

## The Cycles of Life, Physical and Spiritual

Joella Pickup

In the Beginning, God created Light, Time, Air, Earth and Skies, Plants, Animals and Mankind. He created all things pertaining to each living being, such as male and female, that would allow for the reproduction of its kind, generation after generation. He created an environment for each, appropriate for its needs. (Please read the entire first chapter of Genesis at this point.)

The cycles of physical and spiritual life are basically the same: seed is planted; life within the seed begins to transform it to an infantile state. With the sustenance provided by its environment, growth toward maturity occurs. Upon reaching the ability to propagate, it produces seed of its kind. Normal growth depends upon an accompanying, healthy environment to satisfy its needs. If deleterious influences poison or affect that cycle at any time, that life will be stunted, unable to reproduce and ultimately die. See Matthew 13:1-8.

God did not create the world with all its creatures and their habitations because He needed something to keep Himself occupied. He created these things for His Glory, which consists of His Love and Purity. Mankind is His prime creation. He gave humanity a special gift—that divine spark of an eternal spirit that cannot die. Plants and animals were not given such a blessed gift, because our world is only temporary and will someday be done away. God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness—and let them have dominion over all the earth."

That divine "spark" also allowed for voluntary choice, power over the environment and the ability to process thought. But, as they say, "Aye, there's the rub." God knew that man's choices could be obedience to His commandments, or in defiance of His commandments. So God sent His Son, Jesus, to be born of Mary, a virgin, to grow up as a man, sinless, and with miraculous power to prove He was the Son of God. Jesus preached the Way of Salvation, but those in power did

not believe Him. They put Him to death in the most horrible way—crucifixion. God put upon Him all the sins of all people, ancient, present and future. Jesus died in our stead crying the sinner's wail, "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

There is great reward for God's faithful followers at the end of mankind's earthly habitation. The faithless sinner has hell-fire as his "reward" along with Satan, himself, consigned to everlasting punishment for his rebellion (John 5:17-29). I can imagine Satan howling with evil glee at the prospect of capturing the Holy Son of God at His death. However, God foiled that old serpent, Satan, and caught the Spirit of

our Lord Jesus and sat Him on a throne of honor at the right hand of God. Thus, Satan was defeated. Satan still roams the earth seeking whom he may devour. At God's set time of Judgment, all of Creation will vanish away. Righteous man will go to Heaven and the unrighteous will go to Hell.

Since the time of the Garden of Eden, man has always tried to "whittle on God's end of the stick." (Quote from Robert Turner, wonderful old friend and preacher.) Because they sinned, Adam and Eve lost their earthly paradise. Don Truex once said in a sermon: "Sin takes us farther than we want to go—Keeps us longer than we want to stay—and costs us more than we want to pay." (Anonymous?) See 1 Timothy 1:15-20.

I marvel that even before the death of all the apostles of Jesus, the church was already beset with false teachers and infidelity of its people who held the Truth in unrighteousness. Look around you at all the "churches" whose people claim to be right with God. Let us, for eternity's sake, make our "calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:2-11.) Let us pray that none of us will be spiritually stunted or broken at Judgment, but will hear God welcome us into His Presence with our faith intact.

God bless us all, dear friends.

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# Will You Be My Valentine?

Ray Hinds

Many millions of dollars have been spent and are being spent today as tradition dictates the celebration of Saint Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14, 2010. But as Christians, we must not accept this celebration as a part of our religious heritage. It comes from a combination of early pagan worship of the gods and goddesses of love, ancient Greek and Roman lore, and a plethora of misguided religious sacraments from the early Catholic honoring of man in the place of God, the Creator.

## Valentine's Day History

There are varying opinions as to the origin of Valentine's Day. Some experts state that it originated from St. Valentine, a Roman who was martyred for refusing to give up Christianity. He died on February 14, 269 A.D., the same day that had been devoted to love lotteries. Legend also says that St. Valentine left a farewell note for the jailer's daughter, who had become his friend, and signed it "From Your Valentine". Other aspects of the story say that Saint Valentine served as a priest at the temple during the reign of Emperor Claudius. Claudius then had Valentine jailed for defying him. In 496 A.D. Pope Gelasius set aside February 14 to honor St. Valentine.

## The History of Valentine's Day

Some say that Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage.

The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate. However, one of the customs of the young people was name drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. Claudius the Cruel was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was that Roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, Claudius cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome. The good Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples, and for this kind deed Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and to have

his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270. At that time it was the custom in Rome, a very ancient custom, indeed, to celebrate in the month of February the Lupercalia, feasts in honor of a heathen god. On these occasions, amidst a variety of pagan ceremonies, the names of young women were placed in a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed. The early Catholic Church in Rome endeavored to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those of maidens. So it seems that the tradition of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or "saints" as patrons for the coming year, arose in this way.

Gradually, February 14 became the date for exchanging love messages and St. Valentine became the patron saint of lovers. The date was marked by sending poems and simple gifts such as flowers. There was often an added social gathering.

In the United States, Miss Esther Howland is given credit for sending the first valentine cards. Commercial valentines were introduced in the 1800's and now the date is very commercialized. The town of Loveland, Colorado, does a large post office business around February 14. The spirit of good continues as valentines are sent out with sentimental verses and children exchange valentine cards at school.

## Conclusion

Let us view this pagan celebration with eyebrows raised! Young children learn from the actions of their parents, who, meaning well, many times thrust upon them foolish practices whose sources are suspect at best. Titus 2:3-5 explains that "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." [WWW](http://www.)

