

End of the Black Plague

Last week we left off alluding to a vaccine that can neutralize the raging sin plague first spawned by Adam and Eve. Before we see what that is, let's spend a moment explaining how the Black Plague came to a merciful end after almost four centuries. In a tiny village called Eyam England a tailor named George Viccars unpacked a clothing box that was shipped in from London. When he opened it disease infested fleas swarmed him. Four days later he was dead. Weeks later however, many of his fellow villagers were still alive, and even after a few months still hadn't presented any bubonic symptoms. How was this possible? One young mother buried her husband and six children at the same time but she was not infected. The town's gravedigger handled hundreds of diseased corpses but didn't die. How so?

DNA studies of the surviving descendants discovered a resilient gene. It was called the CCR-5 Delta 32 Receptor. This one gene prevented the yersinia pestis bacterium from weakening a person's immune system. Having this gene meant that one could be exposed to the disease and survive it. There was one underlying condition however: you had to choose the right parents. Of course that was impossible. How many do you know genetics are not fair?

As we said last week, the sin pandemic has infected and affected us all. However, we were able to trace its origins back to Hebrews 3:12 which is a "Evil heart of unbelief that turns us away from the living God." A heart of unbelief doesn't trust God, fully or at all, to meet our needs and provide us with an abundantly happy future. However, if we don't want to "Die in our sins" (John 8:24) all we got to do is choose the right Savior. Got any suggestions? I suppose we could go with the Dalai Lama, Buddha, Mohamad, or some other religious or wisdom figure. I guess we could rely on our own "spiritual antibodies" such as good works and good intentions. In our heart-of-hearts however, we know these are not viable therapeutics. Therefore, if we can't choose other humans, no matter how impressive, or even ourselves, no matter how impressive, who then should we choose?

Adam vs Jesus

Last week we saw in Romans 5:12-21 how unbelief originated in Adam. We now go back to that passage to see why we need to choose Jesus, a.k.a., the "Last Adam" (I Corinthians 15:45) to save us from the sin pandemic

12 Just as sin entered the world through ADAM and death through sin, and in this way death came to all, because all sinned—14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of ADAM... 15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of Adam, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, JESUS CHRIST overflow to the many! 16 Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of ADAM, death reigned through HIM how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, JESUS CHRIST! 18 Consequently, just as the result of ADAM'S trespass was condemnation for all, so also the result of one act of JESUS' righteousness was justification that brings life for all. 19 For just as through the disobedience of ADAM the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of JESUS the many will be made righteous. 20 ... But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

His Life For Ours

If we inherited the sin gene from the 1st Adam and all of its horrible consequences” “death, guilt, judgment, condemnation, and disobedience” then we inherit an “overflowing, increasing, abundant provision of grace, justification, righteousness, and eternal life” from the 2nd Adam. How? Imagine it this way. You are born into the dreaded era of the Black Plague. You grow up watching as your family and friends perish seemingly every other day. One day you wake up with the fever. You are horrified because you know that you will eventually die a slow, agonizing, and horrible death. Just as you are knocking at death’s door a person walks into your room which you don’t recognize. He invites you, “Touch me and my health will enter you and your sickness into me.” You’re not sure what to think but with zero options you grab his hand. In an instant, your fever breaks and you feel great. In that same instance, his body heaves in a fiery fever engulfs him. He staggers away leaving you totally healed.

Who Would Do That?

Now who would freely, even gladly, trade his life for yours? This is somewhat how the biblical writers describe Jesus as the vaccine or our CCR-5 Delta 32 Receptor. Catch the following:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; 5 He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Paul rightly reasons in Romans 5:7-8

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Imago Dei Restoration

We may not be able to choose the right parents but we can choose the right savior. If you got a better one than Jesus, I’ll switch! However, Christ’s work was not only to rescue us from the sin pandemic but also to restore the image of God in us. Don’t get me wrong, I’m glad he saved me from an eternity of torment but I want more. Much like when I got rear-ended the other week. Sure, I was glad I was “saved” from big-time injury but my truck was damaged and I wanted my baby restored back to its pre-wreck condition (ex. House on Fire).

Belief: Root of Restoration

As we said previously, sin damages the image of God in us. So we need that image restored back to its pre-sin conditions of goodness and beauty, honor and worth. How does that happen? If unbelief is the root of sin then it stands to reason that belief is the root of restoration. If an unbelieving heart turns us away FROM the living God then a believing heart turns us TO the living God. And when we turn to the Living God he restores our hearts of stone (unbelief) into hearts of faith and faithfulness (belief - Ezekiel 36:26, Jeremiah 24:7). We then begin to totally trust him for everything we need today and a totally happy future tomorrow in Him. The promise of restoration of the image of God in us prompted Paul to declare in II Corinthians 5:17

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Conclusion

After four horror-like centuries the Bubonic Plague cutdown Europe's population from 475 million down to 375 million (-100 million). It took almost 150 years for Europe to restore its pre-plague population. How long does it take Jesus to restore the image of God in us? Give your life to him and find out.

God is restoring his image in us by conforming us to the image of Christ. It is through union with Christ that we are made like Him: For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29). God didn't begin a work in the Romans simply to abandon them in the midst of their present suffering."Paul is saying that God is the author of our salvation, from when we first received him as Savior and throughout our entire Christian life. We are not to think that God can take action only when we graciously give him permission." (Morris). However, our participation in this eternal plan is essential, reflected in its goal: that we might be conformed to the image of his son. This is a process that God does with our cooperation, not something He just "does" to us. "that he might be the firstborn born of many brethren." This is the reason for God's plan. He adopts us into His family (Romans 8:15) for the purpose of making us like Jesus Christ, similar to Him in the perfection of His humanity. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:49). "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). This occurs when we have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator (Colossians 3:9-10).

" For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," He then says, "And THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE." (Hebrews 10:14-17; Jeremiah 31:33).