

The Christadelphian Advocate

Bible Study Paper No. 1

IN ADAM

OR

IN CHRIST

Josh Vest

August, 2008

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

Death and life are incompatible states. By using the preposition “in”, the Apostle Paul turns the names of two men into a system of classification for all mankind. A standing in the former means death, while a standing in the latter means life. Like the states to which they correspond, man may only be associated with one man or the other.

Part one: *In Adam all die*

The first man transgressed the Edenic Law and as a result sin entered into the world, *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin* (Romans 5:12). While in fellowship with God and in a “very good” state, Adam and Eve were not immortal creatures. This is demonstrated by the penalty for breaking the single law of the Garden of Eden, *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Genesis 2:6-17). Belief that Adam and Eve were immortal is to believe the serpent’s lie, *ye shall not surely die*, in that immortal creatures by definition cannot ever be subject to death. In the Scriptures, immortality or life everlasting are only applied to God (I Timothy 1:17; 6:16), to Christ after he had risen (Revelation 1:18), and as a future hope of the faithful (1 Corinthians 15:53). Adam and Eve were created in a very good state with the potential to attain to the higher immortal state *of the elohim* or to come under the sentence to death.

The penalty of this Edenic law was death to be inflicted on the day of disobedience, *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. Attempts have been made to portray the penalty as a condemnation to mortality and eventual death, relying on the marginal rendering of “dying thou shalt die”. This phrase is a Hebrew expression for death. No period of prolonging is implied as evidenced by use of the exact same idiom in Exodus 19:12. The Jewish Study Bible appropriately renders the passage, *as soon as you eat of it, you will die*. Based on the death of our Savior, we may infer the death

due also would have been one involving their cutting off and the shedding of their blood. In addition, an interpretation away from a death in the day of disobedience must redefine the word translated “day” to mean a longer time period. Extending the time period of the punishment would be incongruent with Adam and Eve’s understanding and experience with time. Here it must be noted that partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge did not directly bring about death. The fruit of the tree was not poisonous or fatal, but rather brought knowledge. Death was a sentence delivered by God for disobedience. Adam and Eve broke this law. However, through Divine mercy, the penalty of death was not inflicted that day. In fact, to argue that an immediate death was not due the day of Adam’s sin is to miss the first great act of God’s mercy and love in the Scriptures. In addition, concluding immediate death was not due may lead to missing the importance of the *coats of skins* provided to clothe them. The results of Adam’s transgression are important for both him and his descendants in terms of nature and relationship to God.

Adam and Eve became sinners through their disobedience. Sin, the breaking of God’s laws, had not yet been present in the world. With their disobedience, sin entered the world and the propensity to sin became the basic nature of mankind. The first definition of sin is *a transgression of a law*. The second is the physical principle of animal nature that works contrary to God. The inherent propensity to sin

within human nature was a result of the transgression. As James wrote (1:13-15), the ability and will to do that which is contrary to the will of God is within each man. Paul in Romans (8:3) calls this natural tendency “sin in the flesh”, and “sinful flesh”. Sin in the flesh, or sin’s flesh, is a law of our very being working against conscious attempts to serve God (Romans 7:14-24). Jeremiah described sin in the flesh more succinctly, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...* (17:9). This sinful flesh is as much a physical disability as it is an inclination to sin. This inclination to sin became a law in their members, and because it was implanted in their flesh by transgression, it is styled, *the law of sin which is in (our) members* (Romans 7:23). Adam and Eve’s now sinful nature was demonstrated allegorically in the Garden of Eden. After transgressing the law, they realized their nakedness was cause for shame and that it should not be seen. They attempted to cover it. The change in their nature is a parallel.

John’s description of *all that is in the world* in 1 John 2:16 parallels Eve’s threefold reaction (Genesis 3:6) to the serpent’s claims about partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, namely the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*. In the original circumstances, these characteristics were external to the thinking of Eve and were presented to her through the enticing words of the serpent. After the transgression, these characteristics inherently became part of our fallen nature.

