



The Fall From Innocence

and its Message to the 21st Century Church

David Kovach

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by

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Introduction

God never intended corruption or sin to mar His creation. He never intended mankind to die. But this was necessitated by the deception of Eve and the disobedience of Adam, which led them into a sinful condition, something God could not allow to continue. The meticulous recording of the ages of the line of Seth and of the Patriarchs in Genesis is there to emphasize the dying of mankind, as forewarned by God to Adam (Gen 2:17). Much has been written on the fall of Adam and Eve into sin and with good reason: this cataclysmic occurrence affected all of mankind negatively and eternally. Each individual has to acknowledge the results of this event and decide whether to accept God's remedy for it or not. At stake is eternal enjoyment with God or eternal separation and suffering. Now because of the importance of this event and the many consequences of their sin, and also because of the divergent interpretations of Adam and Eve's individual actions during the serpent's temptation, and the questioning of whether Adam and Eve even existed – especially in recent years, this matter warrants another look.

This work will look at three questions related to the Fall of Adam and Eve:

1. The first issue one must wrestle with is why did God put a test of man's obedience in the Garden of Eden?
2. Secondly, why did God allow the devil to even enter the Garden? God made everything good; why allow the possibility of evil to enter it?
3. And thirdly, how can we properly understand God's judgments that resulted from Adam and Eve's sin and how that applies to us today?

We will also briefly discuss the serious implications of not believing in an historical Adam and Eve. God's word is truth, start to finish.

Chapter One: Why Test Man and Why is Satan There?

Question 1: Why did God put a test of man's obedience in the Garden of Eden?

The answer to the first question is partially answered in Jesus' life. Although He was without sin, Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered (Heb 5:8). Obedience implies trust and trust implies love (John 14:15; also Deut 7:9; 11:13, 22). Love, trust and obedience are inseparable. God is faithful and just and can be trusted for everything He says (John 17:17; 1 Thes 5:24; James 1:17; 1 John 1:9). As human beings, we are individual, eternal persons. And as individuals, we are individually accountable to God; we are not robots. We must decide whether we are going to have a loving, trusting relationship with God or not. Thus, when Adam and Eve were created, even though they were without sin, they had to make a conscious choice each day as to whether they would obey what their Creator had asked of them. Even without the devil's presence, Adam and Eve, as individual beings, had the capability of choosing to sin. Consider Satan, the first to sin (Isa 14:12-15). No one tempted him. He, on his own, made the decision to rebel against God. The fact that a being (God) can be good, that is of perfect moral excellence, means that the possibility of moral depravity must exist. If evil does not exist, then a grievous act like murder, which leaves the victim's loved ones in tears and agony, would not be considered wrong. And if there is no right or wrong, life loses all meaning and the individual loses his or her meaning and importance. Unfortunately, some people believe this. But most of us have not rejected the God-given innate knowledge that life does have meaning. And God has demonstrated just how important we are to Him by sending His own Son to an excruciating death on the cross so that we don't have to suffer judgment. He suffered the punishment for us. It is not His desire that we suffer or remain separated from Him (2 Pet 3:9). He wants all to be His children (1 Tim 2:4). Because of His love for us, we each have enormous worth.

Since love, trust and obedience are inseparable, our relationship with God grows through testing. The deepening of love comes through recurring obedience to the God we love. Adam and Eve had everything they needed. All God asked them to do was to avoid eating from one of the trees in the garden. By doing so, they would begin learning slowly, and step-by-step, the difference between good and evil under the love and direction of God. But enter Satan onto the scene. Love and patience are not in the character of Satan. Satan is filled with hatred of others and loves only himself. He is out to lie, cheat, deceive, and destroy us (1 Pet 5:8). He is impatience at the core of its meaning. He entered the Garden and spoke to Eve and tempted her. Little detail is given in Genesis 3:1-7. For example, where was Eve when the serpent began talking to her, near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or some distance away? Was she alone? Where was Adam? Was there more of a conversation than recorded here? We will discuss these questions below, but for now the key point is that the author of Genesis provides us with only the key ingredients to make sure that the reader understands that Adam and Eve's disobedience did occur, with the help of Satan, and that sin has entered into the world.

And that brings us to the second major question:

Question 2: Why is Satan in the Garden?

The answer to this question may not be fully understandable from our human viewpoint, but the Bible does provide some insight. As stated earlier, the devil wasn't required for the possibility of Adam and Eve to sin. But the fact that Satan was there in the Garden suggests a greater work of God than just the human factor.

Angels exist in God's creation and at some point in history some of the angels followed Satan in his sin (Matt 25:41; Rev 12:4). When mankind was made, He made them a little lower than the angels and yet He crowned them with glory and honor (being made in the image of God) and gave them dominion over the earth (Ps 8:4-6). Why was man given such honor? And, in a different setting, why was Satan almost goaded into causing pain and suffering on Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6)? Is it possible that God is wonderfully showing the principalities and powers in heaven (Satan and the angels, both good and bad) that love and faith triumph over greed, power and hatred? Is it possible that the angels existed before man was made? God's answer to Job seems to indicate this:

“Where were you when I laid the foundations for earth? ...
When the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

(Job 38:4, 7, ESV)

It appears from Scripture that angels existed before mankind was made. The term “sons of God” refer to created beings, angels in this particular case – later we will see that the term refers to humans. We also know that Satan rebelled against God and some of the angels followed after Satan. We know that they have had access to earth and that Satan is defined as “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2) and that he influences the minds of humans that have not been saved, “sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). At some point, Satan and his angels are limited only to earth (Rev 12:7-9). Scripture also tells us that Jesus came not only save mankind, but also to destroy the works and person of Satan.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.”

(Heb 2:14-16, ESV)

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

(1 John 3:8, ESV)

Part of God’s wisdom in making man a little lower than the angels may have been to show to the principalities and powers (Satan and his angels) that God can have other created beings, “sons of God,” children of faith in this case (e.g. John 1:12, Rom 8:14), that would be faithful to Him. Their relationship to God would be based on love for Him rather than on what they can get for themselves. Now when Satan sinned (as alluded to in Isaiah 14:12-15) and when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen 3:5-6), they wanted to be like God. But as one commentator on Isaiah put it:

“It is a strange paradox that nothing makes a being less like God than the urge to be his equal, for he who was God stepped down from the throne of his glory to display to the wondering eyes of men the humility of God (Phil 2:5-8).”¹

The character of God includes humility, self-sacrifice, and love. The character of Satan, and all who follow him, are pride, greed, and caring only for themselves. To be like God is to not demand anything, but to accept with joy what God has for us.

Now as to why Satan was allowed on the earth, consider these verses:

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and *to bring to light* for everyone *what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God* who created all things, so that *through the church the manifold* [many and various, multifaceted] *wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places*. This was according to the *eternal purpose* that he has *realized in Christ Jesus* our Lord, *in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith* in him.”

(Eph 3:8-12, ESV, italics and bracketed text added)

Angels can see the face of God (Matt 18:10). Mankind does not. And yet God has revealed to humans insights into His grace that angels had longed to understand (1 Pet 1:12). And now, through the church age – initiated by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, all see the wisdom of God that addressed the many issues caused by the fall into sin of both angels and mankind. The angels cannot be saved because they sinned in full knowledge of what they were doing. Mankind can be saved because we sinned in ignorance (1 Tim 1:13). And both angels and mankind saw the public display of love and judgment of God when Christ was sacrificed on the cross:

“And *you*, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *God made alive* together with him, *having forgiven us all our trespasses*, by cancelling out the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame*, by triumphing over them in him.”

(Col 2:13-15, ESV, italics added)

With our sins forgiven, Satan's accusations are meaningless. And if he does accuse us of sins, we have an advocate who forever lives to make intercession for us (1 John 2:1-2; Heb 7:24-25, 10:17-18). With one stroke of God's mercy, mankind was saved and Satan and his angels were defeated. Thus, to answer the question above, Satan and the fallen angels were allowed on earth to be openly shamed and defeated. At the same time, humankind who was held captive by the serpent were made qualified to be rescued and brought to God's kingdom (Col 1:12-13), leaving Satan with absolutely nothing but defeat, humiliation, and judgment. Everything the Satan grasped for was ripped from his hands.

