

## 7. GENESIS ... BACK TO THE BEGINNING: THE RIPPLE EFFECT

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**“Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” (Genesis 3: 11).**

**D**uring my boyhood years I kept a few homing pigeons, as did my closest school friend, Graham. The weekends were way too long for us to go without playing together, so we had the bright idea of exchanging our pigeons for the weekend.

I would write little notes and strap them to the legs of Graham’s pigeons, and he would do the same from his end with my pigeons.

This, of course, was our form of text messaging long before mobile phones! Our little interactive notes would arrive *via airmail* over the weekends! How wonderful to keep in close touch this way. All possible of course, because our couriers had a powerful innate desire to wing their way home to roost in their own nests.

It seems to me that the Creator has not only built this scientific marvel which I liken to a “beeping beacon” into the brains of a pigeon, but that He has also built into our human hearts two powerful desires --- much like “beeping beacons” always urging us towards home.

The first “beeping beacon” is our craving for a significant relationship with the God of heaven and earth. There beats in every human breast an insatiable desire for meaning in God’s cosmos. God has put that drive into our hearts. He is always calling us home to His love and life.

The second “beeping beacon” is our need for human love, and particularly from the opposite sex. Unfortunately, when Adam & Eve ate the forbidden fruit both of these created drives were whacked out of kilter. In a moment of time Adam & Eve fell and lost their way --- and dragged all their future descendants down with them.

### THE MOMENT THAT FOREVER CHANGED OUR WORLD

**I** am sure we have all done something in our lives which at the time seemed so trivial, so insignificant, and yet now, many years later, we are still reaping either the good or the bad results? I certainly have.

A single moment in time can cast its blessing or its shadow over a lifetime! It’s the old story about throwing a rock in the pond and the ripple-effect rolling out over the water in ever widening circles all the way to the shore. But will we, can we, find our way back home?

Listening to the enthralling offer from the Serpent, Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, and she took some and ate it (3: 6). Just a piece of fruit, right?

Having taken just a bite or two, and feeling that nothing much had happened --- the sky hadn't caved in! --- Eve gestured to Adam to taste, "Come on my darling, join me!"

The New Testament adds a vital piece of information at this point; Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived ... (1 Tim. 2: 14). And, Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning ... (2 Cor. 11: 3). Eve was hooked, trapped, snared, completely fooled by the serpent's cunning. But not Adam. He went in eyes wide open.

One of the severest temptations any husband or wife will ever face in their Christian lives is to put their partner above the clear commandments of God just to "keep the peace". If a husband or wife should pursue something against the revealed word of God, it's going to take a lot of prayer and a lot of wisdom for their partner to obey God rather than men (Cf Acts 4: 19). Of course, it goes without saying that we are talking about the revealed word of God, and not just some personal preference we might think is of God.

## ADAM'S BATTLE

I cannot imagine the battle going on inside Adam when his darling wife, whom God Himself had given for his highest joys in life, stepped outside the revealed will of God. Would he lose her if he didn't join her? Would he once again be *alone*?

I imagine there was not a little panic in his decision. He couldn't bear the possibility of that thought. Many have faced similar heart-wrenching choices down through the ages. Many have compromised and lost their souls to God, when choosing man's favour instead of God's approval.

The first and inviolable commandment is that we are to love the LORD our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. And only then are we able to properly love our neighbour as ourselves. That's the divine order (*double entendre* intended!).

Our Lord Jesus put it this way; "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters --- yes, even his own life --- he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14: 26-27)?

Adam made his fateful choice. He would rather keep his beloved wife and lose God, than keep God and lose his wife.

I receive correspondence from people around the globe who have been shunned by their own flesh and blood because they decided they could not, would not, compromise over the truth and the call that God is asking. But oh, it's dreadfully painful! It would

be easier to face a firing squad than the rejection of a precious loved one day after day, year after year!

But of course, Adam was forgetting that God is good. Adam did not imagine, it seems, that God is able to restore that which we have surrendered to Him a hundredfold over. Adam was soon to learn that God is a redeeming God!

No sooner had he partaken of the forbidden fruit, than the proverbial rock was already hitting the pond. The ripple-effects which would change the entire course of human history were set in motion, irreversibly. Those ripples have now, at last, reached the shores of our climactic generation!

Theologians call Adam & Eve's rebellion **The Fall**. It was a dreadful faceplant indeed. However, I personally prefer the term **The Rebellion** because it was Adam's disobedience that brought about the fall --- cause always comes before effect.

