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## ADAM AND JESUS

Adam and Jesus are alike in some ways and different in others. They are alike in that each of them was the first of his kind. They are also alike in that great things came from a single deed of each of them.

Apart from these similarities, however, Adam and Jesus are as different as night and day. From Adam came the certainty of death while from Jesus came the hope of resurrection to life.

### THE FIRST SIN

Adam and Eve were sinless and innocent until the serpent (Satan) came and tempted them to eat fruit from a certain tree, from which God had told them not to eat. It was a tree called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17). After Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened and they felt guilty. It was then that they realized that they were naked (Genesis 3:7).

God punished Adam and Eve by driving them out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). He told Eve that she would bear children with pain (Genesis 3:16). Adam He told that he would have to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, for the ground would no longer yield food of itself (Genesis 3:17-19). In addition to these punishments, the sentence of death was passed upon Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:19) and upon their descendants. Adam lived 931 years and then he died (Genesis 5:5).

Not much else is said about Adam in the Old Testament, except that the prophet Hosea mentioned him (Hosea 6:4-7). It is not surprising, however, that not much is said about Adam in the Old Testament, because Adam was no hero.

As one reads through the Old Testament and finally comes to the end of it, one finds mankind still confronted with sin and death

with no solution in sight. This fact makes the Old Testament seem sad and incomplete.

## ADAM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In contrast to the Old Testament, the New Testament has a great deal to say about Adam, some of which is not very complimentary to him.

The apostle Paul contrasted Adam with Jesus in order to show the difference between the two and to explain some interesting things about Jesus.

## WHY DO PEOPLE DIE?

If no one had ever sinned, presumably, no one would ever have to die. As it is, however, sin has entered the world. It entered through one man, Adam. (Of course, Eve was involved too, but Adam seems to have born the main responsibility.)

Once sin entered the world, it brought death with it, because death is the punishment for sin (Ezekiel 18:4,20). And so, death has spread to every one, because everyone sins. The apostle Paul said,

“Therefore, just as through one man  
sin entered the world,  
and death through sin,  
and thus death spread to all men,  
because all sinned;”

Romans 5:12 NIV

Please note that this verse does not say that men and women are somehow guilty of Adam’s sin. (Only Adam is guilty of his sins.) Nor is there any thought in this verse that people come into the world with a sinful nature as a result of Adam’s sin.

Little babies are just as sinless and innocent when they are born as Adam and Eve were before the devil tempted them. Little

children have, however, the capacity to be tempted just as Adam and Eve had that capacity. Children also have the capacity to fall into sin just as Adam and Eve did.

Although people suffer as a consequence of Adam and Eve's sin, they will not be held accountable for Adam and Eve's sin when they stand before the Judgment Seat of God. They will have to give account for their own sins.

## ORIGINAL SIN

The apostle Paul did not teach in Romans 5:12, or anywhere else, the doctrine of original sin. The doctrine of original sin holds that little children, who die before they are baptized, will suffer for the sin of Adam. That is nonsense.

## HOW ADAM IS A "PATTERN" (OR TYPE) OF JESUS

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul said that Adam was "a pattern of the one to come" (Romans 5:14). No one should think, however, that Adam was a pattern (or type) of Jesus in the sense that Jesus was somehow like Adam in character or in deed. Nor should one think that Adam is a pattern by which people should live.

Adam is a pattern of Jesus in the sense that his story illustrates the enormous effects that one man's deeds can have on posterity. An awareness of the consequences of Adam's deed can blunt the contention of those who say that Jesus' death was too small to have the wide consequences that believers in Jesus claim for it. If Adam's death could have a detrimental affect on all of mankind, why cannot God's Son have a beneficial effect on those who trust Him?

## SIN'S REIGN CONTRASTED WITH THE REIGN OF GOD'S GRACE

The apostle Paul contrasted sin's reign over the people in Old Testament times with the reign of grace that started with Jesus Christ.

People were guilty of sin before Moses' time even though they did not have the Law of Moses by which to live. They violated the principles of right and wrong as dictated by their own consciences (Romans 2:14-15) and consequently they died. The coming of the Law of Moses did not change the connection between sin and death. The Law of Moses only highlighted how bad sin is. It did not stop people from sinning and it did not provide for eternal life. It could not make people righteous (Romans 8:3). Therefore, sin continued to reign over people even after the Law of Moses was given. The major effect of the Law of Moses was to point out the need for something to be done to change the sad state of mankind. The apostle Paul said,

“The law was added [literally, “intruded”]  
so that the trespass might increase.  
But where sin increased,  
grace increased all the more,  
so that, just as sin reigned in death,  
so also grace might reign through righteousness  
to bring eternal life  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 5:20-21 NIV

Now that Christ has come, things have changed for the better. God's grace is now reigning. God's grace makes it possible for people to live righteously through Christ and thus to have the hope of eternal life.

## ADAM'S TRESPASS CONTRASTED WITH JESUS' GRACIOUS GIFT

Whereas the sin of Adam brought death, the gift of God through Jesus Christ brought life. The apostle Paul said,

“But the gift is not like the trespass.  
For if the many died  
by the trespass of the one man,  
how much more did God’s grace  
and the gift that came  
by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,  
overflow to the many!”

