

Delightful Discoveries in Prayer

Prayer Lessons in Creation

From material by Glenn & Ethyl Coon

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 11: Creation of Man from Dust

Isn't it amazing, how God is so mighty and powerful to make a universe, yet is concerned with this speck of a planet? And then He is interested in man himself, who is infinitesimal in this one world!"

In Psalm 8, verses 3 and 4 we read: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

CREATION STORY

The whole story of the creation of man is found in Genesis 1:26 to 31, and Genesis 2:1 to 7.

Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 2:7 tell us: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." It is almost a paradox, man is made of dust, and yet in the likeness of God. After man sinned, God said he would go back to dust: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19 (last part).

DUSTY ABRAHAM:

In Genesis 18:27. We see the story of how Abraham pled with God to save any righteous persons from the coming fire that was going to destroy the city of Sodom, where Lot and his family lived. "And Abraham answered and said [to the Lord], Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." There is a dust and ashes prayer.

"God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt." Genesis 19:29.

Did the fact that Abraham humbled himself, and admitted he was but dust, have anything to do with his prayer being answered?

DUSTY JOB, TOO:

Let's look in Job 42:6.

Most have heard of Job's experience; how these professed friends brought charges against him. Job stood up to them, and let them know that he was not guilty of any of their charges. Then later, Job humbled himself, and began to pray for the men he had argued with. Even though he was innocent of their charges, he should not have been retaliatory. At the end, the Lord Himself gave Job a pretty good lecture to help him to realize that he was but a man!

Job changed his attitude, and prayed to God: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Then in the 10th verse it says: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."

Prayer Lessons in Creation

It would seem as if there is some connection between a person's being humble—even to admitting that he is composed of dust—that causes God to hear and answer his prayer.

MORDECAI AND HAMAN:

Here is a text with the word ashes in it. It is found in that fascinating story of how Haman planned to murder all of God's people. "When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry." Esther 4:1. God turned their threatened destruction, and Haman himself was hanged on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai.

We can see that there must be a connection between a man's humbling himself, and his receiving answers to prayer.

DANIEL THE PROPHET:

Here is another man praying in ashes; Daniel, that great prophet. He said, "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Daniel 9:3.

Later he received a wonderful prophecy of the coming Messiah; later on in the same chapter, an angel came to this praying man, and said, "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved." Verse 23. So there must be some wonderful relation between humble praying and being greatly loved of the Lord.

BOASTING versus HUMILITY

There is another amazing story in the Bible, about the king of Assyria, who came against a good king named Hezekiah.

It tells of how before Hezekiah, the good king, prayed, he was overcome by the king of Assyria. In the 2nd Book of Kings, chapter 18, verse 13, it says the wicked king took one fenced city after another that belonged to Judah, over whom Hezekiah was king. Then he came to capture the city of Jerusalem itself. It was then that Hezekiah, the good king, listened to this wicked king's boasting. From verse 14 on to the very end of the chapter, the Assyrian king boasted and ranted about what he had done in the past, plus what he would do in the future.

But the 19th chapter begins with Hezekiah covering himself with sackcloth. This was just old bags, or sacks they carried produce in. The officers of King Hezekiah did the same as he. In chapter 19, verse 2, the story goes on and tells how the king of Assyria boasted, and finally wrote Hezekiah a letter. It was terrible! He blasphemed God himself. Hezekiah spread the letter out before the Lord. He appealed to the Lord, saying, "Thou hast made heaven and earth" (verse 15). In deepest humility he begged the Lord to come to his rescue. (verse 19).

185,000 CORPSES

The prophet Isaiah sent a special message to King Hezekiah. In it he told of how all the pomp of the Assyrian king amounted to nothing in God's sight (verse 26). The Lord gave Hezekiah a promise that the Assyrian king would not enter the city of Jerusalem, or even shoot an arrow there (verse 2). And that very night God sent one angel from heaven who slew of the army of the Assyrians 185,000 (verse 35). Isn't that an amazing answer to a prayer of humility?

Hezekiah came to God saying that God was Maker of the heavens and the earth. Hezekiah is in the dust, owning his creatureliness. He acknowledges God as creator. And he claims a promise.

Prayer Lessons in Creation

After this wicked king fled back to his own land, he himself was slain by two of his own sons. 185,000 soldiers could not save this man! "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Psalm 118:9.

Isaiah declared in Isaiah 51:12 and 13, that every person is like grass: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually?"

When a man recognizes that he is like grass; that he is but dust, and that God is the Creator; then he can expect answers to prayer.

In our troubles we often go to some other human being for help. It is good to seek fellowship, and to ask others to pray for, and with us. But we should be careful not to put our trust in another person, as if he were able to solve our problem. The Bible says: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted?" Isaiah 2:22.

"For what is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James 4:14.

"If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." Job 34:14 and 15.

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:3 and 4.

In Isaiah 40:15, it says that the nations are "as the small dust of the balance." And in the same chapter where it says, "All flesh is grass, . . . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Verses 6 and 8. Man, without the Lord, is likened to grass, and to very fine dust.

The Hebrew word for the small dust in this text is the same word used in seven other places in the Bible, translated in our English language "sky". A man, or a whole nation, counted as smallest dust without the Lord, can be lifted up as a cloud, to the sky, with the Lord. So we are dust, lowly, earthly, without God. But in Christ we may be elevated heavenward.