At that moment of sin against the commandment of the LORD God, Adam & Eve placed themselves under the curse of the cosmic rebellion which **the Serpent** had already enjoined. **The Serpent** became their new lord, and **the god of this world (2 Cor. 4: 4)**. The stone was cast. The ripples were loose, gathering pace. Soon they would become a tsunami rolling and crashing over everything in its wake.

## **GUILT BEFORE GOD**

**Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves (3: 7).**

That which had been their highest delight --- unhindered face-to-face fellowship with God --- now became their greatest dread. Sensing their guilt before the LORD, the couple tried to hide. Quick! Run! Shoosh! The LORD God is coming! Silence that "beeping beacon".

**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking ... and they hid themselves (3:8).**

The expression **the sound** (*qol*, can also mean "voice") of the LORD God occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and especially in the book of **Deuteronomy**. It expresses God's wish for His people to obey His **voice** so they might obtain His favour and blessings. <sup>(1)</sup>

In particular, note when the LORD appeared to Israel at **Mount Sinai**: The people **heard the sound of the LORD our God** and their response echoed what Adam & Eve had originally done in the garden ---they were **afraid** and **stayed at a distance and said ... "Do not have God speak to us or we will die" (Ex. 20: 18-19)!**

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Deut. 5:25; 8: 20; 13: 18; 15: 5; 18:16;26:14;27:10; 28:1,2,15,45,62; 30: 8,10.

The single key to a blessed life under heaven is to align oneself to **the sound** (“voice”) of **the LORD God**. And I can testify that there is no greater or higher joy in all of this world than to know you are hearing the voice of God!

## ORIGINAL SIN

It's impossible to talk about Adam's sin without referring to the age-old question of “original sin” --- the notion that all of Adam's progeny to this day have inherited the guilt of Adam's first sin, and indeed Adam's “sinful nature”.

It was **Tertullian** who blamed women as carriers of Eve's guilt. But it was the **Fifth Century Roman Catholic** theologian **Augustine of Hippo** who popularised the teaching that the contamination of Adam's sin is transmitted through male sperm, which one writer describes as **one of the great tragedies of theological history**. ( <sup>2</sup> )

The reason **Augustine's** doctrine was so disastrous is that it essentially canceled the previous Jewish and Christian teaching that human beings have free will and the power to choose to obey God. (You can see how this idea was only a hop-step-and-jump away from **John Calvin's** disastrous idea that men don't even have the capacity to hear God and repent!)

This reversal was offensive to many Christians at the time, and the controversy was so heated, **that riots took place in the streets of Rome in 417 CE between supporters and opponents of the doctrine of Original Sin**.

I wrote in ***They Never Told Me This in Church!*** that those who upheld the earlier belief that God had gifted men with the ability to make moral choices were soon condemned as heretics. And the view that the soul was self-governed would soon be defunct, and the Rabbinic tradition which saw humanity as made in the living image of the Universal King would fade away with many another shadow of Jewish influence. ( <sup>3</sup> )

This doctrine has come down to us today in the **Roman Catholic** practice of **infant baptism**. The idea that infants will perish outside the Church and her guarantee of salvation should they die before the age of accountability is totally abhorrent. The idea that any human baby is born with the guilt of Adam's disobedience is a departure from Scripture which teaches that the kingdom of heaven is composed of such innocents as the **little children** whom Jesus picked up to bless in his arms.

## SPIRITUAL DEATH?

The popular misconception that the expression, **dying, you shall die** means “spiritual death” or, “spiritual separation” from God needs re-evaluation.

As I read Scripture, what Adam has bequeathed to all his descendants is **mortality** --- the devitalizing process that robs mankind of the life and power of God which

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<sup>2</sup> **Robert W. Funk** *Honest to Jesus: Jesus For a New Millennium*, Sydney, Australia, Hodder & Stroughton, 1996, p203

<sup>3</sup> **Douglas Lockhart**, *Jesus the Heretic: Freedom and Bondage in a Religious World*, Melbourne, Australia: Element, 1997, pp 190

ultimately ends in physical death. The apostle Paul clearly states it is not sin but *death* which "spread to all men" (Rom. 5:12).

