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The Law of Life

**A living stream connects all eras of human existence.
There's a hidden continuity that makes history make sense**
by James McBride

The course of history seems haphazard. Yet from a divine perspective man exists in five distinct - and connected - eras. We pass from *innocence to reason to Law to Christian liberty* - and, yet future, the earthly *reign of the Kingdom of God*. Underlying all is the same fundamental 'law of life'.

The Earliest Age

Human life began as a direct divine creation by the ever-living God. Mankind in all his complexity was created fully prepared and capable of controlling his environment. It was a time of innocence. The man and his wife were in perfect harmony with the Creator God, the Word - who had a close personal relationship with them. Along with the rest of creation '*God saw that all He had made was excellent indeed*'. Everything was in perfect harmony and environmentally balanced. Mankind, the pinnacle - and the purpose - of creation was 'perfect' and lived in harmony with the divine will.

Implicit in the divine instruction was the promise of unending life for our first parents. They had unfettered access to 'the Tree of Life'. Only by deliberate rejection - 'perfection' included freedom to choose - of God's revealed *Law of Life* would they taste death. There's no record of how long this 'innocence' lasted - some say a few hours, more likely a period of years - seven, says some Jewish tradition. But innocence came to an end.

Paradise Lost

By choosing to reject the *Law of Life* Adam and Eve, goaded by Satan, lost their paradise and condemned themselves to a life of unnecessary toil - over and beyond what God had assigned to them. Because they chose to discard divine guidance in favor of human reason God predicted the consequences: earning a living would be unnecessarily difficult; children, despite the joy they bring, would cause sorrow in their rearing; Satan would

continually try to make them stumble; no longer did they have direct access to the LORD - only through blood sacrifice. They had entered the era of *Reason*. Almost all mankind is there, still.

God, while retaining His Sovereign right to oversee His creation, left mankind to the consequence of his choices, while leaving on open door to Himself. As time rolled on the *Law of Life* was increasingly neglected. A few '*walked with God*', but after a mere sixteen centuries there was but one family - that of the patriarch Noah. Only Noah and his wife, sons and their wives walked in the divine pathway. But the pattern repeated. Over the next thousand years God had to intervene repeatedly to prevent human depravity leading to self-destruction - at Babel and at Sodom, the Amorites, the Egyptians, the Canaanites. And still does on occasion.

Neglect of the *Law of Life* inevitably leads to destruction. - personally, nationally, globally. It's a lesson the modern world has yet to learn, for most of humanity still lives in that Age of Reason. Since Adam's choice of this way, the human race has a mind-set hostile to God. We can devise means to avoid the effects of gravity (*eg* the airplane) - but the *Law of Life* is a solid wall that cannot be breached without serious long and short-term damage. But it doesn't have to be that way.

A Beacon of Hope

In His mercy and compassion the Creator has throughout history provided for us a beacon of hope. Most of the race sank more deeply into the mire. But the light of divine truth was passed from generation to generation by men and women who resisted the pressures of society. They '*called on the name of the LORD*'. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Gideon, David, the Prophets, numerous nameless men and women - all carried the torch of the true faith in their generation.

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It's a matter of record that Abraham by faith '*...minded My voice, kept My charge, My orders, My rules and My laws*' (Genesis 26:5). Through the godly line of Abraham's firstborn, Isaac, God promised to raise up a model nation. Virtually overwhelmed by the heathen culture of their slave masters, his descendants - the children of Jacob-Israel - were spectacularly rescued (around 1500BC) in 'the exodus' from Egypt under the guidance of Moses.

The rest of the world continued their downward trek while Israel - the 'Twelve Tribes' - embraced a national Constitution which had the same *Law of Life* at its heart. Moses told the people: '*What great nation is there that possesses such righteous statutes and ordinances as this whole Law that I am setting before you?*' (Deuteronomy 4:8). Never since has any legal system surpassed it. As a model of good governance it ought, to be written into every national Constitution!

Fatal Flaw

Israel gladly embraced it. In a spectacular and emotional acceptance of the Covenant they called out: '*All that the LORD says we will do*'. Fine words - but God knew their hearts: '*O that there were such a heart in them*' He said to Moses, '*that they would fear [reverence] Me and keep all My commandments always that it might be well with them and their children for ever*' (Deuteronomy 5:29). Their adherence to the covenant - and its *Law of Life* - waxed and waned for a millennium. They had barely left Egypt when they slipped back into idolatry. It was a pattern to be repeated time and again. On the heels of idolatry came conflict - invasion by surrounding hostile nations. They then cried out to God for deliverance, and He heard.

But that wasn't God's fault. There was nothing wrong - and everything right - with His Law and Covenant. But: '*...finding fault with them [ie the people]*' (Hebrews 8:8). A covenant has two sides: 'I do this and you do that'. The people dropped the ball and brought on themselves invasion and ultimately exile.

