
THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN

Doctrine of Man
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ORIGINAL SIN AND IMPUTATION

- Sin is a covenant-historical reality. This is seen clearly when we consider the sustained analogy that Paul draws between the historical Christ and the first man, Adam.
 - Adam and Christ serve as representatives of distinct ages or epochs in human history. They are *the* two public people, who summarize God's dealings with man. Every single person is either represented by Adam or by Christ.
 - The transition from grace (broadly considered) to wrath in history (Adam) is followed by a transition from wrath to grace in history (Christ).
- Adam's original sin affects us all. But, we must ask precisely how this original sin is transmitted to Adam's posterity. John Murray argues that there is an "immediate conjunction" of the sin, death and condemnation of Adam, and the sin, death and condemnation of his posterity.
 - Death
 - Verse 15b—"For if many died through one man's trespass."
 - The many die without reference to their own, actual sin. The grounds of death consist in being represented by disobedient Adam.
 - It is an *immediate conjunction* between Adam's one trespass and the death of sinners. This is even clearer looking at verse 17.
 - Verse 17—"For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man"
 - Again, there is an immediate connection between Adam's one transgression and the reign of death in the human race.
 - This means that there is no mediating feature between Adam's sin and our death. The relationship is immediate.
 - Condemnation
 - Verse 16—"For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation"
 - Verse 18—"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men . . ."
 - Sin (verses 12, 19).
 - In verse 12, Paul says that when Adam sinned, "all sinned." Because Adam is a public person, his act stands for those whom he represents.
 - Adam's sin is our sin, Adam's guilt is our guilt, and Adam's condemnation is our condemnation.

THE NATURE OF THE SIN IMPUTED

- While the language of imputation is not used explicitly in Romans 5, the concept or reality is certainly present (cf. Psalm 32:2; Romans 4:8; 5:13 and 2 Cor 5:19). Imputation introduces the idea that sinners are constituted guilty independent of and prior to their own personal sin.
- Paul makes a sharp though parallel comparison between the representative acts of Adam/Christ and the result of those acts.

- Adam's sin results in death for Adam as well as those whom he represents. However, the righteousness of Christ results in justification and eschatological life for Christ and those whom he represents.
- In *antithetical contrast* to sin and its consequences, the righteousness of Christ, understood as obedience, brings justification and life.

HISTORICAL VIEWS OF ROMANS 5:12–20

- **The Pelagian view** is that “all sinned” (Romans 5:12) simply refers to the actual sins committed by all men after the sin of Adam. Adam's sin only affected himself.
- **The Roman Catholic view** is that a sinful state results from Adam's sin. They call this habitual sin, which is a sinful orientation or an inherited proclivity to sin. There are several issues with this view. One major issue is that Romans 5:12–19 does not speak of the transmission of sin specifically at birth. It speaks of an immediate conjunction between Adam and his posterity even in his one act of disobedience.
- Murray holds a **classical Protestant view**. He argues that the one trespass of the one man in verses 15–19 is the same sin denoted by the language “all sinned” in verse 12.
 - The “just as” / “and so” in 5:12a and 5:12b begins an unfinished comparison.
 - Verse 12 establishes that *just as* sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, *so also* all men sinned.
 - Verses 13–14 is a parenthesis in the argument.
 - Paul picks up his unfinished thought from vs. 12, continuing it in vs. 19. The syntax of “just as” / “and so” in 19a and 19b connects to verse 12.
 - The one act of disobedience that results in sin and death is compared specifically to another act of obedience that results in righteousness and life.
 - Theologically, we can base the connection upon Paul's two-Adam Christology. Adam represents the age of disobedience (v. 19a), sin (v. 12), death (v. 12), and condemnation. Christ represents the age of obedience, righteousness, life, and condemnation.

THEORIES EXPLAINING ADAM'S UNION WITH HIS POSTERITY

- **Biological Union**—The corruption of Adam is passed to his posterity by ordinary or natural generation and his guilt is imputed to his posterity, based *solely* on biological concerns. Adam and Eve are the “root” of all mankind. So when Adam sinned, his sin would certainly pass to his descendants. The means for the imputation is “ordinary generation.”
- **Realistic Union**—The realist takes the general notion of “humanity” to be an independent substance. All human beings are united with one another through this singular substance. Human nature is generically and numerically one. But there's a major problem. If Christ has a fully human nature, and human nature in its entirety was corrupted in the fall, then Christ was not born without sin (compare Heb 4:15).
- **Covenantal or Federal Union**—In addition to a biological union, there is a “covenantal” union between Adam and his people. All mankind sinned “in” Adam not only by being his biological descendants, but also by a “covenantal” relationship ordained by God. Ordinary generation is then a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition for the imputation of Adam's sin.