Based on the above testimony we see the word “sin” is used in two principal acceptations in the Scripture. It signifies in the first place, “the transgression of the law” and in the next it represents that physical principle of the animal nature, which is the cause of all its diseases, death and resolution into dust. Sinful flesh came

to stand for the substance called man.”¹ “Sin is a synonym for human nature. Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean.”² Previously Adam and Eve’s nature had not been unfit before God in any fashion as their nature was sinless. After transgression, their nature was no longer “very good” but sinful and needed to be covered. Through sinful action in breaking God’s law, Adam and Eve lost their fellowship and closeness to God. Sin made them unclean in the sight of God, that is, their standing before God changed. After their sin, God did not address them except in condemnation. This breach was a result of their actions, and not part of the sentence to death pronounced upon them (Genesis 3:19). The closeness mankind enjoyed with God was lost. Having become sinful, they were morally and physically unfit for direct association with God. This change of position from one of favor to disfavor was illustrated by their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Paul, speaking of Adam, wrote *for the judgment was by one to condemnation* (Romans 5:16). As stated previously, Adam and Eve were due to receive the just reward for their actions, an immediate sentence of death. However, God in His mercy spared Adam and Eve from this immediate death. God, addressing the serpent, promised a savior to mankind through the seed of the woman. Adam understood this promise, and demonstrated faith in God to perform it by giving his wife the name of *the mother of all living* (3:20). Adam was still sentenced to death but the sentence was to *return unto the ground*; they were now subject to a process that would result in their death. God’s offering of sacrifice to obtain covering for sin required the shedding of blood; the animal sacrifices that were offered could not permanently take away their sin nor grant them eternal life, but the sacrifices offered provisional forgiveness by which their days

¹ J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel* (Logos Edition) page 129

² *Ibid*, page 130

were prolonged, foregoing the immediacy of their death. It is recorded God made Adam and Eve coats of skin to cover their nakedness. Their figurative state of sin was covered by the death of an animal. It may be assumed that the coats of skin made by God required the blood shedding death of a lamb. For Hebrews 9:22 (Diaglott) states, *without an effusion (or shedding) of blood, no forgiveness takes place.* Adam and Eve's sin was covered, both literally and figuratively, by the animal skins. Adam died symbolically with the animal sacrifice fulfilling the requirements of death due for the transgression of the law. However, this sacrifice could not permanently remove the effects of Adam's sin. *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* (Hebrews 10:4) He was still expelled from the Garden, the ground continued to be cursed, he was not a righteous being, and he was still destined to die. A higher order sacrifice would be necessary to destroy the power of death

The effects of Adam's transgression were not limited to Eve and himself. Sin in the flesh, or the physical propensity to sin, passed to all of Adam and Eve's posterity. The sin, the sentence to death, the declared execution of that sentence as a return to the dust of the earth, and the separation from God, all occurred before Adam and Eve had children. The sinful fallen nature possessed by our collective first parents is hereditary. Jesus said (John 3:6), *That which is born of flesh is flesh.* The physical propensity to sin was tragically illustrated by Cain, who needed no outside tempter, as his one time "very good" parents did. Likewise, the Psalmist says (51:5), *Indeed I was born with iniquity; with sin my mother conceived me.* On which the Jewish Study Bible comments, "...He (David) sees himself as sinful even before his birth; or in other words, he is, by nature a sinful being." Because Adam became sinful flesh, his posterity would be sinful flesh. Paul said (Romans 7:18),

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.

In addition to the physical nature of a propensity to sin, the condemnation to death, which sinful nature is due, and the natural separation it causes from God, were also not confined to Adam. Paul states *all have sinned* (Romans 5:12). Adam was condemned to death, and not only were his descendants condemned to die, but also die in a state of sin. The phrase *for that all have sinned* should not be interpreted as personal sins, in the sense that all men will die because all men will commit sins due to their propensity to sin. This interpretation is not allowable on grammatical grounds. In Greek this tense means not a repetition of action, but a single one-time action in the past, as in the sin of Adam.³ From birth men are accounted as sinners on the basis of Adam's transgression. Paul explains how this is possible in the 19th verse: *For as through the disobedience of one man, the many were constituted sinners, so even through the obedience of the one, the many will be constituted righteous* (Diaglott). Constituted means established by law. All of mankind has been made, or constituted, sinners on account of our relation to Adam.

