

Eternal Security: Message 2

DEATH IN ADAM

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

In this message (and the next) we explore another avenue of truth that will further confirm our *confidence* and *certainty* of *Eternal Life*. We’re going to examine the way God actually saves us – exactly the way it’s set out in the Bible.

The explanation of God’s method of salvation is detailed for us in Romans chapter five. And what we are going to do now, is follow the logic of the divine plan exactly as it’s set out by Paul in this chapter.

Now, so that we can truly understand how God saves us from sin, Paul begins by explaining how we became sinners *in the first place*.

And this is what this message (*‘Death in Adam’*) is all about.

- *The origin of sin*

The section under discussion in Romans chapter five, begins with an account of how sin and death came into the world in the first place and goes on to tell us how *we*, as a *race*, suffer the consequences of the act of disobedience committed by Adam in the Garden of Eden so long ago.

Paul’s explanation begins in this way:

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

That seems logical enough! We're all sinners because we all *sin* - just like Adam did - right?

Well - that's not actually what Paul has just said! He doesn't say 'because all sin' – he says “...**because all sinned;**”. Death came upon *everyone* **because all sinned** - *past tense!*

So, what does Paul actually mean by this? To find out, we need to read a little further:

“To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account *where there is no law.*” (Romans 5:13) (italics mine)

Paul is saying here that sin can't be held against some-one who *hasn't broken a specific law!* The bottom line is this: you can't pay the penalty for sin - or suffer the consequences

of sin (in other words; you can't *die*) - unless you've disobeyed one of God's commandments. You must have broken a *specific law* to deserve death!

- *The origin of death*

This principle has tremendous implications for us. To be held guilty of sin - *we must have broken a specific law*.

This seems entirely logical in the case of people who lived *after* God gave His law to *Moses* - the people were *bound* by that law; they *broke* it, and *death* was the result.

But what about the people who lived *before* God gave mankind the ten commandments? What happened to those people? Didn't they all still die – in spite of not having broken any specific law of God?

Indeed, they did – the very point that Paul makes in the next verse:

“**Nevertheless**, (that is: in spite of them apparently not being given a commandment) **death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam.**” (*Romans 5:14*) (brackets mine)

They died as *well* – during the thousand years *before God gave his law to Moses!*

So what's Paul getting at? Just this - that all those generations of people who lived after the garden of Eden *must have actually broken the law*; they *must* have violated one of God's specific commandments - otherwise sin couldn't be held against them and they wouldn't have died!

And if the commandment given to Adam and Eve in Eden's garden was the only one that had been given up till that point – they must have died as a result of breaking that particular commandment (as did Adam and Eve).

That's the point Paul is making here when he said:

“**...death came to all people, because all sinned.**” (i.e., in the garden)

But how is that possible? Only Adam and Eve were in the garden. How could the whole human race (including you and me), be said to have also been in the garden, violating God's commandment?

The answer to *this* question reveals to us the actual cause of the *human condition*. It tells us how we became sinners and ultimately leads us into a deeper understanding of the true nature of salvation.⁹ (as we'll see in the next message: 'Life in Christ')

And now Paul goes on to explain how the whole of humanity stands in two relationships to Adam. We are, as a race:

1. *Represented by Adam*
2. *Incorporated in Adam*

1. REPRESENTED BY ADAM

- *Represented by Adam: Federal Headship*

The whole human race -including you and me - aren't sinners because of the sins we commit in our *lives*. We're sinners because of *one sin* that we committed *in the garden of Eden*

But how does this work? We weren't in the garden! No one else *was* - except *Adam* and *Eve*! We weren't *there* to commit that sin. And even if we *had* been, who's to say that we would have disobeyed like Adam did? It sounds like the whole human race is being arbitrarily held accountable for the actions of just one man!

Well - unfair as it seems - that is certainly what *appears* to have happened. Paul goes on to say that “...many died through one man's trespass.” (*Romans 5:15*) and “ ..by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man.” (*Romans 5:17*) (*italics mine*).

Clearly, we've all been pronounced guilty because of Adam's sin - even though we weren't there at the time!

- *Why blame us?*

So, the objection naturally arises - and we've *all* heard it before - how can that be *fair*? Why blame *us* for *Adam's* sin?

