

LOVE OF DEATH

By

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The tree that was forbidden to Adam and Eve in the garden has become, in our time, the most popular tree in all the world.

It was called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” and God said, “You shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17).

Man is a creation of God, made in His image to think God’s thoughts after Him and to act in harmony with God’s desire. Only by reflecting the will of God can man fulfill the purpose for which he is created and give the Creator reason to continue to sustain his life.

The sin in the garden was not merely the act of stealing an apple while the farmer’s back was turned. Note what the serpent said to Eve. And remember that “the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made” (Gen. 3:1). “And the serpent said unto the woman, You shall not surely die; for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

God had already told the pair what was good and evil, what they could do to live, and what would bring death. What the serpent suggested was that they could reject God’s law and determine for themselves what was right and wrong. They could be their own gods and establish their own rules.

This attempt at self-determination is the clearest kind of rebellion against the Creator and is worthy of the penalty of death which He promised. If man does not want to be the creature God intended him to be, then he has no right to receive the life which God gives. To reject the desire is to reject the Designer, and to reject the Life-Giver is to reject life.

Although Adam and Eve did not drop dead the day of disobedience, the sentence was carried out exactly. The Hebrew expression translated, “shall surely die,” literally means, “in dying thou shall surely die.” The work of death began that day, and ultimately they both died, in spite of the serpent’s lie, “Thou shall NOT surely die.”

This is the only place in the Bible where the rebellious are promised that they won’t die, and it is in direct refutation of the very words of God. Yet it is a lie accepted, believed, and widely taught throughout the world today, that everyone had an “immortal soul” which shall live for eternity. This doctrine is wrong on two counts. 1) Man does not *have* a soul, he *is* a soul. The record of creation states, “And God formed man of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). The soul is not something God put into man, it is the man, mind, body, and all. God did not say to Adam that if he ate of the forbidden tree his body would die, nor did he suggest it would be only a “spiritual death.” It was the whole Adam, the “living soul” or “living being” that would die (Compare Genesis 3:19). 2) Man, as a “living soul”, is not immortal but mortal. “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). Scripture says that only God has immortality (I Tim. 6:16), but that on the day of resurrection it will be bestowed upon all the faithful believers: “For this mortal must put

on immortality” (I Cor. 15:53). Nowhere in all the Bible does it say that man is immortal or that he has an immortal soul, and for the unbeliever there is no promise of immortality but the promise of death.

Did Adam and Eve actually believe God had lied to them and that the serpent was telling the truth? Scripture rather indicates that they were willing to run the risk, in order to have their own way instead of God’s; man’s desire for his own way is greater than his desire for life. As it is said of wisdom, “All they that hate me love death” (Prov. 8:36).

The extent to which man has rejected God is measured by his effort to determine for himself good and evil. Bertrand Russell once wrote that he and his colleagues accepted the Darwinian concept of evolution because the alternative was to accept God and His laws, and this, he said, would force them to give up the lifestyle they preferred. This continues to be the popular course of modern thinking, and it always runs in the direction of death: socially, religiously, politically, economically and personally.

Many churches of our day are in chaos because they indulge in the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Ask almost anyone to explain the fundamental tenets of the denomination to which he belongs, and he may be hard put to answer. Every denomination is splintered into many factions because they have chosen to determine their own course according to the traditions and councils of men, rather than to rely upon the commands of the Lord.

The public school (more correctly called government school) is a prime example of man determining for himself what is good and evil. For decades the teachers have been forbidden to teach the commands of God or even to teach that God exists. In the attempt to guide and control the children, schools introduced “values clarification.” This is nothing more than the rebellion against the Creator in order for each person to know good and evil for himself and become his own god. Children are taught that there are no absolute morals and each one must construct his own value system. It is all right to advise them to abstain from sexual intercourse on the grounds that it could lead to pregnancy or AIDS, but it is NOT all right to tell them it is sinful and against God’s law. The result is frustration and disorder, not only in the classroom but in the home and throughout the lives of the students. The price for letting the children “know good and evil” for themselves is obvious to us all: pregnant children, unwanted babies, abortions, broken lives and teenage suicide, to say nothing of the ultimate death penalty at judgment.

The lawmakers of the nation also have partaken freely of the fruit of this tree of death. In one political campaign a candidate promised that he would “try to improve the life of every citizen.” No doubt he would do this by new laws determined by men in congress. Yet state and federal congresses have proven that they are unwilling to operate under the Creator’s definition of good and evil. By vote they legalize abortion and gambling and force parents to submit their children to the teaching of atheistic evolution. They reject out of hand God’s rules concerning money, crime, welfare, the home, education and government itself. Possibly the most shameful example of rejecting God’s law, that man might write his own, is the homosexual cause, in which legislators have abandoned God and common decency to bow to the demands for “gay rights” and thus have given their approval and protection to those who openly defy God and seek to destroy the family and pervert the very nature of man as God created him. When a nation’s elected rulers so defy God, can judgment be far behind?

The love of death is constantly sounded forth from the TV set as Hollywood produces its smut in the name of comedy and pornography in the name of drama. In music and literature hatred for life as God ordained it is predominant and often the principle theme. The rock and movie stars proudly champion their defiance of the Creator and still receive glory from the American public.

God had told Adam and Eve that they could eat of any of the trees in the garden except one. The ways in which we can obey and serve God are limitless and can never be exhausted. Yet it is the nature of man to resist them in order to act as his own god and make his own rules. But God is the giver of life, and there is not other way to have life except by His grace and power.

The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil may be pleasant to the eye, to the taste and to one's pride in making his own rules, but to partake of it is to partake of death.

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