Now let's take a glimpse at the devil's sin and restriction that most likely occurred before man was created. Satan and his angels did not want to stay in the position of authority that God had given them, so in punishment He confined them to darkness:

“And the angels who did not stay within their position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”

(Jude 6, ESV)

“God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [literally, Tartarus], and committed them to chains [or pits] of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”

(2 Pet 2:4, ESV, brackets reflect ESV footnotes)

Let us state at the beginning of this discussion that the sin of the angels mentioned in these verses do not refer to a theory of angels committing sexual sin in Genesis 6:1-2, as some have proposed, for as Jesus said angels do not procreate (Mark 12:25). The sons of God in Genesis 6:2 are the male descendants of Seth that had been following God, similar to today: “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith” (Gal 3:26, ESV). Getting back to the texts just quoted above, one commentator on Jude wrote, “These angels resided in heavenly splendor, but after their rebellion God consigned them to live in darkness.”² They were consigned to spiritual darkness, for sure, but is it possible that they were also put into pits of darkness (as one could interpret 2 Peter 2:4) for a time? In Revelation 20, verses 2-3 and 7, John writes that Satan will be bound for 1,000 years in a pit. Will this be his second time there? In 2 Pet 2:4, the use of the word *Tartarus* (translated as such by HCSB, and footnoted as such in AMP, ESV, and NET) is unusual. Scripture uses several words for hell: for example Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, or the Lake of Fire. Why does Peter alone use the word Tartarus? In Greek mythology Tartarus was the deepest place of hell, where the mythological gods locked up their enemies ... “or I will hurl him down into dark Tartarus, far into the deepest pit under the earth, where the gates are iron and the floors bronze, as far beneath Hades as heaven is high above earth” (Iliad 8).³ Maybe Peter was using the imagery of Greek mythology to describe a physical darkness that the angels were kept in. When God cast them to earth, was the earth at that time then subjected to a shroud of darkness, as described in Genesis 1:2 ... “and darkness was over the surface of the deep”? Were they consigned to

earth until the Lord would refashion the earth (Day 1 consisted of removing that dark shroud and letting light appear to earth), making it a place for mankind, and eventually a place where Jesus would die for humanity and at the same time destroy the power of Satan? On Day 2 of Genesis 1, God made the expanse between the waters, that is, the atmosphere. Notice what God did *not* say on Day 2. He did not say: ‘And God saw that it was good.’ Why is this left out regarding Day 2? Was it a scribal error or intentional? One can see the possibility of a universe that has existed for a long time with a recent fashioning of earth (2 Pet 3:5). Was the creation of mankind on earth deliberately located there in order to humiliate and judge Satan and his angels?

The possibility described above views Genesis 1, verses 2-31 as six literal 24-hour days in which God fashioned an earth to be inhabited by humans. This view believes there is a gap in time between verse 1 and 2 of Genesis 1. This view does not believe in a pre-Adamic human race. It seems that when the universe was created by God, the earth was not of much structural form (similar to Jupiter – a planet that apparently does not have a well-defined surface). This gap in time theory is not presented to satisfy secular scientists, who cannot be satisfied for they deny the existence of God (Rom 1:18-22). Rather, the time gap between verses 1 and 2 are proposed to conform to Scripture:

“For they deliberately overlook this fact, *that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God*, and by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. By the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and the destruction of the ungodly.”

(2 Pet 3:5-7, ESV, italics added)

Some opposed to the time-gap theory between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, point to Exodus 20:11 where some translations say, “for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth” (e.g. NASB) based on the Masoretic Text. Other translations say, “for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth” (e.g. ESV) based on the Septuagint Translation. The difference between the two translations is the plural ‘heavens’ versus the singular ‘heaven.’ If plural, the verse would indicate the creation of the universe in six days. If singular, the verse would be referring to the expanse, or atmosphere, created on Day 2 where the atmosphere is named ‘heaven’ (Gen 1:8), and the six days of Genesis 1 is about the transformation of planet earth into a habitable place for plants, animals, sea life and humans. In the context of Exodus 20:11, the atmosphere seems to be what is referred to, as it reads, “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.” This would fit in with 2 Peter 3:5, “the heavens (plural) existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water.” The universe may have existed for a long time and earth was refashioned recently. The aging of the universe would not have begun until Adam’s sin, which was recent (Rom 8:19-22).

Thus, Scripture allows for the possibility that Satan is present on earth as a means by which God demonstrates the power of His love and His grace towards mankind in triumphing over Satan and his angels with all their power and authority that they thought they possessed of their own accord. Power-hungry beings are foolish, for God's power is only fully released in acknowledging our weakness (2 Cor 12:9). For God is opposed to the proud, but draws near to the humble (James 4:6, 8).

Chapter Two: The Fall From Innocence

The interpretations of Genesis 3:14-19 are quite varied. To look at the judgment of their sin, we must first look at the events of their fall from grace.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman,

‘Did God say, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden”?’

And the woman said to the serpent,

‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said,

“You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.”’

But the serpent said to the woman,

‘You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.”

(Gen 3:1-7, RSV)

First of all, let us address the idea that Adam was also there observing the interchange between Eve and the serpent and did nothing. This idea is based on verse 6 that in some translations implies that her husband was with her. There are several reasons for not accepting this theory. The reasons given are listed below. The second and third bullet points below come from sources that are not Scripture, but are helpful and worth our consideration.

- **The serpent talked to Eve.** Verses 1-5 is an exchange between Eve and the serpent; the serpent never addresses Adam.
- **Jewish commentary.** According to the Talmud (Jewish writings on the Torah), Eve gave the fruit to Adam later; Adam was not present during the exchange between the serpent and Eve. [From a footnote in the Amplified Bible (AMP) on verse 6.]
- **Hebrew narrative structure.** According to the notes in the NET Bible on verse Genesis 3:6:

“This pericope (Gen 3:1-7) is a fine example of Hebrew narrative structure. After an introductory disjunctive clause that introduces a new character and sets the stage (3:1), the narrative tension develops through dialogue, culminating in the action of the story. Once the dialogue is over, the action is told in a rapid sequence of verbs – she took, she ate, she gave, and he ate.”

- Different word usage for Adam.** Verse 6 uses a term for Adam that is not used in the rest of the text of Genesis 3:1-19. In verses 8, 9, 12, and 17 the term *Adam* is used. But in verse 6, the word *ish*⁴ or *enosh*⁵ is used in this verse, depending on the manuscript, as *ish* (Strong's 376) "may be related related to *enosh* (582)."⁶ The word Adam is considered a 'more dignified' word than *ish* or *enosh*.⁷ Since *enosh* is derived from *anash*, which means 'to be weak,' *enosh* "is frequently used in contexts where man's weakness or frailty is emphasized."⁸ So Mose's primary purpose in the way that he wrote this account might be to emphasize Adam's weakness in choosing to follow the leading of his wife rather than obeying the command of God, not his location when he succumbed to sin.
- Helpmates / literal translation.** The literal translations of verse 6 is "and she gave to the man with her." The phrase 'man with her' seems to indicate husband, which several translations employ (e.g. CPDV, DRC1752, GNB, MSG, RSV). The word "with"⁹ is also used in verse 12, and reads in one translation: "The woman, whom thou gavest to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (DRC1752). The idea that Moses seems to be conveying is that Adam and Eve were created to be close companions, that is, 'with' each other, always by each other's side, *helping each other to obey God's commands*. This helping each other concept tragically broke down in Genesis 3, as Adam chose to disobey God. God is always trying to help us do right. After commanding Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit, he declared that man needed a helper (Gen 2:16-18) – the implication being to help him obey the command. After Jesus told his disciples that loving him means obeying him, he immediately says that he would ask the Father and that he would send another helper to be with them forever, the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17). In the context of John 14:15-23, the reference to "another helper" means a helper in like manner to the Son's presence (vs 18-21) and the Father's presence (vs 23). The triune God is ever present to help us follow him. In addition, Jesus' reference to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" (vs 17) might not only be describing one of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit, but may also be putting him in sharp contrast to the diabolic (i.e. slanderous) 'help' the devil offered Eve in the garden. The lies of Satan put us in bondage to sin (John 8:34; Eph 2:1-3). The truth of God sets us truly free (John 8:31-32, 36). Satan is "the father of lies" and a "murderer from the beginning" (John 8:34). Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) and because of his work on the cross the Father rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son (Col 1:18).
- Missing from God's judgment.** If Adam was present when Eve was being tempted by the serpent and did nothing, God would have pointed this out. God is not shy in telling us the truth. For example, in John 4:7-9, 16-18, Jesus initiates a conversation with a Samaritan woman (which in those days was not viewed as acceptable), and specifically brings up the subject of the woman's five husbands and current partner, with whom she is not married. It is necessary for us to acknowledge our sins in order to be forgiven. God is not shy in getting us to the truth of the matter. Had Adam stood

by without trying to prevent Eve from sinning, God would have pointed this out. This principle is seen in Matthew 12:36 and Ezekiel 3:17-19: We will give an accounting to God for every word spoken, and for every word not spoken when we should have warned others.

- **Following the wrong voice.** According to God's judgment on Adam, he erred in listening to Eve's *voice* rather than obeying God's command (Gen 3:17). According to Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB¹⁰), the word 'voice' means *advice, command, or entreaty*. In other words, there was a conversation between Eve and Adam, with Eve probably requesting him to either come to the tree for himself or to eat the fruit of the tree that she had brought with her. This is a conversation that would not have been necessary if Adam were present during her temptation and quickly followed Eve in eating the forbidden fruit. This conversation was not included in Genesis 3:1-7, but did occur, otherwise God would not have referred to it (vs 17).
- **A concise account, not exhaustive.** One can see that Genesis 3:1-7 describes the key elements of the fall, but does not provide a comprehensive narrative of all that happened. The fact that Eve referred to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as being the tree in the middle of the garden, rather than saying *this tree here*, which she would have said had she been standing next to it, means that she was probably some distance from it and she took the time to see up close what the tree was like. In the first portion of verse 6, she discovers that the tree was beautiful to look at and it looked good to eat. This seems to be her first close up encounter with the tree. But Moses records only the essentials and does not glamorize this awful event in any way. He gives only the sober facts. Eve believed the lie of the serpent, ate the fruit, and subsequently convinced Adam to eat the fruit. At this point, they had sinned and were separated from God.
- **Paul's commentary on the fall.** Lastly, there is Paul's 'commentary' on Genesis 3 in 1 Tim 2:14. Had Adam been there watching as the serpent tempted Eve, Paul would have included Adam as being deceived. But he doesn't. Instead he points out that Eve alone was deceived. Now Adam's sin was choosing to sin, even apart from any deception. Both were horrible, but the point here is that Eve alone was deceived and therefore Adam most likely was not present during Eve's temptation.