Well, this is where we need need to understand the principle of *Federal Headship* - or, if you like, - Representative Headship.

Representative headship is a principle we're all familiar with in many levels of life.

- *Representation by Proxy*

Take one example: If a group sends a representative or a *proxy* to speak or act on its behalf, the representative becomes a *substitute for the group*. What he or she *says* or *does* is *what the group is deemed to have said or done*. The actions of the proxy are binding on the whole group. The group doesn't have to be physically present: it is present - in the person of that *proxy*.

That's the true nature of *substitution*!

But if the individual can represent the whole, the whole can represent the individual:

- *Representation by Government*

If the Government declares war - it's acting on *our* behalf and we are consequently *all* at war and many of us will die because of decisions made by the government.

We say the *Government* financially supports the needy, but it *is*, in fact, we *ourselves* - through our *taxes* - who support these people. The Government is acting as a *substitute* for us; it's functioning on *our* behalf; it's acting as our *representative*.

- *Representation in law*

Take another example. If you hire somebody to kill for you, you may not have committed the act personally, but you are legally just as *guilty* as - or even *more* guilty - than the person who pulled the trigger! Because he or she was representing you - acting on your behalf - in the eyes of the law, that person's actions are *your* actions.

In 2004, in the state of Delaware, a woman, Linda Charbonneau, co-opted both her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend to kill her husband and, subsequently, her husband's boyfriend. At her sentencing, she received the death penalty. The ones that actually committed the murder avoided execution. The reason? As the judge said: 'They were her agents. She has more, not less, responsibility for the murders.'

- *Representation in Sport*

A further example we're *all* familiar with is seen at the Olympic Games. When an athlete wins a gold medal - *the country that athlete represents is victorious*. When he or she stands on the podium to receive a medal, they don't play his or her favorite pop song - they play the country's *national anthem*. The country *shares* in the athlete's victory - just as they might share in the disappointment or even humiliation of his or her defeat.

Get even closer to home. You may not play football *yourself*. Yet what happens when your favorite team wins? *You* rejoice - and even boast in its victory saying: '*we* won'. In effect, every action *they* perform becomes *your* action. You might have heard football fans saying things like: '*We* had a good training session Thursday night' or '*We* purchased this particular player last week'.

- *Representation in the workplace*

Have you ever found it *amusing* how that when a person starts a new job with a company, in a few hours (or even minutes) he or she will be saying: '*We* sell this particular product or *we* intend to promote this particular event next week", even though that person will have had nothing *personally* to do with these activities or decisions?

- *Federal Headship in the Bible*

this concept of Federal headship - of *representation* or *substitution*- also runs right

through the Bible, it's how God actually *evaluates* and *judges individuals*. Not on an *individual, personal* basis per se (because if that were the case, *everyone* would be going to hell), but on the grounds of the *group* to which he or she belongs - and, specifically, by the actions *performed by that group's representative*.

- *Some examples*

Remember how the sin of Ham had dire consequences for the entire progeny of Canaan? Ham sinned and his son Canaan - together with all his descendants - was cursed as a result.

Another example: the character and destiny of entire tribes of Israel were determined by the actions of their progenitors. Particularly in the case of Reuben, Simeon and Levi.

Again, in the book of Exodus, we read of God visiting the iniquity *of the fathers* on the children and the children's children - to the third and fourth generation. (*Exodus 34:7*).

And remember when Achan kept the forbidden spoils after the conquest of Jericho? A transgression committed by *one* man (and perhaps his *family*) But what did God say to Joshua?

"Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies." (*Joshua 7:11-12*) (*italics mine*).

You can see that on this occasion, God viewed Israel corporately through the actions of just *one man*. It really *is guilt by association*. Achan sinned and *all Israel* were represented by Achan and pronounced guilty!

A more familiar example is the story of David and Goliath. When they met on the field of battle, each was representing his own nation or army. The *Philistines* were defeated because *Goliath* was defeated, and *he* was *representing* them. The Israelites were victorious because David - *their representative* - was victorious.

So, we find that God deals with entire bodies of people *through their representatives*. This explains why whole cities (women and children included) were sometimes wiped out because of the wickedness of their kings!

