

Death Was Not Part of God's Original Plan for His Creation

A Reflection on Death and Creation's Restoration

Reflections Grace, Sin and Transformation WhatsApp post, 1 October 2023

Genesis 5 (referenced)

Genesis 11 (referenced)

Genesis 1-3 (referenced)

Romans 5:12-14 (referenced)

Genesis 2:17 (referenced)

Romans 8:20-21 (quoted)

The Book of Genesis, in chapter five, tells us that Adam lived to be nine hundred and thirty years; his son Seth, nine hundred and twelve years; Seth's son Enosh, nine hundred and five years; Methuselah, the oldest of them all, nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and Noah, nine hundred and fifty years. That was a whole lot of living by our standards. Then, after the Flood, we read of Noah's son Shem living six hundred years; his son Arphaxad, four hundred and thirty-eight years; then Shelah, four hundred and thirty-three years; then Peleg, two hundred and thirty-nine; and then Terah, the father of Abraham, two hundred and five years. Then come the patriarchs: Isaac, one hundred and eighty years; Jacob, one hundred and forty-seven years. And after the four-hundred-year bondage in Egypt: Moses, one hundred and twenty years; Joshua, one hundred and ten years. By the time we reach the period of the kings, David is traditionally reckoned to have died at about seventy, and Solomon at about eighty — which is where things have stood, I suppose you could say, for three thousand years: seventy or eighty years at best.

We know from the story of Creation in Genesis 1 to 3, and in Romans 5:12-14, that death was never intended to be a part of the perfect world that existed before sin entered it — and, with sin, death. Death was a curse, laid as the penalty for disobedience (Genesis 2:17). The presence of death in the world is not, therefore, a natural part of the original, perfect Creation, but a judicial part of a fallen one. Paul puts it thus:

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:20-21)

That deliverance, I believe, is not for man alone. The same creation that was subjected to vanity because of us is bound up in that very same hope, and awaits that very same glorious liberty. What lies ahead, then, is not merely a return to what was lost in Eden, but something greater still: a total restoration, of man and of the whole created order together, brought at last into a glorified existence in which death itself shall have no more part.

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