In Isaiah 57:15 we are told: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

It is only for man to come to the place where he is ready to acknowledge the fact that he is dust, completely dependent on God. Then come to the Lord of creation. In Christ he becomes sky-high in God's sight. He will regain the likeness of God, as at creation. (See Genesis 1:26 and 1 John 3:1-3).

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever." Psalm 146:5 and 6.

"For with thee is the fountain of life." Psalm 36:9; and "When I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Corinthians 12:10.

So we see the reason why, when men have gotten down in sackcloth and ashes, in deepest humility, God has answered their prayers in a pronounced manner, many times when, humanly speaking the situation was impossible.

God wants to teach the children of men the simple fact of our creatureliness. When we come to Him, fulfilling the simple conditions to answered prayer, God will honor us. But we must face up to facts. One

Prayer Lessons in Creation

of the greatest facts is the utter weakness of man without his Maker. Then we accept the absolute omnipotence of our Creator. The human unites with the divine. It is then that a weak mortal can exclaim triumphantly: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13.

When the publican in Christ's parable, cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), he went down to his house justified. The Pharisee was well satisfied with himself, and received no blessing from the Lord.

In Isaiah 58:1-4 we are told that the people, even those who fasted, received no answers from God until they became humble, and performed a service of love for needy humanity. To pretend humility, does not deceive God. And for one to take on such an attitude, and yet point the finger of scorn, criticism, accusation, et cetera, at others, is unacceptable. But if we repent of this holier-than-thou attitude, God promises to guide us continually." (See verse 11.)

The Bible says: "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." Isaiah 40:17. Again we are told in 1 Corinthians 1:27 to 31 that God has chosen the foolish, weak, and base things of this world to confound the worldly wise "that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

The Lord, during the creation week said, "Let the earth bring forth grass." We have seen the ability of a spire of grass, filled with the creative word of God, to push up a clod of earth a thousand times its own weight! So we, though frail as the grass, can, by uniting our weakness to God's strength; our ignorance to God's wisdom; our unrighteousness to God's righteousness, say: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:13. And also, "With God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37.

In the book of Jonah, it is stated that even the vile Ninevites received pardon when they fasted in sackcloth and ashes. The way to have long arms reaching to the sky, is to fall on our knees and acknowledge that we are dust. Then He will respond to our appeal.

It is the inability of man to remember the truth of these Scriptures that causes him to almost hit the sky in eminence of spiritual leadership, and then suddenly to go back into the dust of ill repute. They appeared to be bright and shining lights, but find it impossible to adapt the lessons on humility to their own lives, their own families, or their own souls.

Man must recognize that without the Lord, he can do nothing. He must know that only when he is weak, then is he strong. Connected with Christ, the Source, all power is ours, Separated, we have no strength to push away the clods of earthly problems, cares, and temptations.

People everywhere need the quiet hour of communion with the Lord each morning. This hour with God is both needful and delightful. We have known of individual after individual who has received almost fantastic answers to prayer, to either partially or totally backslide within a matter of days, because they failed to take their hour a day with the Master.

Let nothing interfere with your hour of quiet, personal, communion with God, morning by morning. Without this daily experience of communion with our Maker, a character, otherwise beautiful, can break open at the seams, and leave a trail of mistakes to litter life's highway.

"I am the vine," Christ said, "ye are the branches." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "For without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5 and 4.

Prayer Lessons in Creation

Effective prayer, therefore, is epitomized in this great truth; man's total inability to have life without our Lord. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." John 5:12. Man of himself has no wisdom. It is then that Christ "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. Man of himself is a defeated son of the dust, but through Christ, we can reach the sky, and sit down with Him on His throne. He promises: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Revelation 3:21.

Dust can bear the image of God; or dust can produce a mere muddy hole into which people loathe to step. Even in our missionary work, this truth should be observed.

"The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ." The Desire of Ages, page 250.

In every emergency of life God waits for man's recognition of his creatureliness: then God longs to impart again His image, His likeness, His character: but God cannot do this until man faces God on the basis of facts--the fact of man's dust-ship and God's Creatorship. There is no way for man to reach heaven, except by long arms of a penitent on his knees.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Review Questions

1. Jesus was God, but came to earth; took on Himself the form of man, and humbled Himself. Are we taught to humble ourselves in the same spirit Christ did? Yes _____. No _____. 1 Peter 2:19-24.
2. Does God promise to dwell in the proud heart? _____ or the humble heart? _____. Isa. 57:15.
3. To what extent will God exalt us if we humble ourselves as we ought? "To him that _____ will I grant to sit with me in my _____." Rev. 3:21.
4. Should we be willing to have self crucified as Christ did? Yes _____. No _____. Gal. 2:20.
5. Even though Abraham "was called the Friend of God," when he humbled himself, calling himself "but dust and ashes," did God remember to grant him his request? Yes _____. No _____. Or did God tell him he did wrong in humbling himself? Yes _____. No _____. Gen. 18:27; Gen. 19:29.
6. When Hezekiah humbled himself before God, covering himself with sackcloth, how many enemy soldiers were slain by one angel in a single night? _____ 2 Kings 19:35.
7. Man was made in the likeness of God, but out of the _____ of the earth. Gen. 1:26; Gen. 2:7.
8. If we take the Lord Jesus into our hearts, can we know that there is hope for us? Yes _____. No _____. We shall "bear the _____ of the _____" 1 Cor. 15:49.

Answers found on answer sheet.