Adam's sin

We should note here that although the account shows that Eve was deceived by Satan – a masterful deceiver (Gen 3:1), into disobeying God's command, the Bible squarely puts the blame on Adam (Rom 5:12, 14). Adam, whose mind was not clouded by sin, who did not struggle with a sin nature as we do (Rom 7:23), who alone had directly received the commandment from God (Gen 2:16-17), who was not confronted by the masterful deceiver, chose to disobey God. His sin was unique to us today (Rom 5:14). Adam, without a sin nature, knowing that he was about to disobey God, chose to sin. But praise be to Jesus, who also without sin, chose to obey God (Rom 5:18-19).

The temptation

With very little introduction, the devil appears on the scene speaking through a serpent. He speaks to the woman, Eve, and asks a general question in order to get Eve to think about that one tree from which she is prohibited from eating.

Serpent: Did God really say to not eat of the fruit from any of the trees?

Eve: We are allowed to eat from any of the trees, but God said not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden, or even touch it, or we will die.

(Adapted from GNB)

We thus learn that Adam, in his concern of the consequences of eating from the forbidden tree, appears to have added a stipulation to Eve – to not even touch the fruit. He probably also said to not even go near the tree.

Serpent: You most certainly will not die! God knows that when you eat of the fruit, you will understand things as they truly are, just like God, knowing good and evil.

(Adapted from GW)

Satan outright lies and says that God himself is keeping her from realizing her full potential. Satan implies, ‘He is withholding knowledge from you. He must be afraid of you becoming like him.’ Eve believes the lie. She might be thinking, ‘Something is being withheld from me. Why?’ So she walks to the center of the garden to see the tree. It has edible fruit and the fruit was very attractive. More importantly, this fruit gives one insight and understanding, and she wanted that. So she ate the fruit. Now the Bible declares that God willingly and generously gives understanding to those who ask (James 1:5). God is for us and desires our best (Rom 8:31-31). In answer to the devil, James wrote:

“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

(James 1:16-17, NIV)

God is the source of all good things, both then and now. In contrast, the devil can only offer deception – death clothed in a deceitful offer of ‘enlightenment.’ Eve believed the lie and ate the fruit. At first, nothing really happened, except that she didn’t die. So she went to her husband to let him know about this. And a conversation occurred that at first must have been very alarming to Adam.

(Adam) What have you done? (Eve) But, Adam, nothing happened to me. Etc.

Now Adam had to make a decision. He clearly understood the commandment of God, but he loved the companionship of Eve. He may have begun a process of rationalization in an attempt to justify what he had decided to do: since God gave the woman to him to be a helper, maybe this was God's method of guidance to now eat the fruit. When later facing God in his judgment, Adam says:

“The woman whom you gave *to be with me*, she gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

(Gen 3:12, ESV, italics added)

Adam may be implying to God: You gave her to be my helper, so I thought following her advice was going to help me.

In response to their sin, God first asks Adam, “Where are you?” (vs 9). Of course God knows the answers to all the questions that He asked, but He asks them to prompt Adam and Eve to confess their sins. Adam responds by saying that he heard the Lord coming and that he was afraid and naked. Never before was Adam afraid of God. Sin has separated him from God. Adam also confessed that he was aware that he was naked. God responds to Adam by asking who told him this information – an apparent allusion to Satan. He also asks if he ate of the fruit in direct disobedience to His command? Adam indirectly answers ‘Yes,’ but deflects some of the blame to Eve and the rest of the blame to God Himself: the woman gave me the fruit, that is, the woman You gave to be my helper.

Chapter Three: The Judgments, Part One

Question 3: Understand God's judgments that resulted from Adam and Eve's sin?

The judgment of Satan

God then asks Eve what is this you have done? And Eve responds that she was deceived by the serpent, also indirectly affirming guilt but redirecting the blame to the serpent. God then pronounces judgment on the serpent and Satan. No questions were asked of the serpent or of Satan – God knew exactly what they had done and they knew exactly what they had done. Neither Satan nor the serpent were given an opportunity for forgiveness. *God then foretells Satan's defeat* by the eventual offspring of the woman, *Jesus* (Gen 3:14-15). The future bruising of Christ's heel – death on the cross, but then His resurrection – was going to be the deathblow to Satan's sway over mankind's disobedience to God and the fear of death that he hung over all humanity. The serpent was humbled by having to crawl on his belly in the dust for the remainder of this creation.

The judgment of Eve

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception,
in pain you shall bring forth children,
and unto your husband shall be your desire,
and he shall rule over you.”

(Gen 3:16, literal translation, BibleHub¹¹)

1. Eve's sorrow will increase due to the many problems associated with motherhood.

Because of Eve's sin, women will now have sorrow in the context of bearing children. Getting pregnant might be difficult. Miscarriages will occur for some. Physical and emotional pain will now come with child bearing. Unruly children due to their sin nature, will cause grief to moms. Sin messed up everything. And yet, even though these problems are well known, women will want to have children by their husbands. The word 'desire' is *teshūqāh*, which is used three times in the Old Testament. It can refer “to the strong attraction between the sexes,”¹² as used in Song of Solomon 7:10, “I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.” In order for the marriage and family to continue, women will desire to have children even though pain is coupled to childbearing. But a stark reality is also conveyed. The word *teshūqāh* can also refer to a desire to dominate or rule. It is used this way when God speaks to Cain in Genesis 4:7, “And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its *desire* is for you, but you must master it.” The sin nature in humankind will cause women to desire to strive to rule over their husband. (In the very next phrase of this verse we'll see this problem with men). Right from the first pronouncement of judgement, the struggle to do

right against the urge to rebel is revealed (Rom 7:23). But the desire to have children will, in most cases, be given to women. God is not trying to impede the marriage relationship. He still blesses the marriage relationship and wants it to be successful and still wants husbands and wives to have children (Gen 1:28a; Ps 127:3-5, Matt 18:5, 10).

2. Adam will lead Eve.

Eve was also told to follow the lead of her husband.

“And he will rule [with authority] over you
and be responsible for you.”

(Gen 3:16d, AMP)

The role of the husband is to be head of the household, and that ‘headship’ is to be like Christ’s example of leadership, which has a meaning that is far different than the world’s examples of leadership. Eve was told by God that her husband would rule over her. This, as we shall see below, means to serve, care for, and provide for Eve and their children. But because of humankind’s sin nature, men will tend to dominate the relationship and do so harshly. This, of course, is wrong. But, again, God is declaring from the very first pronouncement of judgement of sin that a struggle will occur within husbands to do the right thing or to let the flesh have sway and be uncaring and even cruel. God will judge abusive behavior, but the stark reality of sin is that it will occur. A husband that is a follower of Christ has to be reminded often that he is called to serve others, not to be served.

As the New Testament writers indicate, the husband’s leadership is to be in love, just as Christ loved the Church, even dying for it (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Peter’s advice is especially good:

“Likewise, husbands live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

(1 Pet 3:7, ESV)

Of the many reasons for husbands to honor their wives and treat them with respect and dignity, Peter lists several in this verse:

- One is that women are heirs of grace just like men. That is, men and women are equal before God (Gal 3:28).
- Secondly, God has placed the wife in a ‘weaker position’ in the marriage relationship. This does not refer to a physical or emotional or intellectual difference. As followers of Christ, we hold a treasure (the Gospel) in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7).

We are vessels, or servants of Christ, in carrying out His will. Now the weakness Peter is referring to in 1 Pet 3:7, is in God's ordained position in marriage: she is called to follow the husband's leading. This can put her at a disadvantage – in a weaker position to carry out God's will, especially if the husband is not reading and obeying the Word. The proper positional order is that the Father is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the husband, the husband is the head of the wife (1 Cor 11:3), and children are under the authority of both their parents (Eph 6:1).

- Now although the wife is in this 'weaker position,' *God guards the wife* in that He warns the husband that his prayers will be hindered if he does not treat her with the respect and dignity God has given her. Hindered prayers mean that the husband's life will not have the Lord's blessings; things won't go well for him. The definition of Christian leadership is servanthood, because it reflects the nature of God (Matt 20:25-28).

3. The Lord's judgment of Eve also had implications in church leadership. Paul addresses this when giving advice to Timothy:

“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”

(1 Tim 2:11-15, ESV)

These are very unpopular words in today's world. But let's look at what Paul is saying. Paul's advice to Timothy is based on Genesis 3.