Romans 5:15 NIV

## SIN'S RESULTS CONTRASTED WITH THE RESULTS OF GOD'S GIFT

Although the results of Adam’s sin are great, the results of what Jesus did are even greater. The gift that God gave to mankind by allowing His Son Jesus to die on the cross makes justification (acquittal) of their many sins possible. The apostle Paul said,

“Again, the gift of God  
is not like the result of the one man’s sin:  
The judgment followed one sin  
and brought condemnation,  
but the gift followed many trespasses  
and brought justification.”

Romans 5:16 NIV

## DEATH'S REIGN CONTRASTED WITH THE REIGN OF BELIEVERS

The apostle Paul next contrasted the reign of death with the reign of Christ's followers. Those who receive grace and the gift of righteousness through Christ will themselves reign. They will reign in this life and in the life to come. The apostle Paul said,

“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”  
Romans 5:17 NIV

## CONDEMNATION CONTRASTED WITH JUSTIFICATION

Adam's trespass resulted in the threat of condemnation for all men and women. Unfortunately, Adam's trespass made it a foregone conclusion that everyone in the world would sin and, therefore, that everyone would die physically. By way of contrast, however, the righteous act of Jesus made justification (acquittal) and eternal life available to all. Thus, Jesus provided for the undoing of the harm that Adam caused. Paul said,

“Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.”  
Romans 5:18 NIV

No one reading these verses needs fear that he or she will be hauled before the Judgment Seat of Christ in order to give account

for Adam's trespass. Never! Adam and Eve are the only humans that will have to give account for their trespasses. Ezekiel said, "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

It is wrong to think that people are automatically condemned as a result of Adam's trespass. Condemnation is no more automatic than justification (acquittal) is automatic. People have to engage in sin personally before they will be condemned on the Day of Judgment, just as they have to make a personal decision to obey the gospel before justification (acquittal) is made available to them.

### ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE CONTRASTED WITH ONE MAN'S OBEDIENCE

The apostle Paul contrasted the effect of Adam's disobedience with the effect of Jesus' obedience. The contrast lies in the fact that, whereas many were placed in jeopardy by Adam's sin, many are given the opportunity to be made righteous by Jesus' obedience. Paul said,

"For just as  
through the disobedience of the one man  
the many were made sinners,  
so also through the obedience of the one man  
the many will be made righteous."

Romans 5:19 NIV

Notice that the phrase, "many will be made righteous," is in the future tense. The apostle Paul was not thinking of righteousness' having being attributed to people at the moment that Jesus died on the cross; nor was he thinking of righteousness being attributed to a person at the moment that person first attaches his or her affection to Jesus. The attributing of righteousness lies in the future, because it is contingent upon many things, not the least of which is the response that an individual makes to the gospel of Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote,

“He [God] will punish those  
who do not know God  
and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”  
2 Thessalonians 1:8 NIV

If the imputation of righteousness is not automatic, but is contingent upon one's response to the gospel, can one then reasonably assume that people automatically become sinners because of Adam's sin? No. Being a sinner is dependent upon one's own response to temptation, not upon Adam's.

### ADAM AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The apostle Paul also wrote concerning Adam in connection with his discussion of the resurrection of the dead. Paul showed that the harm done by Adam would finally be overcome in the resurrection of the dead. In the following passage, Paul found it entirely appropriate that Christ, who came as a human (John 1:14), should overcome death as a human, since it was through a human that death came into the world in the first place. Paul said,

“But Christ has indeed  
been raised from the dead,  
the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.  
For since death came through a man,  
the resurrection of the dead  
comes also through a man.  
For as in Adam all die,  
so in Christ all will be made alive.  
But each in his own turn:  
Christ, the firstfruits;  
then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”  
1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NIV

## A “LIVING BEING” CONTRASTED WITH THE “LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT”

The apostle Paul traced out the contrast between Adam and Jesus still further. He called Adam “a living being,” but he called Jesus “a life-giving Spirit.” Adam was only a “natural” man, but Jesus was (and is) “spiritual.” “The first man” (Adam) was made of the dust of the earth, but “the second man” (Jesus) came from heaven. Adam was an “earthly man,” but Jesus was (and is) “the man from heaven.” Here are Paul’s words:

“So it is written:  
‘The first man Adam became a living being’;  
the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.  
The spiritual did not come first,  
but the natural, and after that the spiritual.  
The first man was of the dust of the earth,  
the second man from heaven.  
As was the earthly man,  
so are those who are of the earth;  
and as is the man from heaven,  
so also are those who are of heaven.”

1 Corinthians 15:45-48 NIV

All humans share a physical body with Adam--and that physical body will die--but through Jesus, everyone is offered a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44), which will live forever (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

## CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul brought his comparison between Adam and Jesus to a close by saying that just as people resemble Adam in their physical bodies, they will be like the resurrected Jesus in their resurrected bodies. Paul said,

“And just as we have borne  
the likeness of the earthly man,  
so shall we bear the likeness  
of the man from heaven.”

1 Corinthians 15:49 NIV

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God send Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden after they had sinned? See Genesis 3:22-24. Why did He not just leave them there? What do you think?
2. Is it a good thing or a bad thing that people have to die? Would you like to live on this earth forever? Please give your reasons.
3. Would you want bad people to live on this earth forever? What would it be like on earth, if bad people lived forever?
4. Is there a difference between the way Christians mourn for their dead and the way unbelievers mourn for theirs? Please explain.
5. What are some of the ways in which Adam and Jesus are alike?
6. What are some of the ways in which Adam and Jesus are not alike?
7. Do little children inherit Adam's sin? Do little babies need to be baptized in order not to be lost? Please explain.
8. At what age do you think people should get baptized?