Adam was warned his disobedience would bring *death*. God said that **when you eat of it you will surely die** (Gen. 2: 17). The literal Hebrew reading is, **dying, you shall die**. It means that from the day you eat you are to know with certainty that you will surely die. ( <sup>4</sup> )

## THE DEVIL'S LIE --- WHEN DEATH IS NOT DEATH

Throughout this mini-series I have favourably quoted **Francis A. Schaeffer**. However, we come to a point in his commentary that I must, in the strongest of terms, entirely disagree with. **Schaeffer**, it seems to me, turns from his faithful adherence to the Scriptural revelation to date when he writes:

Watch a man as he dies. Five minutes later he still exists. There is no such thing as stopping the existence of man. He still goes on. He has not lost his being as a human being. He has not lost those things which he intrinsically is as a man. ( <sup>5</sup> )

*What???* Returning to dust does not **stop our existence**? Returning to ashes means you are still **intrinsically a man**? Dissolution means we have not **lost our being**? **Schaeffer** inexplicably takes the Devil's lie for his own --- "**You will not surely die**"!

## "DEATH IS YOUR BEST FRIEND"!

It reminds me of the time when the minister told our congregation, "Death is your best friend! Death is coming to take you by the hand and lead you straight up into the arms of God in heaven. One minute after you die you will be with the angels in heaven praising God and the Lamb! Oh, isn't death wonderful? We do not need to fear our best friend!"

*What???* Now ...

You may choose whom you wish to believe.

You may choose to believe **Schaeffer** and the popular narrative of the minister --- that death is your best friend and that five minutes after you die you will still consciously exist and that you are still living on. Or ...

You can believe God's word to Adam & Eve, "**You will certainly die!**"

You can believe the Bible, when it says that death is our **enemy**, and that you and I will surely be dust on the day we breathe our last.

You can believe we will stay asleep until the glorious day when the regal voice of our

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<sup>4</sup> The exact same Hebrew phrase occurs in such verses as **Gen. 20: 7; 26: 11; Ex. 19: 12; 2 Sam. 12: 14; 1 Kings 2: 37** where the obvious meaning is; know with certainty that you will die. The expression **dying you shall die** is a classic example of the literary feature called Hebrew parallelism.

<sup>5</sup> *Genesis in Space and Time*, IVP Ill., 1972, p101

Saviour Jesus shouts the resurrection call for his own and we shall awaken like **Lazarus** to come out of the tomb unto everlasting life in the Age to Come!

Those who wish to teach that death is “spiritual separation” from God have a hard time finding anywhere in the Bible where the word “death” is modified by the word “spiritual”.

Take for instance, where the apostle Paul discusses the very subject of the death which Adam introduced into the world in **Romans 5: 12-21**. There Paul uses the word “**death**” **five times** but he *never* modifies it with the adjective “spiritual”.

In fact, there are 120 times where the word “**death**” occurs in the NT and it is *never* said to be “spiritual death”. Death means literal, physical death --- the dissolution of the individual into “**dust**”. That’s what God Himself announced would be the certain outcome of rebellion in the garden. (<sup>6</sup>) He wasn’t kidding. He told us the truth.

Whilst Adam & Eve and their descendants did and do suffer a sense of alienation from guilt and fear, nevertheless, after their expulsion from the garden, mankind was still able to have a relationship with the LORD God. The very next chapter goes on to speak about **Abel** whom the NT describes as **righteous**. We also read that **at that time men began to call on the name of the LORD** (Gen. 4: 26).

We go on to read about great men of faith such as **Enoch** who **walked with God**, and of course, **Noah** who **was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God**. But we also go on to read that **all these were still living by faith when they died** (Heb. 11: 13). They had a vital relationship with God until the day they died!

What the apostle Paul argues in **Romans 5:2-14** is that death comes to all mankind **even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam’s offense**. His argument is **not** that each of us dies because of our own sin (though the Bible has many examples of the LORD bringing a premature death upon individuals for their own sins against heaven).

No. His argument is that death comes universally to everyone because of the sin of Adam. This is proven sadly, by the fact that babies, infants and children, who are not guilty before God for any sin, still die. I say again, we inherit the disease of mortality from Adam, not the guilt of his own sin or sinful nature.