Paul does not allow women to teach men in a public setting or to have authority over men in the church. These are two separate thoughts. The word 'or' in 1 Tim 2:12 is *oude* which means the phrases connected by it are equal in importance but “mutually exclude each other” (Thayer¹³). That is, in the church both pastor and elder positions are to be held by men. Bible studies in a mixed group of men and women are to be led by men. Women are called to teach other women (both in a public and private setting) and can hold church positions as deacons, which are service-related positions in the church (Titus 2:3-5; Rom 16:1-2).

Paul gives two reasons why men are to fulfill the roles of elders and pastors:

1. Adam was created first, then Eve. (1 Tim 2:13)

Adam is God's appointed leader. This is a positional order established by God from the beginning.

2. Eve was deceived by Satan and usurped Adam's authority. (1 Tim 2:14)

Eve was deceived into thinking that she could leave her proper place by leading Adam and not suffer consequences. Recall, Satan and his angels did not keep their proper place, but rejected and usurped God's authority (Jude 6, 8). Satan further lied to Eve saying that she would be elevated in her position ('you will be like God') if she left her proper place by disobeying God – who, Satan implied, was trying to hold her back because God must be insecure in His own position.

In 1 Tim 2:11-15, Paul is saying the proper place (or role) for men is to lead and lead righteously. "Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension," (1 Timothy 2:8, NASB). Women's proper place – and this goes against all that the 21st century secular world and some churches teach – is to bear children, teach children in the ways of the Lord (2 Tim 1:5), and to teach younger women how to walk with the Lord (Titus 2:4-5).

Now the bearing of children might be interpreted by many of today's women as denigrating, as if they were baby factories, like human 'puppy mills.' That is another lie of the devil. How can bringing a precious human being into this world be considered denigrating? It is actually an honor, as pointed out by Adam himself:

"The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living."
(Gen 3:20, ESV)

Eve means "life-giver."¹⁴ Even though death entered the world because of Adam and Eve, Adam encouraged his wife by calling her 'life-giver,' for new human life is always born through women and that is a special honor. It needs to be noted here that the Bible teaches that no woman is required to marry. In fact, God also considers singleness a blessing. If a man or woman choose not to marry, Paul says that they do well, for the troubles of this world can be a distraction (1 Cor 7:25-40). Whether one marries or remains single, they do well (1 Cor 7:38). Additionally, no married woman is required to have children. And some, due to biological reasons, cannot. Either way, God blesses both men and women who do not have children, whether by choice or because of biological reasons:

"... and let not the eunuch say,
 'Behold, I am a dry tree.'
For thus says the Lord,
 'To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
 who choose the things that please me,
 and hold fast my covenant,
I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name

better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.”

(Isa 56:3-5, ESV)

The key to all this, is that whether we marry or stay single, whether we have children or not, we should unselfishly desire to follow the Lord in all that we think and do. The quality of our lives is determined by our love and obedience to our Lord, not by our attainment in this world that passes away.

Now getting back to Paul’s advice in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul says by accepting their proper role – bearing children and remaining faithful, women will be saved (vs 15). On first reading, that sounds odd. The Greek word for saved is *sózó*, which Thayer¹⁵ says is salvation in the biblical sense of salvation *from* eternal penalty and *to* becoming a fellow partaker of blessings with Christ. The implied dangers are in following the lies of the devil, and the world, that say to us that Paul or the church or even God does not really want the best for women, or the lies that women will find their greater fulfillment by leaving her proper abode (place) and usurping the roles of others. The fact is that men cannot give birth to children. Whether 21st century thinking likes it or not, God has assigned the role of child-bearing to women. Accepting God’s role for us, which for women may include having children, helps us in following His commands. Following the advice of the world leads us away from God. That seems to be the point of Paul’s statement. Women will be saved through accepting God’s plan, not the world’s.

To repeat, this does not indicate inequalities. Christ is not inferior to the Father though He submits to Him. A boss, no matter how seemingly competent (or incompetent), is not superior to the person under them. Is a government office holder superior to you or me because we do not hold that position? No. It has nothing to do with intelligence or ability or wisdom, it is their position. In fact, it can be argued that many, if not most, people are smarter, wiser, and more compassionate than people holding even high positions in the various forms of government around the world. It has nothing to do with equality; it is a positional matter. And, in a free society, that governmental position is supposed to be one of service to the people that elected them. It is the same, or greater, in the Christian family and Church. God’s call to leaders are to be humble servants – even to the point of death:

“But Jesus called them and said,

‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them. It must not be this way among you! Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’”

(Matt 20:25-28, NET)

Christ is our example of how we should live:

“Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also the in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men.”

(Phil 2:4-7, NASB)

“‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ *This mystery is profound*, and I am saying that *it refers to Christ and the church.*”

(Eph 5:31-32, ESV, italics added)

One of the most colossal theological concepts to realize is that Christ left his godly form, left the Father and the Holy Spirit, to take on human form. Today, he is still the second person of the triune Godhead, but also, he is still a man. He is in his glorified body as we shall be (1 Cor 15:22-23, 49: “the man of heaven”, ESV, NET), but he descended, so to speak, from being in the form of God to now being in the form of man. His willingness to do this is hard to comprehend. It is exactly the opposite of the desires of the world, the devil, and our flesh – our three enemies (Eph 2:2-3; 1 John 2:15-17).

The roles of men and women have been decided by God. Let us accept them.

“The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.”

(Psalms 19:9b NASB)

If we know and understand how much God loves us, we will accept His roles for us as honoring us for who we are and for how He made us.

Chapter Four: The Judgments, Part Two

The judgment of Adam

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;

Cursed is the ground
because of you;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.
Both thorns and thistles it
shall grow for you;
And you shall eat the
plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face
You shall eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”

(Gen 3:17-19, NASB)

In Adam’s judgment, his sin is delineated more than the others:

1. “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife ... “

Adam listened to what Eve said in preference to what God had said to him. He put Eve before God.

2. “and you have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying,
‘You shall not eat from it.’”

The Lord clearly states how Adam sinned. In Genesis 2:16-17 God had spoken to Adam saying that he may eat from any of the trees in the garden except from just one. From that one tree God clearly said, “you shall not eat.” Before Eve was created, God commanded Adam not to eat from that tree. The command to Adam of obedience to God came before Eve was made. The priority was clear.

But Adam disobeyed God and so his judgment is stated. The judgment has three parts:

1. The ground is cursed.
2. Death has come to man.
3. Man’s role is to provide for his wife and family.

1. The ground is cursed.

The ground will be the source of food for mankind. Whereas before God freely provided food from the trees in the garden — there for the picking, now mankind would eat the plants from the ground. Eating produce from the ground would require much toil and sweat, for the ground would now produce weeds, thorns and thistles, that would make the production of food frustrating. It is true that the trees grew in the ground and both provided food freely for man, but the image is instructive. Adam didn't have to stoop to eat; the ground through the trees served him. Now, he would have to bend down to the ground and labor to get food. He was, in a sense, subject to the ground. A little more on this, but first it is helpful to discuss the ground.

The ground that is cursed is the same ground that Adam was created from. The words for ground and Adam are very similar. The word for ground is *adamah*. Both *Adam*, the proper name (or *adam*, the general name for man) and *adamah* are often etymologically linked¹⁶ and probably come from the word *adom*,¹⁷ which means 'to be red.' According to one source,¹⁸ the author of Genesis is deliberately using words (*adam* and *adamah*) to make a play on words, much like the words 'humus' and 'human' or 'earthling' and 'earth.' Mankind came from the earth and is dependent upon it for food. But, more importantly, as created beings of God, we are dependent upon God as the source of our lives. As Creator, God used clay to make mankind. This is illustrative of God's sovereignty. As a potter uses clay to make vessels for whatever he wishes, mankind is made to be moldable to God's will. How foolish to object to God's will for us! Should the clay say to the potter, "Why have you made me this way?" (Rom 9:20) or 'the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?' (Isa 29:16). Whatever our calling, whatever our role, is not God justified in what He calls us to? Does He not know what is best for us? *So obeying God is a much better pathway than following our limited human reasoning.* When we aren't submissive to His will, He has every right to correct or judge us. In Adam's case, his disobedience was monumental. It affected everyone. And now, because of Adam's sin, we return to that ground from which we were made. Praise be to Jesus for His work that prevents that from being believers' final destiny!

2. Death has come to man.

Death is separation. This is in contrast to the theme of earth's formation. Each action taken by God resulted in progress. Light was separated from darkness (a shroud was removed and earth's rotation began), water was separated from water (the atmosphere — called heaven — was formed), water was separated from soil (dry land appeared), vegetation was derived from the soil, then the sun and moon were formed and made visible in the atmosphere to be the source of earth's light and to light daytime and nighttime, and to mark seasons and years. Then sea creatures, birds, animals and finally mankind were fashioned from the earth. Each separation resulted in progress. All was progressing from a formless state into entities with form and function. And with each passing day, Adam and Eve would mature in their understanding of God and His plan for

them. But then Adam and Eve sinned and that progress abruptly ended and was reversed. Mankind was now doomed to return to earth.

