Because this story of history is not about Man, but about GOD!!
- c. God's story is that He promised to send a victorious obedient Son to rescue a fallen sinful people who were enslaved and defeated and under His righteous wrath
  - i. He is telling a story of grace, and it was not a new plan, but a newly revealed stanza of the original song, sung to all Creation, beginning with the great enemy of God, the Serpent
  - ii. "The seed of the Woman is going to bring you down!"
    - 1. You will chase Him to destroy Him, but He will destroy you
      - a. Rev 12:5
    - 2. You will only wound His heel, but He will crush your head
  - iii. Thus, this proclamation of hope was proclaimed first as a proclamation of judgment against the enemy of God and Man
- d. So, the people of God waited for this Son of Adam and Seed of Eve, the Serpent's harbinger

#### 1b. Promise Fulfilled in Jesus the Victorious Obedient Son

- a. The advent of the Son of Adam (Luke 3:38)
- b. He is the Greater Adam (Luke 5:14ff; 1 Cor 15:22-28; 45-57)
  - i. Jesus succeeded where Adam failed when tested by the Devil (Luke 5:14ff)
  - ii. How?
    - 1. Jesus trusted the Word of the Father rather than asking why or needing more information than God's commands
      - a. While Adam asked "why?", Jesus replied, "Because God has said..."
    - 2. Satan tried three times, whereas Adam and Eve failed the first time
  - iii. By His faith and success, His death and its defeat, Jesus robbed Satan of His power, crushed His head, and released His people from Satan's power (Hebrews 2:14-17)
    - 1. He delivered those who were subjected to the slavery of death by taking on their flesh and blood and making "propitiation" for them, i.e. He paid down their sin-debt

- iv. The “last Adam” raises those who are His to the newness of life, incorruptible, the total recreation of that which was lost, paradise restored through resurrection (1 Cor 15:22-28; 45-57)

## 2b. The Obedient Son Restored Paradise Through a Second Tree

- a. 1 Peter 2:21-25
- b. He committed no sin...bore our sins in His body on the tree that you might die to sin and live to righteousness...you have now returned to the great Shepherd and Overseer of your soul
  - i. Calvary, the tree of death that you might live – Tree of Life through Death
- c. Jesus Christ, the Seed of Eve, is the Last Adam, the Victorious Man, the obedient Son, and through His atoning death He brings the life of paradise, the presence of God with Man, to all who close to Him
  - i. He does this through His own tree, bearing our sin and shame upon it, so that we might live
- d. How? Why was the death of Jesus necessary?
  - i. That’s an entire sermon right there! 😊
  - ii. The basic reason is that God must keep his word – “if you eat of the tree you will surely die”
    - 1. If God were not to bring about the consequences of sin, then He would be a liar, untrustworthy
    - 2. Simply, God cannot lie, He cannot be unjust, He cannot nor will not give up His throne to any creature (and that is very, very good!)
    - 3. Romans 3:21-25
  - iii. Thus, through the giving of His Son as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice for humanity, He is both just (sin is paid down and mutiny against His throne averted) and the justifier of the one who trusts in Jesus (He declares the believer righteous, forgiven, pure, clean, restored to friendship with God, even more so the Bride of the Lamb!!!)
    - 1. By the cross, Jesus the Obedient Son paid down the curse of death and by His resurrected life He restores creation’s futility and crushes the serpents head by robbing him of his power

## 3b. A Tree Discovered in a Glorious City

- a. Rev 2:7 - Rev 22:1-7,14,19
  - i. On either side of the River was the tree of life with 12 kinds of fruit for each month, and the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations
    - 1. This tree is greater than the tree in Eden!
    - 2. It is so large that its roots span the river of life, its leaves produce healing fruit every month for every nation!
  - ii. The Paradise Restored
    - 1. Eden had a river that split into four rivers
    - 2. Revelation has a single river which flows from the Throne of God and waters the city of God with life
- b. The promise that we have, the image of history’s goal, is Paradise Restored and a tree discovered again
- c. The story moves from walking with God in a garden to dwelling with God in a city
  - i. From 2 persons to the multitude of nations receiving healing from the tree of life, watered from the life which proceeds from the reign and rule of God
  - ii. Paradise is not simply restored, but it is paradise enriched!

- d. This is the plan of history, written, won, and worked by God Himself, so that all Created beings might see the glory of the God of grace
  - i. This is the gospel of God's victory through His victorious and obedient Son!
  - ii. There is hope for anyone who comes to Him in faith, for He is making all things new in the city of God

The season of Advent is the season of waiting. It is to pause, to listen and look, to yearn for the arrival of the yet unseen hope of the Hero in this story of God. We have learned, in our disquieted culture, that waiting is painful and awkward. Thus, Advent has been conveniently displaced by the immediate arrival of muzak carols and candy cane ribboning the day after Halloween, Thanksgiving abruptly annexed by consumerism's exchanged "good" Friday, appropriately labelled as black. We don't want to wait, we want it now, credit be damned.

But this story of God reveals an advent, that, in the words of Timothy Paul Jones,

"Even on this side of Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, there is brokenness in our world that no cart full of Black Friday bargains can fix; there is hunger in our souls that no plateful of pumpkin custard can fill; there is twistedness in our hearts that no terrestrial hand can touch. "The whole creation," the apostle Paul declared, "has been groaning together for redemption."

In Advent, Christians embrace the groaning and recognize it not as hopeless whimpering over the paucity of the present moment but as expectant yearning for a divine banquet that Jesus is preparing for us even now. In Advent, the church admits, as poet R.S. Thomas has put it, that "the meaning is in the waiting." And what we await is a final Advent that is yet to come. Just as the ancient Israelites waited for the coming of the Messiah in flesh, we await the consummation of the good news through the Messiah's return in glory. In Advent, believers confess that the infant who drew his first ragged breath between a virgin's knees has yet to speak his final word."

Advent begins today. We rejoice at the arrival of the Great Serpent Slayer, rehearsing the ancient anticipation. But we not only rehearse the yearning of the ancients, but we also yearn ourselves for that final word, that delightful dinner, that wonderful wedding when the victorious Seed of Eve, the Last Adam, finishes our redemption and sits down to the banquet having made all things new. In the blessed words of Isaac Watts:

Lo! What glorious sight appears  
To our believing eyes!  
The earth and sea are passed away,  
And the old rolling skies.

"The God of glory down to men  
Removes His blest abode;  
Men, the dear objects of His grace,  
And he the loving God.

From the third heav'n, where God resides,  
That holy, happy place,  
The new Jerusalem comes down,  
Adorned with shining grace.

His own soft hand shall wipe the tears  
From every weeping eye,  
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,  
And death itself, shall die.

Attending angels shout for joy,  
And the bright armies sing—  
"Mortals, behold the sacred seat  
Of your descending King.

How long, dear Savior! O how long  
Shall this bright hour delay?  
Fly swifter round, ye wheels of time,  
And bring the welcome day.