This idea of *representation* is an essentially Hebrew concept. In Western thought and philosophy, we find that the *self* is paramount. Everything is seen in reference to the individual *alone*. But this is *not so* in Eastern thought. The community to which one

belongs - and, in particular, the nature of the individual representing that community - is what makes all the difference!

So, we can now see what Paul is driving at.

- *Adam, our Federal Head*

If the whole human race sinned in the garden, it must have been that Adam was acting as our *representative*. He was speaking for us. He was our *proxy* if you like: our *Federal Head*.

Understand the significance of this! It means that it wasn't just one man being tested in the garden. God was testing the whole of humanity - our entire race - through this first man *because Adam was speaking for us*. His actions were therefore *our* actions, and *his* words were *our* words. He was *standing in our place* - *substituting* for us. And because God had decreed that we should all be represented by that first man, we *all* suffer the consequences of *his* actions!

But is that reasonable? Maybe we would have done better than Adam! Why not give *us* a chance?

Well - it wouldn't make a scrap of difference!

Let me explain. We choose our government to represent us - but our choices are fallible and our confidence often misplaced. That government may turn out to be corrupt or simply fail to represent us fairly or accurately. A proxy acting on behalf of a group - though chosen by that group - may be a loose cannon and entirely misrepresent the wishes of the group.

However - this is *not* the case with a loving, compassionate and all-knowing God of wisdom and truth. *He* knew what He was doing when He selected our representative. From all eternity He's been acquainted with every human being ever born - and we can be sure that His choice of a representative was entirely just and fair.

This means that what Adam did, every single one of us would have done because - I repeat - it wasn't just an individual being tested in the garden: it was the entire human race - represented by the first, perfect man. In that sense we all sinned *in Adam* - his actions were our actions: he was speaking and actively *on our behalf* - *in our place* - a truly representative role. And consequently, we're all answerable for that sin in the garden!

So, Paul sums it up this way in this way:

"...through the disobedience of the one man (that's Adam) the many (that's us) were made sinners." (*Romans 5:17*) (*brackets mine*)

- *A race of sinners*

The word '*made*', is the Greek word *kathistemi*, and it means: "to appoint, put in the category of..." What this means is that you and I - our whole species in fact - have, as a result of *Adam's* sin, been designated as a *race of sinners* before God. That is now the nature of the human race, which means that every one of us are deemed to be sinners simply by being born into that race!

2. INCORPORATED IN ADAM

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

As we read through the Scriptures, we regularly come across two expressions: 'in Adam' and 'in Christ'. There is a profound truth attached to each one – every person on earth is either 'In Adam' or 'in Christ'. Though also conveying a similar idea to what we've been discussing, each expression also embodies the concept of *incorporation*.

In this message, we're discussing what it means to be 'in Adam'. In the next message, we'll see what it means to be 'in Christ'. The similarities between these two opposite experiences give us a keen understanding of what salvation is all about. They will show conclusively why it's quite impossible for us to lose our salvation.

- *Incorporation: the reason why we sin*

If *representation by Adam* explains why we, as a race, are judged by God to be sinners, then *incorporation in Adam*, while also conveying the idea of representation, goes a step further. It explains why we, as individuals, personally commit sin.

This section began by quoting from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church:

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

We use these expressions often – but do we really understand their true significance?



To do so, we're going to see what happens with Matryoshka dolls (Russian nesting dolls). You may know them as Babushka dolls:

Those of you with a set of Babushka dolls, will know that one doll is contained within the other – another smaller one contained in that one – and so on until the tiniest doll of the set is contained within all the others.

- *Adam: the first-born of humanity*

Now imagine that the biggest babushka doll is Adam

Adam was the first man. There was only one of him in the garden of Eden.
But (aside from Eve), was Adam- truly alone?



No - he wasn't Within Adam (though not having come into separate existence as yet, was a son called Cain:

“Adam made love to his wife Eve and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.” (Genesis 4:1)

Cain had been there all along in Adam's genes (remember that Eve had been taken out of Adam) - waiting to be “brought forth”.

So, sin was present in Adam when Adam sinned – present in Adam's genes – the human genome (if your will).