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they were immediately separated from God – they even hid from God out of shame and fear. *Their sinless nature died immediately.* Their relationship to God was fractured. Death is separation from God. It happened the moment they disobeyed God, just as He said. Their bodies began to age. Because of an evil tendency now in them, God would not allow their bodies to continue indefinitely. They would return from where they came from, they would return to the earth.

Growing closer to God and trusting Him more each day is the right course. Separation from God is the reverse of what God intended. *This separation itself needed to be reversed.* Eve made the first mistake by believing the devil. But it would be through her offspring that a God-given miracle would someday occur and a child would be born to destroy the work of Satan. It is fitting that the announcement of Christ's resurrection was first made to women. The mistake has been eternally paid for. Today, we who depend on Christ's death on the cross are now *separated from the penalty and dominance of sin.* We are given new life. We are reunited to God, no longer separated from Him. Progress in the right direction has resumed for the believer.

3. Man's role is to provide for his wife and family.

To Adam was assigned the role of laboring to provide food for his family. He was assigned the role of leader, which means he has the responsibility of caring and providing for his wife and children.

Leadership of family or church or in business for the Christian man *is* best defined as *following God* with everything you've got: heart, mind, soul, and body.

Leadership means serving others. This is God's definition. Genesis 3:16 says that man is to be head of the family unit and Genesis 3:17-19 says that headship requires work and service for those he leads. Ephesians 5:25 says that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. Ephesians 6:4 says that fathers are not to exasperate their children, but are to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. These are impossible for anyone to do by themselves. Only by the work and power of the Holy Spirit can there be the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 22-23). As God desires the best for us, we are to desire the best for others.

God's judgment is both just and compassionate to man.

The judgment is just because whereas Adam fought against the will of God, the ground would now fight against the will of man. Previously the ground provided freely, now its produce comes at a cost.

The judgment is compassionate because it helps mankind realize he needs help. Just as the ground previously cooperated with man, so did his body. Now, after Adam's sin, the ground and our flesh war against us. The struggle we have with both are telling us that something is wrong. That our flesh wars against us becomes evident when we accept Christ as our Savior and we are born again; that is, a new nature is created in us. As Paul says, our flesh – our bodies and our sin nature are intimately tied to each other – wages war against our mind, trying to make us do what our new nature does not want to do (Rom 7:14-25). The solution, of course, is a dependency upon the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:1-17).

Chapter Five: Sanctification and God's Help ... Abba, Father

Sanctification

The struggles of this life are incentive to seek God for help. This is pointed out by Paul in Romans, chapter 8:

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh ... For to set the mind on the flesh is death ... For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.”

(Rom 8:5-8, ESV)

The above states that those that live according to the desires of the flesh are of the flesh – not born again, and have no inheritance with Christ.

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you ... if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness ... he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

(Rom 8:9-11, ESV)

This says that those that have the Spirit of God living in them will be empowered to control the desires of the flesh, even though the old nature wars against our new nature.

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.”

(Rom 8:12-15, NIV)

Because the Spirit of God lives in us, we can choose to obey the Spirit and overcome the desires of the old nature, even though it is a very real struggle – “the sufferings of this present time” (Rom 8:18). One can think of it as gravity – the weight of the old nature is trying to return us to slavery to sin (2 Pet 2:22). But the Spirit of God gives us the power to remain standing above the mire (Rom 8:26-27; Eph 3:14-21).

“But you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if

children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

(Rom 8:15-17, ESV)

The Holy Spirit gives us an inner conviction that we have been adopted by God and can call on God in prayer as Abba, Father. This is very important. The struggles of this world are part of our sanctification – the process whereby God is changing us into the people he originally intended us to be, holy and blameless (Eph 1:4), a people who earnestly desire to do what’s right (Titus 2:14). It is during this sanctification process, which comprises our time from spiritual rebirth to our going home, that we must rely on God’s help through prayer (Rom 8:26-27) to yield to his work in our lives (Phil 2:12-16).

Abba, Father

The phrase, “Abba, Father,” is used only three times in the Bible. Paul used this phrase here in Romans (8:15, quoted above) and in his letter to the Galatians (4:6). Mark, most likely with the help of Peter, recorded this phrase in his gospel account (14:36) of our Lord’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. *Abba* is the Aramaic word for father. The Greek word for father is *Patēr*. Why do most Bible translators just transliterate the phrase, rather than making a translation? They could have just written ‘Father, Father.’ Instead, most maintain the Aramaic word *Abba*. It is true that *Abba* was a borrowed word from Aramaic and became part of the Greek vocabulary.¹⁹ But, why then maintain the two separate words *Abba* and *Pater*, i.e. *Abba* and *Father*, in our English translations? And why does Paul also refer to this phrase as if it were significant? *Because it is*.

Let’s look at the three uses of *Abba, Father*:

“And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.’ And going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said,

‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.’”

(Mark 14:32-36, ESV)

“But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.’

(Gal 4:4-7, ESV)

And lastly, the passage we are looking at:

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and *fellow heirs with Christ*, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

(Rom 8:14-17, ESV, italics added)

It has been suggested by some in recent years that the word ‘Abba’ is synonymous with the word ‘Daddy.’ This is rejected by most scholars, who, instead suggest that Abba is referring to a privileged status.²⁰

Let’s look at the meaning of the phrase ‘Abba, Father’ as it is used in its context. In Paul’s usage, he refers to us as adopted children. Let’s look again at Galatians 4, verses 4-5 in another Bible translation:

“God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, *that we might receive adoption[†] to sonship.*”

(Gal 4:4b-5, NIV, italics added)

[†]“The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a legal term referring to **the full legal standing of an adopted male heir** in Roman culture.”
(NIV note on Gal 4:5; YouVersion Bible App, bold type added.)

In Roman times, adults were adopted in order to become the heir of an inheritance or a kingdom. For example, Gaius Octavius Thurinus, born of humble means, was adopted by his maternal great-uncle, Julius Caesar, and eventually became known as Caesar Augustus, the ruler of Rome.²¹

“Because you are his sons, God sent *the Spirit of his Son* into our hearts, *the Spirit* who *calls out*, ‘Abba, Father.’”

(Gal 4:6, NIV, italics added)

Notice it is the Holy Spirit that is crying out in our hearts, ‘Abba, Father.’ Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit is testifying to our spirit that we are indeed God’s children:

“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.*”

(Rom 8:15-16, NIV, italics added)

So it appears that the Aramaic word, Abba, carries with it the sense of adoption.

There is also a possible confirmation of this thought with the word *Ab* in the Arabic language, another Semitic language. In its usage as a verb, it means *to become as a father to someone*.²² We see this sense in Scripture. Jesus is, of course, by nature the Son of God from eternity. But in his incarnation, the Scripture hints at him being an ‘adopted’ son in the sense that Jesus came as a man, voluntarily took on the limitations of being a human, ‘emptied himself’ (Phil 2:6-7, ESV, NASB) of his divine rights – *not using his pre-incarnate powers or knowledge*, but instead relied on *all* the gifts of the Holy Spirit during his time on earth. God affirmed to him his sonship through:

- (a) the Scriptures with the temple rabbis and Jesus’ ability to ‘understand’ (Greek: *synesei*, joining together the facts,²³ Luke 2:47) that the Scriptures were speaking of him,
- (b) the Holy Spirit at his baptism – the heavens tearing open and a dove descending upon him (Mark 1:10),
- (c) the Father’s voice from heaven, also at his baptism – “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well-pleased” (Mark 1:11).

Point (c) is reminiscent of Christ’s coronation as King, the promised Son to Israel:

Psalm 2:6-8:

“As for me, *I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.*
I will tell of the decree: the Lord said to me,
‘You are my Son, *today I have begotten you.*
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth your possession.’”

(ESV, italics added)

Look again at verse 7 in the NIV version:

“He said to me,,
‘You are my son; today I have become your father.’”

Thus, in Psalm 2:7, *begotten* means adoption since the person has already been born.

Christ was already God’s son from eternity, but here in response to the nations uproar and their rulers’ counsel to defy the Anointed One (Ps 2:1-3), is a public decree saying that God has adopted Christ as his son – that is, *God is choosing who will be ‘his successor’ (in human terms) to the rulership of the nations*. This is in keeping with kingdom reigns and who inherits the kingdom – both in Roman times (as stated earlier) and in the history of Israel: Solomon was not King David’s first son, but was chosen to be his successor to the kingdom.

2 Samuel 7:12-14a:

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. *I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*”

(ESV)

This verse has a double application, as we shall see in the next verse. Solomon did build a house for the Lord – the immediate application of this verse, but Christ also will build a house of the Lord and a kingdom. The house of the Lord will be established during the coming Millennium and this will be a kingdom that will have no end. David’s offspring that is of the utmost importance is Christ, who is God’s only son, who inherits the throne of David to rule Israel and all the nations of the world.

How do we know that Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7:12-14a are referring to Christ? Because the author of Hebrews tells us this.

Hebrews:

“In these last days he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things ...

(Heb 1:2, ESV)

“For to which of the angels did God ever say,

‘You are my Son,
today I have begotten you?’”

