

Major Bible Themes

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1871-1952

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ISBN: 0-310-22390-3

CHAPTER XXIV

MAN: HIS FALL

The student of the Scriptures should consider the estate of Adam (1) before the fall, and (2) after the fall, and (3) the effect upon the race of Adam's fall.

I. ADAM BEFORE THE FALL

In words of peculiar simplicity, the Bible introduces the first man and the woman whom God provided to be his helpmeet. These two were joined as one and in the divine consideration the unit is that which is formed by this union. Both the man and the woman sinned and fell, but this combined fall is referred to in the Bible as the fall of man. No calculations are possible as to the length of time in which the first man and first woman remained unfallen; but they remained unfallen long enough, it is evident, to become accustomed to the situation in which they were placed, to regard carefully and name the living creatures, and to have experienced fellowship with God. It is said that man as created, like all the works of God, was "very good"; that is, they were well pleasing to the Creator. This implies no more than that they were innocent, which is a

negative term and suggests that they had not committed sin. Holiness, which is the primary attribute of God, is a positive term and indicates that He is incapable of sinning.

While man was made in the image of God in respect to personality and spiritual capacity, he was and is a creature. And though the Creator, being holy, cannot sin, the creature, whether it be angel or man, is by the divine plan in creation made with the ability to sin. Among the angels, Satan sinned (Ezk. 28:15; Isa. 14:12-14), and many other angels sinned, of whom it is written that they "kept not their first estate" (Jude 1:6). We should also observe that, in reality, man did not originate sin; it was recommended by Satan and adopted by man (Gen. 3:4-7). By this action, the moral nature of man -- intellect, sensibilities, and will -- is manifested, and, hearing the voice of God, his conscience prompted him to hide from the divine presence. It is therefore clear that at the beginning man was in possession of these faculties as he is today.

II. ADAM AFTER THE FALL

By sinning, the first man lost his blessed estate as he was created and became subject to certain far-reaching changes:

1. He became subject to both spiritual and physical death. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17); and this divine declaration was fulfilled. Adam and Eve passed immediately into spiritual death, which means separation from God. In due time they also suffered the penalty of physical death, which means the separation of the soul from the body.
2. The very creation itself was changed by the sin of man. Briars and thorns were introduced, labor and sorrow were added, and the enjoyment of Eden was withdrawn.

III. THE EFFECT UPON THE RACE OF ADAM'S FALL

In contemplating the effect upon the race of Adam's sin, we are confronted with the doctrine of "Imputation," which is one of the most profound doctrines in the Scriptures. It is an advantage to consider this doctrine in general before any particular form of the imputation of sin is studied.

Three imputations are set forth in the Scriptures: (1) The sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity (Rom. 5:12-14); (2) the sin of man is imputed to Christ (2 Cor. 5:21); and, (3) the righteousness of God is imputed to those who believe (Gen. 15:6; Psa. 32:2; Rom. 3:22; 4:3, 8, 21-25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phm. 1:17, 18).

It is obvious that there was a judicial transfer of the sin of man to Christ the Sin-Bearer. Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:5; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). So, in like manner, there is a judicial transfer of the righteousness of God to the believer (2 Cor. 5:21); for there could be no other grounds of justification or acceptance with God. This imputation belongs to the new relationship within the New Creation. Being joined to the Lord by the baptism with the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:27), and vitally related to Christ as a member in His body (Eph. 5:30), it follows that every virtue of Christ is extended to those who have become an organic part of Him. The believer is "in Christ" and thus partakes of all that Christ is.

In like manner, the facts of the old creation are actually transferred to those who by natural generation are "in Adam." They become possessed of the Adamic nature and themselves are said to have sinned in him. This is as real in constituting a sufficient ground for divine judgment as the imputation of the righteousness of God in Christ is a sufficient ground for justification, and the result is the divine judgment upon the race whether they have sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression or not. Though men contend, as they do, that they are not responsible for Adam's sin, the divine revelation stands that because of the far-reaching effect of representation through the federal headship, Adam's one initial sin is immediately and directly imputed to each member of the race with the unvarying sentence of death resting upon all (Rom. 5:12-14). Likewise by the fall of Adam the effect of the one initial sin is transmuted in the form of a sin nature mediately, or by inheritance, from father to son throughout all generations. The effect of the fall is universal; so, also, the offer of divine grace.

Men do not now fall by their first sin; they are born fallen sons of Adam. They do not become sinful by sinning, but they sin because by nature they are sinful. No child needs to be taught to sin, but every child must be encouraged to be good.

It should be observed that, though the fall of Adam rests upon the race, there is evident divine provision for innocent infants and all who are irresponsible.

The holy judgments of God must rest upon all men out of Christ, (1) because of imputed sin, (2) because of an inherited sin nature, (3) because they are under sin, and (4) because of their own personal sins. Though these holy judgments of God cannot be diminished, the sinner may be saved from them through Christ. This is the good news of the gospel.

The penalty resting on the old creation is (1) physical death, which is separation of the soul from the body; (2) spiritual death, which (like Adam's) is the present estate of the lost and is the separation of the soul from God (Eph. 2:1; 4:18, 19); and (3) the second death, which is the eternal separation of the soul from God and banishment from His presence forever (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

QUESTIONS

1. Into what three-fold classification does the Bible teaching concerning Adam divide?
2. To what extent does God evidently consider the man and woman to be one?
3. a. What is implied by the words that man was created "very good"?
 - b. Contrast this estate with the holiness of God.
 - c. How is it that unfallen man can sin when God cannot?
4. What faculties did man as created evidently possess?
5. a. What effects immediately followed the fall?

- b. What is spiritual death?
 - c. What is physical death?
 - d. What was the effect upon creation?
6. Name the three acts of imputation as set forth in the Scriptures.
 7. What passages state the imputation of man's sin to Christ?
 8. To what extent and by what means is the merit of Christ imputed to the believer?
 9. Is it equally reasonable to believe that the demerit of Adam is imputed to his posterity?
 10. Since men are not responsible for their fallen natures, is it reasonable for them to seek God's provided remedy?
 11. Do men become sinners by sinning?
 12. Do you believe that God in grace has made provision for the salvation of innocent infants and the irresponsible?
 13. Why must divine judgment fall on all men out of Christ?
 14. Name the three kinds of death mentioned in the Scriptures.