Unfortunately, our English translations (such as **NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV**, etc.) mishandle that critical Pauline verse in **Romans 5: 12** by translating, **"and so death spread to all men, because all sinned ..."** The **KJV** renders it, **"and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."** The Roman Catholic Church and much of Christian “orthodoxy” so

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<sup>6</sup> Some may object that **I Timothy 5:6** says otherwise ; **But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives**. Surely this is “spiritual separation” from God during this life? Well, we do not deny that sin separates from God even during this life. However, the apostle is being very Hebrew in this thinking here. He is expressing that the person who lives for pleasure and sin with no regard for God is under the certain judgment of God --- unless they turn to Him in repentance, they will surely die, just as Adam & Eve did.



interpret. The corollary --- if they are right --- is that death does not come until men have sinned individually, hence the need to baptize infants.

The Greek however, reads "**on which**" (ἐφ ᾧ --- *eph ho*). This is to say that death is the channel through which sin is transmitted. The meaning surely is, "... **and so death spread to all men, because of which all sinned.**" Or, "...**and so death spread to all men, through which all sinned.**" ( <sup>7</sup> ) Mortality is the channel through which sin operates and derives its authority. Because of death's hold on us, sin gets its opportunity.

The other place where the apostle mentions the very same matter is in **1 Corinthians 15: 21-22**; **For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**

So, *sin is the by-product of our mortality*. We sin because of our inherited mortality from Adam. Being born mortal means we are born lacking the spiritual vitality necessary to live the abundant God-life. We are born without the power and purity of the life of God. We are all born outside the original garden, denied natural access to the tree of life.

This is why, often to our own shame, and against our own wills, we choose to sin against our best judgment and desires. We know what our consciences are asking, and we know what God requires, but we are weak because we are mortal.

As Adam's descendants we are born minus the life and power of God ... **that which is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6)**. Being mortal means we must receive God's life before we can escape the tyranny of a life of sin. This is where the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah brings a great contrast ... "**For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Messiah, abound to the many**" (Rom. 5:15).

Our union with Jesus not only promises the life of the Age to Come (eternal life) but enables us to experience *in the present* the life of his Spirit empowering us ... "**The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death**" (Rom. 8:2). The Gospel announcement is that **Christ Jesus has destroyed death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1: 10)**.

Christ Jesus mediates to us the life and energy of his Father *now*. His energising holy Spirit is the new power and motivation to live a life that is well-pleasing to God *today*. Once sin reigned through death; now righteousness reigns through grace!

The sad consequence of teaching "original inherited sin" means the "Church" has put its putative authority in her sacraments over and above the power of the Gospel --- failure to submit to the Church's sacrament of baptism and holy communion in their eyes means severance from the life of God! If only we had stuck to the Scriptural testimony

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<sup>7</sup> The phrase "**on which**" (ἐφ ᾧ --- *eph ho*) occurs in **2 Corinthians 5: 4** where it clearly means **because of which** we want to be clothed. Same for **Philippians 3: 12** --- **because of which** Christ Jesus took a hold of me.

that, in Adam we inherit mortality through which sin reigns, the story would be very different.

Only the Bible believer understands that the basic problem of humanity is that we are all born **alienated from God** in a state of enmity (Col. 1: 21).

Only the Bible believer learns that **we were dead in our transgression and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit which is now at work in those who are disobedient (Eph. 2: 1-2).**

Only the Bible believer knows that **whoever has the Son has life, and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (I John 5: 12).**

Through the Gospel of God's grace in Christ we receive the gift of life. We are **born again**, which is to say, **born from above**. We are **new creations** because God's Spirit enters our souls (2 Cor. 5: 17).. God's life, God's power, God's heart for holiness floods within! He opens His arms and we are home!

In the words of that beautiful old hymn,

O, what a wonderful, wonderful day, Day I will never forget,  
After I 'd wandered in darkness away, Jesus my saviour I met,  
O what a tender compassionate friend, He met the need of my heart,  
Shadows dispelling with joy I am telling, He made all the darkness depart.

Chorus;

Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!  
When at the cross my Saviour made me whole,  
My sins were washed away, and my night was turned to day,  
Heaven came down and glory filled my soul.

Born of the Spirit with life from above, Into God's family divine,  
Justified fully through Calvary's blood, O what a standing is mine;  
And the transaction so quickly was made, When as a sinner I came,  
Took of the offer His grace He did proffer, He saved me O praise his dear Name.

*The Ripple Effect* from that fateful day has gone on and on. Death has reigned supreme over all, and sin through that death. But in every heart of man and woman the beacon beeps on, calling us home.

Have you come back home? Back to your Creator God? Oh, if not, I pray you right now call on the Name of the Lord, for everyone who calls on His Name shall be saved!