(Heb 1:5; *citing Ps 2:7*, ESV)

“Or again,

‘I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son?’”

(Heb 1:5; *citing 2 Sam 7:14*, ESV)

Sonship implies both an intimate relationship with the Father and the Inheritor of His kingdom.

“He shall cry to Me,

‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’
And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”

(Ps 89:26-27, ESV, italics added)

These verses are affirmations from God of his calling and his sonship. It is because of this fact that Jesus calls upon God in his prayer in Gethsemane:

Abba, that is,
'Father ... You who have adopted me.'

Scripture also identifies Christ as God's chosen one. When Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John and went up on a mountain to pray, Jesus was transfigured, and Moses and Elijah appeared with him. The three disciples became very frightened as a cloud covered them.

"And a voice came out of the cloud, saying,
'This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!'"

(Luke 9:35, ESV)

Now Christ alone was chosen to be the Lamb, the Messiah, the King. And he is God's only Son from all eternity. But remarkably, God decided to also *choose* to *adopt us as sons*, through Jesus Christ:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he *chose us* in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined *us for adoption as sons* through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

(Eph 1:3-6, ESV, italics added)

"In him we have obtained an inheritance ... [and we who believed] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance."

(Eph 1:11, 13-14, ESV)

Before God created the world, he knew that Adam and Eve would disobey Him and cause sin and corruption to mar his creation. And yet, God decided, before anything was created – he predetermined, that he would send his Son to be our sacrifice so that we would be redeemed from our sins, "that we should be holy and blameless before him." And not only that, but he predetermined that we should be a part of his family – brothers and sisters of his eternal, sinless Son!

Can we grasp this? Do we understand how much God is for us and does not hold his blessings from us? (Rom 8:28-32). We are his adopted children. We can call upon the Father in prayer.

Let us now look at the term 'Father' in the phrase Abba, Father.

The literal translation of Mark 14:36 is *Abba, ho patēr*, or *Abba, the Father*. Most translations drop the word ‘the’ and just translate the phrase ‘the Father’ as Father. But the phrase ‘The Father’ may be a designation of his headship. God is one God, but three persons, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit – *the Father* being used as an appellation (a word or term that identifies the person), for example “the well-known personage who is to come, i.e., the Messiah, Mt. xi.3; Lk vii.19.”²⁴ Another example is in Matthew 11:27, “no one knows The Son except The Father, and no one knows The Father except The Son” God is three Persons. The three are equal in nature, but there is an order of headship: The Father being head of the Godhead.

“Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power ... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection to him, that God may be all in all.”

(1 Cor 15:24, 28, ESV)

Thus, *The Father* in Jesus’ prayer may be calling upon The Father’s headship of all things. There is no one higher. His prayer in Gethsemane thus becomes,

“Abba, The Father” or, expanded to catch the nuances:

‘Abba – *You who have adopted me as yours*, The Father – *the supreme, the highest of everything that exists*, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’

(Mark 14:36)

Chapter Six: Abba, Father – the Application

Jesus employs his father's love for him as well as The Father's unlimited power in his prayer. *It is in this knowledge of God's love for Christ and his boldness to go before The Father that Paul says we, as adopted children of God, are to also go before God in our prayers!* We do not have a spirit of timidity, but of bold confidence because of Christ's work on the cross and The Father's love for us.

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(Heb 4:14-16, NKJV)

In Romans 8:16 and Galatians 4:6, Paul urges us to cry to the Lord as a Father *who has adopted us*, The Father *who has authority over everything*. What a comfort. God loves us and nothing can prevent Him from helping us. God is for us and wants so very much to help us. Everything He has done is in an effort to *help us come to him and rest there*. A quick list may help illustrate this:

- He made known His existence in nature. Ps 19:1-4; Rom 10:18
- He gave us Scripture to reveal Himself to us. Heb 1:1
- He subjected nature to corruption in order to reveal to us that something is wrong and needs to be set right. (Rom 8:20-21).
- He gave the Law to the Jews to reveal our sin nature. (Rom 7:7).
- He sent the Son to die in our place and save us from eternal condemnation. (John 3:16-18).
- He sent the Spirit to convict us of our sin, His righteousness, and the defeat of Satan (John 16:7-11).
- He adopted us as His children and lets us pray to Him and gives us the same attention that He gave to His Son. (John 17:23; Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6-7).
- The Son is our brother. (Heb 2:11-13).
- The Son is our advocate, ever living to intercede for us. (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1 John 2:1).
- The Spirit helps us in our prayers. (Rom 8:26-27).
- The Father helps us stay true to Him by disciplining us as His sons. (Heb 12:3-8).
- The Spirit gives us gifts to help us, for the common good. (1 Cor 12:4-7, 11).
- God causes everything to work together for His children's good. (Rom 8:28).
- If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31).
- From before the creation of the world, God's plan was to adopt us as sons, those who would believe in His son. (Eph 1:3-6).

Even in nature, God is helping mankind in so many ways. He provides the rain, the sun, the plants and animals for our needs. Even helping us in the details, like livestock herding dogs that instinctively assist the shepherd or rancher with their care of the animals. Dogs and cats that provide undying companionship to make us feel that we are loved. And we are loved ... by God. There are also the designs in nature that mankind can see and learn from like the shape of a bird's wing that helps the aeronautical engineer design wings for planes to allow for human flight and high-speed travel. The complexity of our human bodies reveals a God that can intricately design life that causes the wise to be in awe and wonder of His abilities. The expanse of the universe also reveals His power.

In other words, God has done everything in order to reveal Himself to us and to draw us to Him, to embrace us, to call us His children. *God is so good. God so very, very much loves you!*

Our Inheritance

And as His children, we have an inheritance which is the same as Christ's inheritance. That is, we will be given new bodies (glorified) – thereby eliminating the struggle between our old and new natures, “the sufferings of this present time,” and we will live in the presence of God and all things on earth will be corrected. This is *the hope* that Paul is about to embark on in the rest of chapter 8 of Romans. This hope is based on Christ's work, who is our hope and the anchor of our souls (Col 1:27; Heb 6:18-20). Though we were dead in our trespasses, we took refuge in the salvation bought by Christ and take hold of the hope of our future entry into the presence of God, a place reserved for us.

“For I consider that *the sufferings of this present time* are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

(Rom 8:18, ESV)

Though we suffer due to the sin nature of our bodies, these sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the great life and blessings that await us. Implied here is that we anxiously await *the hope* that is before us.

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.”

(Rom 8:19-24, ESV)

All of the created world anxiously awaits “the revealing of the sons of God,” that is, when we who have put our trust in the completed work of Christ on the cross are given our inheritance, which includes the redemption of our bodies, thus putting to end “the sufferings of this present time” (vs 18). The creation was subjected to corruption because of Adam’s sin, not for anything of its own doing. Before man’s fall, creation’s purpose was to support man, now that purpose became “futility” (vs 20). Creation became indifferent to the needs of man. Instead of the ground being in full support of the needs of man, it now ‘fights’ against the needs of man by sprouting weeds and thistles. Instead of the ground being watered from underneath, man is dependent on rain or has to work to provide irrigation for his crops. The weather itself is sometimes very destructive of man’s needs and even deadly at times.

It wasn’t this way before Adam sinned. Why now? Because in subjecting the creation to this indifference, this futility of purpose, God wants to drive man to hope for a resolution to this disharmony. When we see the world around us subjected to suffering – children suffering, animals suffering, people suffering great losses or life because of severe weather, beloved pets dying – we know something is wrong, out of kilter, unfair. We have an innate sense that things are not right. We want peace and love and harmony to exist in everything and for everyone. In grace, God forces us to see that the problems are bigger than we can handle. The humble will turn to God and take hold of His salvation and the hope He has provided for the future. But, unfortunately, the proud will dig in their heels and try to solve their problems alone, without God. Accepting God’s salvation is a decision each person must make. He forces no one to accept Him. Thus, in hope of many turning to Him, He in grace subjected the creation to corruption in order to show everyone that something is wrong. To the Jews the Law was given to show them their sin nature, their need of help, to drive them to a Messiah (Gal 3:19-26). The subjection of the creation to futility and corruption was meant to do the same thing. God is using every means to have each individual make a choice to put their faith in Christ, the the Messiah, the Savior.

Chapter Seven: Adam and Eve's Existence

For those who dismiss the existence of Adam and Eve

Some dismiss Paul's instructions to Timothy about church leadership (1 Tim 2:12-15) because they say that Adam and Eve did not exist, that they are only an allegory to explain that sin exists in the world. They say that since Adam and Eve did not exist, Paul's words are a moot point and that today women should be allowed to be pastors and elders and have a role in teaching men in an assembly. This bodes well for them in a 'progressive society.' It makes life easier for people to not have to go against the flow of current politics and views.

