



I Will Heal Their Apostasy

In the Greek myth, Sisyphus was cursed to roll a boulder up a steep incline, only to have it slip and roll back to the bottom—an eternal struggle against "backsliding." Often it seems like we are in the same predicament in our struggle against sin. We think we are making progress, then we examine ourselves and are stunned and disheartened to see how much ground we have lost. The trick, of course, is to stop the slide early. The hazard of climbing an icy slope is not in the first inch of regression, or the first foot or yard—it is the cumulative effect that leaves us crushed and broken at the bottom.

"The bottom" is exactly where Israel had reached in Hosea's day. The most poetic of the "minor prophets" sings a dirge for his nation, telling the Northern Kingdom of its pending destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. For 13 chapters Hosea compares the nation's downfall to his own marriage to the adulterous Gomer. But chapter 3 tells us that Hosea took Gomer back, and chapter 14 tells us an even more remarkable fact: God would take His "bride" back as well if only she would return. He says in verse 4, "I will heal their apostasy" ("backsliding" in the King James Version). Our backsliding need not be permanent either, if we would just remember whence we have fallen.

"I will heal their apostasy." The Bible could hardly be more clear regarding the possibility of backsliding. And this is not just a deterioration of service in His cause; it is an abandonment of exalted status. Galatians 5:4 tells us some of Paul's readers were "severed from Christ" and "fallen from grace." Simon was saved along with many other Samaritans, yet Peter found him "in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity" (Acts 8:23). "Once saved, always saved" may seem comforting, but it imperils the souls who take refuge in it.

"I will heal their apostasy." Famous last words: "It can't happen to me." Israel thought they could have Jehovah "split time" with the idols of their neighbors and still be His people. Consequently God calls them "a cake not turned"



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WORSHIP TIMES

Sunday Worship:

9:30 AM - Sermon
10:30 AM - Bible Class
11:30 AM - Lord's Supper

Wednesday Worship:
7:00 PM - All ages

Friday Bible Study:
10:15 AM @ Annex

Bible Class Topics:

Selected Psalms
Prison Epistles
Apologetics
Children: Sacred Hearts
Check with deacons for workbooks

Shepherds

Amos Rowe
Roger James
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Feel free to stop by the preachers' offices for Bible studies, prayers, talks, or a meeting.

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("half-baked," if you will) in Hosea 7:8. Just because we know better than our neighbors doesn't necessarily mean we will always behave better. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

"I will heal their apostasy." Healing first implies illness. I have no problem calling alcoholism, drug addiction and homosexuality "illnesses" if they are considered this kind of illness—illness of conscious choice. The Israelites were not apostate because they were "born that way" or because of some irresistible impulse, but rather because they abandoned God. They made themselves sick. But healing also implies the possibility of change. Thanks be to God we do not have to remain in a sinful state. Through Jesus we have a remedy for the sin that ails us.

"I will heal their apostasy." It is so easy for us to wallow, to assume we have fallen so far that surely

we must be beyond redemption. But often we must reach the bottom before we start back up again. Few have sinned as spectacularly as David; yet he wrote in Psalm 32:5: 'I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.' God has His loving arms ever extended, awaiting the prodigal's return.

"I will heal their apostasy." It is easy to give ourselves the credit when we find our lives back in order. But we must remember that no amount of good deeds can remove our sins. We must trust Him to heal us just as Naaman trusted Elisha—no matter what He may require of us. Thankfully, "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). He only asks us to "do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). If we can manage that, we can truly sing, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done!" - Hal Hammons

Lilith... The First Wife of Adam?

The first chapters of the book of Genesis give us a "play by play" analysis of many of the main events in the creation of the Universe. The text explains that God created everything in the Universe in six, literal days. Included in His "very good" creation (Genesis 1:31) was the formation of the first man—Adam. After God breathed life into his nostrils, the Bible states that God did not want man to be alone, and so the Creator brought into existence a helper comparable to Adam. The Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and He fashioned Eve from one of the man's ribs. This well-known narrative is often one of the first Bible stories children learn.

Over the years, some people have questioned the legitimacy of the story of the first two people on Earth. They have suggested that Eve was not Adam's first wife. Uninspired Jewish folklore says that a woman by the name of Lilith was Adam's first wife instead of Eve. The text known as *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* narrates the mythical story of Lilith, explaining that God originally created her out of the ground just as He created Adam. But when Adam explained to her that he was to be the leader and head of the relationship, Lilith flew away from him. Adam then proceeded to report the incident to God. God sent three angels to retrieve her, and she refused to return



(*Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 2015). [NOTE: The date of this work is unknown, but scholars generally agree it was written some time in the middle ages around 1000-1300 A.D. see "Alphabet of Ben Sira," 2008].

When the Lilith legend is evaluated closer, however, it becomes obvious that the story is a fabricated myth unsupported by historical fact. It is impossible to nail down when the myth started. Her name derives from a Sumerian word that means "female demons" or "wind spirits." Lilith's roots can be **roughly** traced back to Babylonian demonology, where she is said to have terrorized pregnant women and preyed upon infants, but even that is uncertain. Feminists in today's society often praise her for attempting to break free from the shackles of Adam's rule in the Garden of Eden. In most expressions of her myth, she represents seduction, chaos, and ungodliness (Gaines, 2014). There is no historical proof that Lilith existed on the Earth, much less that she was Adam's first wife who God formed in the beginning.

THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED AND ACCURATE

In order to validate the claim that the Lilith myth is true, adherents insist that Genesis chapters one and two are separate Creation accounts. God supposedly created Lilith from dust at the same time as Adam in one Creation account, and Eve was formed from his rib as the Bible describes in the other. When the words of Genesis are surveyed in greater detail, this claim cannot be reasonably maintained. There are not two different accounts of Creation in Genesis one and two (**Jackson**, 1991). Genesis two simply provides more details regarding the Creation account of chapter one. Genesis one and two form a perfectly complimentary account of the same events. The biblical text specifically mentions Eve as Adam's wife and states that she is the "mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). Just as conspicuously, the text does not mention any other wife, nor does it mention other mythological female demons or gods such as Ashteroth, Hera, Ishtar, or Lamia. To artificially insert such a character into the text would be disingenuous and misguided.

When the words of the Bible are evaluated, they have been proven to be factually accurate. The historical facts, archaeological finds, and written records of famous historians "live to tell the tale." Not only have

people such as John the Baptizer and King David been shown to be real, historical figures, but also countless narratives in the Bible have proven to be historically true. In fact, nothing in secular history has ever been shown to be factually true that disproves anything in the 66 books of the Bible. That fact, coupled with numerous other evidences, proves these books to be accurate and inspired (**Butt**, 2007). Since the Lilith story contradicts the biblical account of Creation, and since we can know that the biblical account is accurate and inspired, then we can conclude that the Lilith myth cannot be true and must be understood to be a myth fabricated over time from human imagination.

CONCLUSION

Does the myth of Lilith match up with the biblical record? Despite the beliefs and personal opinions of some, it does not. There is only one account of creation in the Bible, and the name Lilith is not found in the Creation account. Her name is associated with myths, folktales, and demonology that is based on superstition and imagination, not historical events. The Bible's account of creation has passed every test of scrutiny and has proven itself to be historically accurate and divinely inspired. Any person or group of people can make up a story, but God's Word has stood the test of time, and it remains the standard. - Harrison Chastain

References:

- "Alphabet of Ben Sira," (2008), *Encyclopedia Judaica*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_02541.html.
- Alphabet of Ben Sira*, (2015), <http://jwa.org/media/alphabet-of-ben-sira-78-lilith>.
- Butt, Kyle (2007), *Behold! The Word of God*, Apologetics Press, https://www.apologeticspress.org/pdfs/e-books_pdf/Behold%20the%20Word%20of%20God.pdf.
- Gaines, Janet Howe (2014), "Lilith: Seductress, Heroine, or Murderer?" *Bible Archaeology*, <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/lilith/>.
- Jackson, Wayne (1991), "Are There Two Creation Accounts in Genesis?" *Apologetics Press*, <https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=127&article=1131>.

Member News and Prayer Requests

- **Linda Carter:** Linda's elbow is healing great. Her wrist seems sprained, and she will treat it as such. Pray for healing.
- **Greg Dotson:** Mr. Dotson had a second surgery to drain his left arm. He expects a long recovery from sepsis and cellulitis on his left arm. The entire family appreciates our prayers.
- **Carol Horne:** Sister Horne is better. She appreciates our prayers. Don has been staying in with her on Sunday's and Wednesday's and live-streaming all services.
- **Mary McLane:** Sister Mary has recovered from COVID. Thank you for the prayers.
- **Rogers Family:** Wayne and Linda were at services recently. It's such a joy to see their faces at church. Please remember this family in your prayers as they deal with multiple health issues. Not only for their physical health, but to keep their faith strong. Let's do our part in encouraging. Janet Ethridge had a surgical procedure on February surgeon determined she still has an infection in the target area. Her vitals were off the charts. She was in a lot of pain and was sent home. Please continue to pray for her.
- **Janet Ethridge:** Janet was able to be at services this week. Her reconstruction surgery was postponed because of an infection. She is on another round of antibiotics and will see her doctor again on the 17th. Her chemo was also postponed until the infection is cleared up. She is very thankful for the prayers, cards, and food.

Text:
Michael Morgan
*Psalter for Christian
Worship, 1999*

Sing to God, That All May Hear You! Psalm 30

Music:
Greg Scheer
2007

1. Sing to God, that all may hear you! God, whose arms can lift and save; By Thy
2. God, whose wrath we more than mer - it; God, whose grace we can - not earn; When the
3. Change our sor - row to re - joic - ing, Clothe with glad - ness all des - pair; Cause - un -

heal - ing touch, re - vive us, Life re - store be - yond the grave, Praise we now our sure sal -
pride of hu - man na - ture From Thy way tempts us to turn; Then we cry to Thee for
stead - y feet that stum - ble Now to dance be - neath Thy care. Dry the tears we shed in

va - tion, God, the ho - ly One a - bove, End the night so dimmed by an - guish, With the
mer - cy, "Can the tomb re - peat Thy Praise?" Through Thy good - ness, yet re - deem us, Make us
mourn - ing, Give us stead - fast hope al - ways; Fill our hearts with ex - pec - ta - tion, And our

sun - rise of Thy love. End the night so dimmed by an - guish, With the sun - rise of your love.
faith - ful all our days. Through Thy good - ness, yet re - deem us, Make us faith - ful all our days.
songs with thanks and praise. Fill our hearts with ex - pec - ta - tion, And our songs with thanks and praise.

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GOSPEL MEETING

A Series of Lessons
Today's Questions and
God's Answers

Sunday 9:30 am

"Take Up Your Cross"

We've heard this, but what
does it mean in practical terms?

Sunday 5:00 pm

The Birth of 3000 Babies

Where can you read about
the beginning of the
church in the Bible?

Monday 7:00 pm

Lights in the World

How can we become blameless
and harmless in today's dark world?

Tuesday 7:00 pm

Things They Don't Teach in School

What three things should be taught
in every home?

Wednesday 7:00 pm

Forgive Each Other

What does it mean to forgive?
"If you want to be forgiven, you
must forgive."

MARCH 5-8, 2023



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