Israel had become - and continues to be - indistinguishable from the surrounding nations who were '*without God*'. Only the Tribe of Judah retains its Israelite identity.

So, *innocence* died. Mankind in general set about devising its own way of life derived from human reason contrary to the divine *Law of Life*. God's model nation, Israel, incorporated that *Law* into its national Constitution but all too often set it aside with dire consequences. The stage was set for a new era.

Christian Liberty

The divine plan moved on, unchanged. Satan persuaded Eve - and Adam followed - that to ignore God's guidance

would be without consequence: '*you shall not surely die*', he told her. Disobey, but you can still live for ever. It's the ultimate lie that even now tangles mankind in its web. But God promised a champion who would '*bruise Satan's head*'. It's a blood-red thread that permeates all of history.

At the appropriate historical moment God stepped into our world in the person of Jesus. He lived as a man but without sin, being sacrificed for our sin at the hand of the religious and secular authorities.

The disciples were commissioned by Jesus to take his message to all the world - a task renewed generation by generation. But it is a tough message and few are ready to fully embrace it. Those who do and who remain faithful until death will be associated with Jesus in the next phase of his plan. [Request a reprint from the May/June issue of *New Horizons* of the article **God's Academy**]

In the age of *Law*, in the nation of Israel, the *Law of Life* was imposed as a legal system with just penalties administered with mercy by the Judiciary. Given human nature the 'Justice Department' of Israel's Government failed. As with all the faithful since Creation the *Law of Life* would now be imprinted in the human heart. Submission to it is not imposed by authority - secular or religious. On our willing change of spiritual direction and our baptism God implants His mind in us - the '*gift of the Holy Spirit*'. The Spirit prompts and energizes us - with our active co-operation - to submit to the divine will - to live by the same *Law of Life*.

Jesus, in the *Sermon on the Mount* (eg Matthew 5-7), made it clear that God's Law was not abolished but now pierces even to the human thoughts - no longer mere external obedience induced by penalties. As long as that Spirit dwells in us we are assured of eternal life. The degree to which we each voluntarily submit to the terms of the *Law of Life* determines our role in the Kingdom of God.

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Since mankind's beginning, then, this *Law of Life* has flowed through every age - a cleansing stream that can refresh every nation, every individual that drinks of it. God's Law - His instruction, His Manual for the conduct of life - is as vital to human well-being today as it has been since man first walked the Earth. Failure to heed it, failure to write it into national law, failure to voluntarily submit to its provisions will exclude us from God's richest temporal material and spiritual blessings.

At the heart of this Law lie the much maligned 'Ten Commandments'. All of its provisions may be traced scattered throughout the Bible - *before* Moses was handed them by God engraved in stone as the foundation

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document of Israel's Constitution. As wrote the apostle Paul: *'the law is holy, just and good...[and] spiritual'*

The story, however, doesn't end there. The God who instructed Adam, who taught and guided Abraham, who talked face-to-face with Moses, who became man to die for our sin and continues to walk in the midst of his church - this same will return to establish this Law over all mankind.

And yes - that same *Law of Life* will continue to be applied. How could it not when Jesus himself gave it such an accolade!

A New Beginning: God Reigns

A period of 'shock and awe' is predicted for modern Israel - both Houses. The survivors, however, will have a new beginning initially in what is today known as 'Palestine' - but a territory enlarged to extend from the Nile to the Euphrates.

The Prophets give further insight. Ezekiel, for example. He passes on God's message that the LORD will one day re-unite both Houses of Israel - separated since the time of Solomon's successor, Rehoboam: *'Observe. I am taking the children of Israel from among the nations whither they are gone, and will gather them from every quarter and bring them into their own land. One king shall be king over them all. They shall no longer be two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. Neither shall they defile themselves with their idols, their foul practices and all their other transgressions; for I will save them from all their sinful apostasies'* (ch 37:21-23).

But *change* is vital. There will, at long last, be perfect incorruptible Government, as the resurrected 'saints' reign alongside the Messiah. And the people, too, will be changed. Hear Jeremiah: *'See. The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah; not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant of Mine they broke, although I was a husband to them'* (ch 30:31-32).

God 'married' Israel but, because of their infidelity, 'divorced' them. But He will re-marry! The first marriage covenant (Exodus 19-23) clearly demonstrated that man's - and not just Israel's - innate hostility to his Creator hindered sustained submission to the terms of the covenant, and cut them off from its blessings.

In the 'new covenant': *'I will put My Law in their inward parts and upon their hearts will I write it'* (v.33). The *Law of Life* - just as with true Christians today and as with all God's faithful throughout the ages - will then be imprinted on the minds of all Israel and of all mankind.

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