In answer to this, the Bible declares women equal to men while keeping the reality of Adam and Eve. One doesn't need to alter Scripture to accept this truth! What one does need to do is alter one's understanding of the difference between equality and God's positional calling on our lives. As stated earlier, Jesus is not inferior to the Father because He submits to Him. The Godhead is ordered Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are equal and no one is offended. Children are not inferior to their mother, but she most definitely has authority over them while they are growing up. God also has a positional calling for each one of us. We are not all pastors (Eph 4:1-3, 7, 11-16). We are not all government officials. We are not all the CEO of the company we work at. Many of us do not have the financial means that some others do. But, we are all equal before God:

“”And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were and ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, **God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.** If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.”

(1 Cor 12:16-19, ESV, bold type added)

Now if Paul was wrong about church leadership and the role of men and women in the church because Adam and Eve really didn't exist, then he was also wrong about the work of Christ. If sin didn't enter the world because of one man's sin (Adam), then the work of one man who came later as the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45) could not undue sin's entrance into the world. Romans 5:12-21 explains that through one sinless man (Adam), sin entered the world because of his disobedience to God's command. The verses also explain how Jesus (the last Adam), the only other man who was sinless – because of his virgin birth and being the offspring of the Holy Spirit – through His obedience to God's command removed our sins from our account before God and justified us, that is, gave us a righteous standing before God. In legal terms one might say Christ's death falls into the category of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' (Lev 24:17-22). In other words, a man committed the first act of disobedience which caused sin and death to enter the world. Therefore, a man must die to pay for that sin, and all the other sins that followed. Now it is true that one perfect man's sacrifice

can only pay for the debt of one other man's sin. But the sacrifice of a God-man (John 1:1, 14; 8:58 "I AM"), could substitute for the sins of all men. But if it is not true that sin came through Adam, as some teach today, then the sacrifices of animals might have been just as acceptable to God as the sacrifice of a person. But the Bible declares that "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). As the writer of Hebrews goes on to say:

"Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
Then I said, 'Behold, *I have come to do thy will*, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'

"And *by that will* we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

(Heb 10:5-7, 10, ESV, italics added)

This is so important it bears repeating: the Bible declares that a substitutionary death by a man did indeed substitute for a real sin committed by a real man. The Good News is that Christ's death substitutes for the justifiable penalty that is our due and was effective for all. Christ's blood, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb 9:11-14).

If you believe that Adam didn't sin because he didn't exist, then either sin didn't enter the world – meaning sin doesn't exist, or sin exists because it was part and parcel of the world from the beginning – thus placing the cause of sin on God Himself! *To those who want to remove the reality of the existence of Adam and Eve, please realize that this is a dangerous place to be.* From this position of error the next step is to deny that God really created the world or that He judges the world, as He did previously when He judged the world with a flood for its iniquity (2 Pet 3:3-7), or that there was really a need for Christ to die on the cross. This position of error calls into question the accuracy and validity of the accounts of Genesis and all of Scripture. But, what would Jesus say to this?

When Jesus was asked about the institute of marriage, he referred back to the Genesis account:

"He answered, '*Have you not read* that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female [Gen 1:27], and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his

father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?
[Gen 2:24]. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined
together, let not man separate.”

(Matt 19:4-6, ESV, italics added)

In his answer, Jesus refers to both Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 and asks the Pharisees, who were trying to catch Him in a controversy, whether they read Scripture or not. Jesus refers to the Genesis account as factual. God took the formless earth and fashioned it into something beautiful and productive in six, 24-hour days. He created a man and a woman and put them in a garden. To the 21st century man (including some Christians, both leadership and laymen), that is impossible. That is because their view of God is so small. God Almighty has no limits. Can the earth reverse its rotation so that a shadow reverses direction ten steps? It did in 2 Kings 20:8-11. Can the Red Sea part? Can people be miraculously healed by the word of Jesus? Could Jesus be born of a virgin? The miraculous powers of God do not fit the 21st century mind. Does that mean we have the right to remove parts of Scripture to make it palatable for our present day? Of course not.

The Bible’s words about God creating the world are true. The authenticity of Adam and Eve are also true. The fact of human sin and God’s remedy in the person and work of Jesus Christ is also true. Paul’s words regarding church leadership are based on Scripture and are also true and are to be followed today. Christ’s words about the integrity of Scripture are still true (Matt 5:18). “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matt 24:35).

The Bible’s words about the need for the process of sanctification are also true (Rom 8:29; 2 Thes 2:13; Heb 12:14). Modern society and their accompanying pressures do not invalidate Holy Scripture. We need to accept Scripture as trustworthy and the knowledge that is given in them can lead us to salvation in Christ.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Adam's fall from grace allowed sin to enter the world and mar the good which God had made. God was not caught by surprise by Adam and Eve's failings, and of course by our failings, but God knew from the beginning that His Son would fulfill the work that He alone was qualified to do. With Christ's death and resurrection, God gave us the opportunity to become His spiritual children, to those who believe and receive Christ's work on their behalf (John 1:12-13). As His children, as vessels of clay in the Potter's hands, how will we respond? Here are some key principles and applications:

Key Principles

- ***All of humankind is important to God.*** Christ died for everyone (1 John 2:2). After Adam's fall, each individual was still an image-bearer of God (Gen 9:6; James 3:9). And as such, we are commanded not to pass judgment on each other, whether saved or unsaved (James 4:12). All people are image-bearers of God. This means that all people, saved or unsaved, are God's creation, His children. Though they may not have accepted Christ as their savior for their sins, they still possess the likeness of God and have the opportunity to become spiritually reunited to God. As His image bearers, God has endowed us with glory and honor, and with responsibilities that mirror His (Ps 8:5-8). There are no little people. All are important to God. Therefore, we must show respect to each and every person, regardless of their skin color, nationality, ethnicity, monetary status, or personal lifestyle. We must treat them like our physical brother or sister, because we are all from one race, the human race. As for our spiritual status, believers are being transformed to the likeness God intended, Christ's image (2 Cor 3:18). In regards to non-believers, we must pray for their salvation, for God loves them and wants all to come to a saving knowledge of Him (1 Tim 2:4-6).
- ***As we are each important to God, we should not look down on our position or status.*** Just as the Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each person for the common good (1 Cor 12:7), and each gift is important and necessary (1 Cor 12:11-26), the position or role that God has called us to is important. No one should say, because I am not an elected official, I am not really important – is not the elected official suppose to serve the voter? No one should say, because I do not run the corporation, I am not important – does not the corporation remain in existence because of the work of the employees? No family member should say, because I'm not the father or mother, I am not important – is not the child lavished with love and care? On the other hand, does the child say to the parents, shouldn't I make the family decisions? Most young children accept their position without too much complaint, and they are no less valuable for doing so.
- ***When we have eternity in our hearts, we aren't overly concerned with our status or our rights.*** We understand that this life is temporary and that all of us are 'in the same boat.' We understand that cooperating with each other is necessary. We will honor others and want their best, because they are God's creation. We will esteem others as more important than

ourselves (Phil 2:3-4). The position or role God has called us to becomes an honor to fulfill. However, when ‘position’ and ‘our rights’ become overly important, then our lives become horizontal, earthly, temporary, and shallow. This life then becomes consuming and we have lost our way and our first love for the Lord. A recommitment to God is needed (Colossians 3).

Key Actions

- ***Acknowledge our sinfulness.*** Whether we are saved or not, a true understanding of what we need to do begins here. God is wholly righteous, we are not. Only by God’s grace do we stand before Him with the righteousness of Christ that is assigned to our account because of His work on the cross.
- ***Accept the work of Christ as our only means of salvation.*** No one comes to the Father except through Christ alone (John 14:6). This truth accepted sets us free from judgment, pride, and worry. Christ’s work is complete and effectual (Heb 9:12, 14; 10:12, 14).
- ***Embrace God’s love for us.*** Receive the truth that God truly wants the best for us. God is for us (Rom 8:31-39). Why would God send His Son to die for us if He didn’t want to bless us?
- ***Embrace God’s discipline.*** God disciplines us as sons (Heb 12:5-8). Accept this sanctifying process (Phil 2:12-13; Heb 12:14). This is the meaning behind James difficult words to choose to make trials an occasion for rejoicing (James 1:2-4). This is tough to do, but we are to look to its end result (Heb 12:11).
- ***Accept our position, our role, our calling.*** It is never dishonoring to do the work God has called us to. Jesus said that his food (nourishment – that which sustained him) was to do the will of God and to complete the work The Father sent him to do (John 4L34).
- ***Remember that this life passes quickly; eternity awaits.*** This truth gives us perspective and a direction in life to aim for.

“The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

(1 John 2:17, ESV)

- ***Pastors and teachers are called to teach the Word accurately.*** Pastors hold the key to knowledge (Mal 2:5-6), the keys to heaven (Matt 16:16-19; Luke 11:52). The knowledge of Christ is that key (John 6:39-40). He is the entrance into heaven (John 10:7, 9, 11). Jesus told us to not fear those who can only kill the body and after that nothing else. Fear Him who can destroy both body and soul (Luke 12:4-7). Pastors and teachers are to emphasize both the love and holiness of God (Eph 2:1-7).

God’s holiness demanded the death of mankind because of our iniquities.
God’s love for mankind demanded the death of his Son,

and for his death to be publicly displayed on the cross.

Both the sinfulness of mankind and the righteousness of God demanded our punishment. But God's love for mankind required sending His Son to die in our place and for that news to be made known so that we could repent and turn to Him.