Then Cain had a son, Enoch. Enoch was therefore also present in Adam – in the genes that produced Cain. Enoch and his wife likewise had children and so on.....

Its what we call the human genome – every living human on earth has been ultimately produced from within Adam.



But this is something well-know to all of us. So, what's the point of using this illustration at this juncture?

It's because the Babushka doll analogy conveys vital truths connected with us all coming from Adam and - more importantly – truths about how God views us in the light of this!

- *Each of the dolls is identical to the other*

Take a babushka doll apart and you'll find each doll is identical (though successively smaller in our physical analogy)



And so it is with all of humanity. Adam's sinful life ('nature' or 'spirit' - if you will) has been handed down successively to each member of his race through the human genome. From Seth to Enosh to Kenan to Mahalalel to Jared and so on - to the many billions in the human race.

Very much like the flame of an original candle being passed down to successive candles – different candles but the same flame!

When we turn to the line of Seth, we read these words:

Genesis 5:3

“When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.” (*Genesis 5:3*) (*italics mine*)

So, king David said in his great prayer of repentance:

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (*Psalm 51:5*)

So, we aren’t just judged as a being a race of sinners because Adam represented all humanity, we’ve all been born with a sinful nature because, in God’s eyes, we did indeed jointly commit that sin of trespass in the garden.

Look again at the Babushka doll. If you lift it up, everything inside it is lifted up. If you roll it around, everything inside it is rolled around and so forth. If we were in Adam, everything that he did – we did, and everything that happened to him as a result, also happened to us.

Remember when we talked about representation by proxy? We saw that the group was judged as being there, in the person of the proxy. This is even more so in the idea of incorporation.

And this is exactly how God judges each one of us!

- *Abraham and Melchizedek*

Remember the time when Abraham rescued his nephew Lot from the four Mesopotamian kings who had ransacked Sodom?

On his way home after a fierce battle, the victorious patriarch meets King Melchizedek who came out of the city of Salem to meet him. (*Genesis 14*)

What follows is something that give us the key to the whole concept of being incorporated in Adam.

The Genesis record tells us that Abraham gave a tithe (a tenth of his goods) to Melchizedek.

But now how the writer to the Hebrews makes the point that Levi, (whose tribe collected a tithe from the other eleven tribes), did himself pay a tithe to king Melchizedek:

But then says

“One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.”
(*Hebrews 7:9-10*)’

That's incorporation!

Levi wouldn't be born for another three generations – he was Abraham's great – grandson. Yet Levi is said to have participated in what Abraham did because he was genetically in Abraham's body – incorporated in Abraham! So great-grandfather and grandson were regarded as acting as a unit.

Now when we look at a babushka doll, what do we see?

Only the outer (largest) doll.

But what happens to that outer doll, necessarily happens to all the dolls inside!

And what does God see when he looks at the human race?

Only Adam – because Adam is not only a *representative man*, he's also a *collective man* – incorporating the entire human race.

Therefore, in that sense, God doesn't see or judge us individually at all. He sees and judges the first man. He doesn't need to look any further: He knows that we're in Adam & Adam is in us. So, we all share in that judgment and the results of that judgment.

And the Bible calls this fallen nature: “flesh and blood “. Because the ‘natural man’ (the one who is ‘in Adam’) is tied to this earth, unfit for heaven and doomed to eternal death. This is nothing to do with our *state* – but everything to do with our *identity*.

“I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*” (*1 Corinthians 15:50*) (*italics mine*)

So, ‘in Adam’ we participated in his sin

Therefore ‘in Adam’ we're condemned

‘In Adam’, our spirits are forever separated from God

‘In Adam’, our bodies become nothing but dust (*Genesis 3:19*) - never to rise again!

And that goes for everyone who is ‘in Adam’.

So why this message that seems so full of gloom and hopelessness?

In fact, why does Paul take such pains to explain to us just how we came to be condemned in sin?

And how does all this contribute to our assurance of eternal security?

Well - the answer is found in the other side of the *Adam-Christ* story.

Being judged by the actions of a representative may seem harsh at times but there is a very important reason why God has always operated on this principle.

He has used it to bring *life* to us - in exactly the same way as *death* was brought upon us through Adam. How He has done so will be the subject of our next message:

'Life in Christ'