A key to understanding what Paul means by "constituted sinners" is recognizing that he is not suggesting mankind is personally responsible for Adam's transgression. Deuteronomy 24:16 states, *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.* It is the condemnation to death due sinful fallen flesh that comes upon all men. "All mankind are born of corruptible parents into a state of sin. By this natural birth, they become members of this sinful evil state, and heirs of all its disabilities. By virtue of this birth, they are 'constituted

³ See E. W. Farrar, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* for an explanation

sinners', though they could not help and had no hand in the matter".⁴ Galatians 3:22 states, *But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin...* Paul states the natural lot of mankind is as enemies of God (Romans 5:10). In Ephesians 2, those before entering the waters of baptism *were by nature children of wrath* and called strangers, aliens, and far off. Because of "Adam's sin, humanity was set down or placed into the rank of sinners; they were placed in the category of sinners; they were regarded as and deemed to be sinners, even before they committed any personal transgressions."⁴ Subsequent to the transgression, Adam and Eve were sinners by act and nature. It is not possible they could produce anything different, for Genesis 1:24 says, *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind...*

The idea a man may exist in a position of disfavor or alienation before God through no fault of his own is attested to in Scripture by principle and by demonstration. The great parable for this principle is Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20). Commenting on this event in Hebrews 7:9-10, Paul states, *And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.* The progenitor of the Levites gave recognition of the superior priesthood to Melchizedek, and because Abraham established that relationship before he had children, that recognition resulted in a legal standing of inferiority for the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priesthood was accounted as inferior based on a hereditary principle. On this same principle, Adam became a sinner when he had no children. While not guilty of Adam's disobedience, all mankind lives with its effects by being born into the same condemned nature and status before God. Although not by fault, but merely by the

happenstance of birth, mankind inherits all that sinful nature can give: inclination to sin, separation from God, and ultimately death. Likewise, the leper under the Law of Moses demonstrated a person may be declared by law to be separated from God as a result of defilement that did not involve any personal transgression (Leviticus 13:44-46). This declaration of a standing before God is consistent with His law.

The effects of Adam's transgression - the physical disability of a propensity to sin, the condemnation to death and the state of separation from God, are hereditary. As the apostle said, "In Adam all die." Adam stands as the representative or nameplate for the class of men constituted to die estranged from their creator. Though the serpent's lie, *Ye shall not surely die*, has been believed by the world, death is final (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Psalms 146:3-4; Job 14:1-2; Isaiah 26:14). The sentence of death pronounced upon Adam has passed upon all men.

I Corinthians 15:21 records, *for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* With his act of disobedience, Adam became the name for a standing before God that leads to death. God has provided a means to come out from under the condemnation to which all men are born. God has established a means to escape the sentence to death. God provided hope to Adam and Eve. The physical propensity of sin cannot be taken away from our mortal bodies until our bodies undergo change to be fashioned like unto his glorious body (Philippians 3:21), but we can be freed from the certainty of eternal death in this fallen state. Jesus said a man *must be born again*.