Righteousness is still required.

However, this Good News of our salvation by faith in Christ's work does not diminish God's holiness and righteousness.

“The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. And he [Jesus] said to them: ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an *abomination* in the sight of God.’”

(Luke 16:14-15; ESV, italics added)

When Christ said to the people following him that we cannot serve both God and money, the Pharisees – whom Luke tells us were lovers of money – heard what Jesus said and scornfully rejected it (Luke 16:14). He replied to them that they were people that justified their desires and actions as being ‘holy’ and ‘righteous’ before other people – but God is never fooled. The Pharisees enjoyed the prestige that came with having lots of money and power – something that is still highly exalted and considered a measure of ‘success’ in our 21st Century culture. But God considers it an abomination. God has gifted some people to have more money than others, but they are to use that money to give to the needs of others and for supporting the work of the church – and to do it generously and with simplicity, i.e. not using the gifting to direct how they think things should be done (Rom 12:6a, 8b).

Jesus continued his rebuke of the Pharisees:

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since then, the kingdom of God is being evangelized, and everyone acts with violence toward it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to fall away.”

(Luke 16:15-17; CPDV)

Jesus said that the holiness and righteousness of God, as revealed in the Law and the Prophets, were proclaimed until John the Baptizer. Since then the love of God, as revealed in the Good News of salvation by faith, is being proclaimed – but everyone is doing *violence* (Grk: *biázō*)²⁵ to that message (Luke 16:16).

Biázō is sometimes translated as ‘presses’ or ‘forces’ in some Bible versions (e.g. KJV, ESV). Some versions footnote it as ‘forcefully urged into it’ (ESV). But the context of the passage brings clarity. Jesus is saying that when God's unmerited forgiveness is given to us, we often use that as an opportunity to sin. We rationalize that what we want to do is not all that bad, and anyway, God will forgive us. We ‘force’ or ‘press’ the Gospel to fit our desires. Where sin abounded, as revealed by the Law, grace abounded all the more. That is

true (Rom 5:20). So, we may reason to ourselves, ‘God is so loving, does He really care if we sin or not?’

Jesus declares that this is doing violence to the Gospel message!

Or, as Paul puts it: MAY IT NEVER BE! (Rom 6:1-2, 15, NASB). God’s lovingkindness does not negate His holiness. Jesus follows his statement, that everyone does ‘violence’ to the Gospel, by saying that “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void” (Luke 16:17, ESV). He then follows that statement with an example: marriage (vs 18), which is a holy covenant between the husband and wife with God (Mal 2:14-15; Matt 19:6). Except for infidelity or abuse, marriage is to be revered as a lifelong commitment to each other, regardless of our circumstances. It was common then, and very common now, to end a marriage because we don’t feel that we are ‘compatible’ anymore. But God says that the one who divorces their spouse covers his garment with *violence* (Mal 2:16; ESV). The Hebrew word for violence is *chāmās*,²⁶ sometimes transliterated *hāmās*²⁷ – like the terrorist group. The priests of Malachi’s time had dealt *treacherously* with their wives by divorcing them (Mal 2:14, NASB) and apparently justified themselves in doing this. The priests complained and ‘covered the altar of God with their tears’ (Mal 2:13) because He was not accepting their sacrifices. God declared that each priest had ‘covered his garment with violence’ by not being faithful to their wife (Mal 2:16). Garments are often used to represent our standing before God, be they the filthy garments of sin (Isa 64:6; Zech 3:3-4) or the righteous garments of those forgiven in Christ (Isa 61:10; Zech 3:4; Rev 3:4). The priests wanted forgiveness without having to change how they lived. They even taught that this was okay: “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them” (Mal 2:17). The church at Sardis also had many who had come to the Lord but were living in the world. The Lord calls on them to wake up and repent (Rev 3:3). Only a few at the church in Sardis had not “soiled their garments” (Rev 3:4). Their names would remain in the book of life (Rev 3:5). This is a serious matter.

The point of Christ’s message in Luke 16:16-17 is that we do not have the right to alter God’s Word or to manipulate it to fit our bent or desires. The Word is Holy. Preach it as it is written – comparing Scripture with Scripture to make sure we are interpreting it correctly. The gifting of the Holy Spirit to be pastors and teachers is for equipping the saints for ministry and to become mature in the Lord where we all grow in unselfish love (Eph 4:11-16).

So teaching the Word requires an acknowledgement of God’s holiness and righteousness, his love for us in sending his son to the cross on our behalf, and that God’s righteousness demands our obedience to Christ’s Lordship as expressed in His Word.

God’s holiness demanded the death of mankind because of our iniquities.

God’s love for mankind demanded the death of his Son,
and for his death to be publicly displayed on the cross.

God’s righteousness demands our obedience to His Word.

We will never understand God's ways completely. Nor do we have to understand them completely to obey Him. But we can believe that He is good.

“Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.”
(Psalm 97:2, NASB)

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Endnotes

- ¹ Grogan, Geoffrey W., Isaiah, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6, Zondervan, © 1986, Grand Rapids, MI, USA. From comments on Isa 14:13-14.
- ² Kistemaker, Simon J., Peter and Jude, New Testament Commentary. Baker Books, © 1987, Grand Rapids, MI, USA. From comments on Jude 6.
- ³ Iliad 8 (part of the 5th sentence), The Internet Classics Archive by Daniel C. Stevenson, © 1994-2009, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA. <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.8.viii.html>.
- ⁴ Baker, Warren, The Complete Word Study Old Testament King James Version, Copyright © 1994, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, USA. Lexical Aids to the Old Testament, #376.
- ⁵ BibleHub: www.bibleapps.com/int/genesis/3-6.htm.
- ⁶ Baker, 1994. See endnote 4, above.
- ⁷ BibleHub: <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/582.htm>, (under Strong's Exhaustive Concordance heading).
- ⁸ Baker, 1994. Lexical Aids to the Old Testament, # 582.
- ⁹ The word *with* is feminine in verse 6, thus 'with her' (<https://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/3-6.htm>), masculine would be 'with him', and common, in this case, verse 12, is 'with me' (<https://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/3-12.htm>). The word used in verse 12 ('*immādi*', Strong's #5978), is a prolonged (extended) form of the word used in verse 6 ('*immāh*'), Strong's #5973, New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Copyright © 1981, The Lockman Foundation, Holman, Nashville, TN, USA.) According to Baker, 2003 (The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Old Testament, 2003, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, USA., #5978), '*immāh*' and '*immādi*' are the same in meaning. It seems then that verse 6 is referencing 'the man to be with her' and verse 12 is referencing 'the woman to be with him.' In other words, the author of Genesis is emphasizing how the husband and wife are to be companions. Thus, when Moses wrote that the woman gave the forbidden fruit to man with her, he was indicating that she gave the fruit to the one she was supposed to help – but, it obviously was not helpful.
- ¹⁰ BDB, Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, Unabridged. Electronic Database. Copyright 2002, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. from www.bibleapps.com/hebrew/6963.htm and also the hardcopy The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon with and Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, Peabody, MA, USA. Reprinted from the 1906 edition originally published by Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, Boston, MA, USA. (Strong's #6963).
- ¹¹ BibleHub literal translation of Genesis 3:16 (<http://bibleapps.com/int/genesis/3-16.htm>).
- ¹² Baker, 1994. Lexical Aids to the Old Testament, # 8669.
- ¹³ Thayer, Joseph H., Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC., Peabody, MA., USA. 2017. Reprint from the fourth edition by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1896. #3761.
- ¹⁴ Baker, 1994. Strong's concordance, #2332.
- ¹⁵ Thayer, 2017. #4982, point 'b.'
- ¹⁶ Baker, Warren and Carpenter, Eugene, The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Old Testament, 2003, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, USA., #121; and Wikipedia, article on *Adamah*: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adamah>.
- ¹⁷ Biblehub on the word *adam*: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adamah> under the Strong's heading.

¹⁸ Thomas, Samuel, 2019, article entitled *Adam/Adamah* (<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/people/related-articles/adam-adamah>)

¹⁹ Thayer, 2017. #5.

²⁰ ‘Ab (Semitic),’ under heading ‘Christendom.’ Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ab_\(Semitic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ab_(Semitic)).

²¹ ‘Adoption in Ancient Rome.’ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoption_in_ancient_Rome.

²² ‘Ab (Semitic),’ under heading ‘Arabic.’ See endnote 19, above.

²³ Vincent, Marvin R., *Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume I*. Originally published in 1886. Published recently by Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, USA, 1985. Comments on Luke 2:47, Understanding: “Hence that quality of mind which *combines*: understanding not only the facts, but of facts in their mutual relations.”

²⁴ Thayer, 2017. #3588.

²⁵ Zodhiates, Spiros, Baker, Warren, and Hadjiantoniou, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament, 1992 (Revised 1993)*, AMG Publishers, Nashville, TN, USA. #971.

²⁶ Baker, 1994. #2555.

²⁷ BibleHub App, Interlinear Gen 6:11; Mal 2:16. Copyright © 2004-2020. Glassport, PA, USA.