

Broken Clay Babies©

Genesis 2:1-3:8; 2 Cor. 5:1-5

September 18, 2011

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More Creation Humor: Adam and Eve had an ideal marriage. He didn't have to hear about all the men she could have married, and she didn't have to hear about the way his mother cooked.

My Old Testament professor, Dr. Elizabeth Platt named this second chapter in Genesis the **Clay Baby Theology**. Dr. Platt is a very interesting professor, who is also an archeologist who takes students on digs in the Middle East in the summer time.

She painted this image in her class of God, the creator, walking along the riverbanks and thinking, visioning humans who would be in his image. Finally, he kneels down and carefully, methodically, he scoops up handfuls of earthen clay and he begins to shape and mold and design this human ... this *A'dam* ... which of course, is the Hebrew word for *human* and is the English word we call *Adam*.

However, the first Adam, if we use this original Hebrew word ... *A'dam* means human, not male. It has no gender, it is simply a person. It is the same thing as when we say the word *man*, but mean both genders.

So, God the Potter forms and shapes and molds this human into perfection, into God's vision, God's image. Perhaps we can imagine then, God standing back and looking lovingly at this creation and smiling ... completely filled with satisfaction and joy at what he has done.

And then God does something that will start the beginning of an ageless relationship, of an ongoing cause for joy and surely for frustration for the Creator. God takes this clay *A'dam* and begins breathing God's own breath of life into the nostrils of his creation.

Suddenly the eyes have light in them, they flutter and have sight. The shapes takes on skin and blood and bones and organs ... it wiggles it toes and shakes it head and moves its arms. Most important, the air keeps flowing ... in and out ... in and out of its lungs. It has taken on a life of it's own.

I imagine this clay baby reaching up to its maker and smiling and taking in all the love that is pouring into it. Life! The beginning of humanity, of breath and senses, of hearts and love and emotions, of thinking and hoping and dreaming. Life in all its best perfection and glory ... life in perfect relationship with God.

But God saw that the *A'dam* was lonely, even after creating all the other things ... the garden, the animals, all living creatures that was under dominion of the human ... still there was something missing.

And so, this loving Creator caused the *A'dam* to go into a deep sleep and took a rib and from this rib created another human ... now they were different, ... they were male and female ... in Hebrew they were *ish* and *isha*.

And God their creator put them in the garden that he had made for them and gave them life and all that was there. Only one warning did God give to his human creation. To leave alone the tree of knowledge. *'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'*

A simple request that was for their own good. Be obedient, so you may live! Everything is yours, including a closeness to me, God said.

But here was the downfall of *ish* and *isha*. Here we find the beginnings of separation and death. Here we see the life God gave become less than what was intended ... harder than God's original vision.

This story has been the major one used the by the church for generations. It is in this story, usually labeled as "The Fall" that our doctrine of sin has come from.

Some doctrines say that because of Adam and Eve and their giving in to temptation, that original sin has tainted humankind, is passed on from generation to generation.

Most scholars do not take this story as a literal account of the very first humans or the very beginning of sin. They do believe it is a faith story of how God is the creator of humankind and how God asked for obedience, but humans did not obey. That disobedience started a separation that set us on the path to destruction and death.

Certainly, to be separated from God in any way, is death for us. God is, after all, the very lifeline, the very cause of breath that we breathe. Whenever and however humans first sinned, we turned away from perfection and started towards disintegration.

This may be known as the first story of sin for humans, but I think it is much more than that. It is the first story of how God, who is just and righteous, is true to his word. People die when they are separated from their Creator. And we, who are sinners, are dying ... withering away, losing that breath of life every day.

Except for the other part of God ... the great compassion, the unconditional love, the grace that is so much a part of this God who desires to have reconciliation and forgiveness and renewal for his children.

God sees his broken clay babies and he cares for each and every one. He is able to reach out and mend the cracks where life seeps out. He is able to pick them back up and breathe again new life into each one.

We see in all the Bible stories after this one, this just, righteous, omnipotent, caring, compassionate, forgiving God at work in the lives of his creation, never giving up on the covenant he makes with them ... a promise that he will be God and they will be his people.

Finally, of course, that promise is fulfilled in the one human who was without sin ... God's only Son, Jesus Christ. The cross for us holds everything we need for life ... it has our sin, our disobedience, our unfaithful hearts, our death, all there in our Savior, nailed in our place.

Yes, we will still face death. We cannot avoid that fact as sinful humans. But our story today ... the story that speaks of the beginning of our sinful nature ... also speaks of God who will not, who *cannot* let us go. We are his broken clay babies, and these bodies *will* return to dust someday. But that is not the end.

The Apostle Paul says it well in his letter to the Corinthians, which is our memory verse for this week:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

I like the way Peterson puts that passage from the Message:

¹⁻⁵For instance, we know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven — God-made, not handmade — and we'll never have to relocate our "tents" again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move—and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less.

We may be broken, but we are being mended every day ... changed from glory into glory ... to breath that breath of life and to give life to others, until the day that someone says about *us* ... ashes to ashes and dust to dust. Finally, on that day, we will truly be completely mended and given new life for eternity ... a life without pain or sickness or death anymore.

Thank God for all creation and for his grace shown to us in his Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.