⁴ E. W. Farrar, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, page 8

Part 2: *In Christ shall all be made alive*

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

By birth all men are constituted sinners in Adam. Since Adam was a sinful mortal creature, all of his descendants are in the same state, though through no fault of our own. Becoming part of the constitution of Christ is the means of escaping the separation from God and having no hope in the world.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). From the beginning, God revealed that a higher order sacrifice than the one provided in the form of the coats of skin in the Garden of Eden would be necessary to destroy the power of death. Jesus Christ was that sacrifice, as he is called in the book of Revelation, *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (13:8). Jesus was the son of God, but also the son of Mary. Jesus was born into the same condemned and lost state as are all men. Previously, we discussed the principle of Adamic condemnation and how it passes upon all men. We will not review that again here, except to see how the scriptures demonstrate Christ was subject to it: *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same* (Hebrews 2:14). Luke records Mary purified herself according to the Law of Moses, because the birth of a child had defiled her (Luke 2:22-24; Lev 12:5). More dramatically, Jesus was baptized! John the Baptist, surprised said, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me* (Matthew 3:14)? John baptized for the forgiveness of sins, the only condition for which Jesus needed atonement was His inherited sin-nature. With this action, God openly acknowledged Jesus as His son, which is evidence God justified Jesus in His sight. That is, baptism, being a symbol of Jesus' death, was

a justification, or reconciliation by shadow from the sin-nature over which the power of death had dominion (Romans 6:9). The ceremony, which had cleansed the people from their personal defilements, was equally as effective in cleansing Jesus from his sin-stricken condition of nature. It is recorded that he was not exempt from the propensities of sin in the flesh, *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin* (Hebrews 4:15). Baptism does not free us from our natural inclination to sin.

Christ, as a descendant of Adam, afflicted with sin in the flesh, is a representative of all mankind, not a substitute. If his nature had been different from ours, that is, without any moral standing before God, His death would have been no different than the sacrifices under the Law of Moses. Those animal sacrifices were merely shadows and types, as creatures with no moral standing before God. Having no personal transgressions, Christ was the only perfect sacrifice. Paul wrote, *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:* (Romans 8:3). God condemned, or deposed from its dominion, sin in the flesh and the death which is its due, by the death of Christ.

Peter preached of Christ, *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it* (Acts 2:24). The blood shed on the cross by Christ was the cutting off of flesh due for the transgression that occurred under the original Edenic Law. Jesus died as the higher order sacrificial offering whose covering was efficacious for release from death on account of the victory that he gained over sin. It was not

possible according to *the law of sin and death* for Christ to be freed from Adamic condemnation without the shedding of his blood as a sacrificial offering. As written in Hebrews 7:27, *Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.* After this event, it was not possible on account of the covenant promises God had made for the grave to retain him. The necessity of Christ's sinless life is seen here. The shedding of his blood, as a perfectly righteous man who rendered his will to his Father's, was accepted by God as the sacrifice necessary for freedom from Adamic condemnation and thereby the eternal death to which it brought all those under its dominion. While death is due for inherited condemnation, in that we come under the sentence of death at birth, personal transgressions also confirm that death is our due, as the Scriptures state, *the wages of sin is death.* Because his sacrifice was perfect, in that our Lord was sinless, God accepted the sacrifice of His Son as the means for his deliverance from death and all those who should come unto God through him. Peter's declaration, that "it was not possible that he should be holden of death," is in the context of the promises of God, which were sealed and made efficacious by his sacrificial offering. As the scriptures express, he was raised from the dead by the *blood of the everlasting covenant.* *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.* Jesus stands as the nameplate for the class of men who come out of Adam. The death outcome that came upon all men by Adam's sin is described by the apostle Paul as *judgment to condemnation* (Romans 5:16,18). The life outcome that was made available by Christ's obedience is described as *the free gift and abundance of grace* (Romans 5:15,18). This is the profound difference between "the law of sin and death" and the "law of the Spirit of life in

Christ Jesus." The former was a judicial sentence imposed by the righteousness of God; the latter is a declaration of God's grace, *that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus* (Romans 3:26).

Job was asked, *How then can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman* (25:4)? Jesus provided the answer, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (John 3:3). By birth, all mankind is in the class of Adam. It is by choice a man leaves association with Adam and becomes associated with the saving name of Christ. Since the days of the apostles, the means to be born again is baptism into the name of Jesus Christ. A standing "in Christ" results in such dramatic changes that, *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In Christ, we are freed from the condemnation to death that passes upon all mankind. Paul wrote the Romans (8:1, 2 ASV); *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death.* To illustrate this change, Paul calls our inherited condemnation the "old man" (Colossians 3:9-10; Romans 6:6-8). Paul contrasts the condemnation inherited from Adam with justification through Christ. Romans 5:18-19, *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* Because of Adam's sin, humanity is placed in the category of sinners by inheritance even before they committed any personal transgressions. In contrast, God has made a gift

to mankind in the form of His son's atoning sacrifice. Like mankind was set in the rank of sinners because of Adam's transgression, God may count a man righteous, or justified in His sight, by His son. The apostle wrote that the gift came upon all men (Romans 5:16). Does that mean all mankind is justified before God? No. Paul wrote the gift was available to all men. Condemnation came by birth and without choice. Partaking of the gift of justification is individual and by choice. Baptism, partaking of the symbolic death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, is the only means to have the "old man" or condemnation put away (Colossians 2:12). Peter wrote, *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). Justification is not universally applied as is condemnation. It becomes a curious contradiction among men of the world, who reject the concept of imputed condemnation from Adam by birth as unfair, yet defend the idea that the righteousness of Christ is similarly imputed.

Justification is a means of reconciliation to God. In Adam, mankind is separated from their Creator. By baptism into Christ mankind is reconciled to God. (Romans 5:9-10). John says, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God...* (1 John 3:2). 1 Peter 3:18 reads, *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

With baptism, personal transgressions are forgiven (Acts 2:38). Sins are illustrated as dirt or filth on a garment (Psalm 51; Isaiah 1:16; Jeremiah 2:22). This imagery was utilized by Paul to describe the effect of baptism on previous personal transgressions when he said, *...And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit*

of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Likewise, John recorded in Revelation (1:5): *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* The forgiveness of all previous transgressions occurs at baptism.

The testimony is clear that believers after baptism are able to sin and will continue to err, because although the condemnation to death was removed "in Christ", our nature was unchanged. The law in our members remains contrary to God; sin in the flesh with its propensity to sin still exists. John states, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). However, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Those "in Christ" are able to confess sins and be forgiven. How? *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous* (1 John 2:1). Those "in Christ" have access to God through Jesus Christ in his current role as high priest. Paul told Timothy, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5).

As sons of God by reconciliation through the blood of Christ, those "in Christ" are heirs of the promises to Abraham (Romans 8:14-17; James 2:5; Galatians 3:26-29). Abraham and his seed were promised to inherit the land of Israel forever (Genesis 13:14-17). The kingdom will be established with Christ's return (Acts 1:6-7; II Timothy 4:1). Inherent in these promises is the surety of resurrection and the hope of eternal life. To possess the land, Abraham and David would have to be resurrected to life again. The guarantee to those having died once with Christ in baptism to be in Christ's presence at his return is so strong that the Apostle speaks not of death, but of mere sleep. This is not simple figurative language, but an actual truth. Having died once, the death that befalls all mankind is not the end for those in Christ. Also inherent within the promise is eternal life (John 11:25). While

constituted heirs and having hope, baptism into Christ is neither a granting of nor even a guarantee of eternal life (Matthew 7:21), for immortality may not be possessed by flesh and blood (I Corinthians 15:50-54). “We must not delude ourselves with the idea that we are in the kingdom before the Master has invited us to inherit it...”⁵

With all of these benefits comes responsibility. The promises and ensuing hope are a result of the everlasting covenant between God and Abraham. Baptism is the acceptance of that covenant and the means to being part of it (Psalm 50:5). There is a responsibility and commitment associated with this covenant and those joined to it will be judged (II Timothy 4:1; Romans 14:10-12; II Corinthians 5:10).

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22). Death and life are incompatible states. By using the preposition “in,” the Apostle Paul turns the names of two men into a system of classification for all mankind. A standing in the former means death, while a standing in the latter means life. Those under a condemnation to death are estranged from God, while those in Christ have been reconciled to Him. Like the states to which they correspond, every man stands in association with only one of these men...in Adam or in Christ. May it be the happy and blessed lot of those who have been privileged to be in Christ to share in the Divine nature as was envisioned by Yahweh from the beginning.

⁵ T, Williams, *The World's Redemption*, page 228