

# **THE NEW COVENANT NEWS**



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# COMMEMORATION

A Memorial address presented by Merv Buckmaster

Jesus said to the disciples *"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you"* (John 15:14), and it is in response to his command that we assemble annually to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a memorial to his name. While primarily a testimony to our obedience to his command, we find great benefit for ourselves in this special meeting, in the spiritual strength derived from re-affirming our commitment to serve our heavenly Father. By meeting with those who also hold to this precious belief, and by following the example set by his son before he yielded up his life as the ransom for our own lives, we acknowledge that unmerited favour granted to those who seek reconciliation with their Creator. We cling to God's promise that his will shall be done on earth as it is done in the heavenly places; and we cling to the promise of life that was guaranteed by Jesus' death and resurrection, which followed the dreadful events of that night almost two thousand years ago.

In Revelation 3:14 we are told that Jesus instructed John to write, *"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God"*. These words, Jesus' own words, state that he was created by God before everything else was created. This is confirmed by Colossians 1, verses 13 and 15, *"... God's dear son ... Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."* The man who died on the cross at Calvary was, in the beginning, created as a spirit being, the image of the invisible God who is himself a spirit being (John 4:24).

When Jesus came to earth as a man, the whole world was lost in the darkness of sin. Jesus was the only man without sin (Hebrews 4:15), so when he was raised it was not from the darkness of sin, but from the darkness of death. By resurrecting him, that is standing him up again, God demonstrated his power over death, and Jesus' sacrifice opened the way to salvation for all men who believe into (that is, commit to) him. Our observance of the Lord's Supper also shows our gratitude for the light he shines on the pathway to eternal life. Because of Adam, paradise was lost. Because of Jesus, paradise will be regained.

Towards the end of his ministry Jesus told his disciples *"In my Father's house are many dwelling places ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:2,3). And we know from 1 John 3:2 that *"... now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"*.

The purpose of Jesus' sacrifice was the redemption of the human race. We have God's word to show that Jesus was transformed from a spirit being to a human being in order to serve that purpose. When Jesus' ministry was finished and the sacrifice had been made, God brought his firstborn out of death, a state of non-existence, lifted him to the heavenly places and granted him all power in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The wonders of creation and the miracles recorded in the scriptures provide the evidence for us to understand that God's power is the means by which he brings about the resurrection, and the nature of the resurrection is explained by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians.

*"But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again. ... But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, all his people will be raised. But someone may ask, How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have? Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. ... They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised they will be spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, so also there are spiritual bodies. ... Every human being has an earthly body just like Adam's, but our heavenly bodies will be like Christ's. Just as we are now like Adam, the man of the earth, so we will someday be like Christ, the man from heaven. What I am saying brothers and sisters, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. These perishable bodies of ours are not able to live for ever. But let me tell you a wonderful secret God had revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die." (1 Corinthians 15:20 et seq; New Living Translation).*

This passage teaches that when Jesus returns, all his people; that is, the little flock (Luke 12:32), those who were called and chosen and faithful (Revelation 17:14), will be raised to everlasting life with spiritual bodies. They will become spirit beings, like Jesus, so they can see him as he is (1 John 3:2). He gave his life as a human being, and he was raised to life as a spirit being. This is God's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

On this solemn occasion of the Memorial, we ponder a little more deeply about the night when Jesus was betrayed into the hands of evil men. He and his disciples had gathered to partake of the Passover, according to God's old covenant with the Israelites. When Jesus paid the ransom for us and all mankind, he took away that old covenant and replaced it with the new

covenant. *“He taketh away the first that he may establish the second”* (Hebrews 10:9). During that final Passover he commanded all those who would believe into him to show their choice to follow him, by participating in a simple supper in memory of him. Just as the New Covenant replaced the Law Covenant, the Memorial Supper replaced the Passover, as established by Paul’s words in the epistle to the Corinthians.

*“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, “Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me”. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”* (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; KJV.)

The horror and anguish of his betrayal and arrest, the abuse he suffered, the mockery of his trial and the pain of his crucifixion ceased when he died on the cross. The horror and anguish were shared in some measure by the Lord’s disciples and family. Impressions, somewhat muted, come to us nearly two thousand years after those events. Grief and bewilderment enveloped the disciples until the third day after he died, when he re-appeared, risen from the tomb, to the astonishment and delight of those who mourned him.

He appeared to the two Marys as they went to tell the disciples that he had risen (Matthew 28:1). He met the disciples at a place where they had gathered to be away from the Jews (John 29:19). He met them again in similar circumstances, and convinced Thomas, who had been absent from the first meeting, that he was the risen Lord (John 20:27). He met them at a place he appointed in Galilee (Matthew 28:16). He fed them beside lake Tiberias (John 21:1), and he appeared to two of them on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13).

On different occasions his appearance frightened them until he re-assured them by identifying himself. He appeared to some of them as if he was a spirit. Sometimes he was not recognised until he gave them a sign. He appeared among them suddenly, sometimes in a room where the doors were locked. Sometimes he vanished from among them. These instances suggest that he was a spirit being; just as the passage in 1 Corinthians 15 explains that as the first of the resurrection he was transformed to have a spiritual body. The explanation in Corinthians is supported by the fact that Jesus’ tomb was sealed and that the earthly body was gone before it was opened.

However, on the other hand, the disciples could see him; he cooked for them, ate with them and they felt the scars of the wounds in his hands and his side. These details suggest that he appeared to have a fleshly body on some occasions, until he ascended into heaven.

Producing a fleshly body is not beyond the power of God. The Creator transformed Jesus from spirit being to human being for his birth and his mission among men. The evidence in Corinthians declares that God resurrected Jesus to be a spirit being, the express image of the Father's substance (Hebrews 1:3), in order to receive his reward in heaven.

There is other evidence of this astonishing transformation from spirit being to human being, such as when other angels appeared in human form to Abraham (Genesis 18:2), to Lot (Genesis 19:1), to Balaam (Numbers 22:31), and to Joshua (Joshua 5:15). These instances support the testimony in the gospels and in Acts that Jesus took on a form that appeared to be a human body when he decided that it was necessary. Other faithful men and women of olden times were given visions and dreams, showing that God and his firstborn are able to influence men's minds and senses. This divine power has also given us the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) where the plan of the ages is revealed, and the same power enabled John to record *"The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him ..."* (Revelation 1:1).

But at this present time let us turn back from the restoration miracles that lie ahead of us, and acknowledge the miracle in which lies the offer of our salvation. For this is the night of the anniversary of our Lord's betrayal: the night on which he established the memorial to his name, so that we can assemble together to give a witness to his sacrifice and to our faith in it.

There is no other way that men can be saved (John 14:6) but through faith, the faith of which this memorial is an essential part. We cannot count the number of times that the memorial has called faithful brethren together, but our dedication to respond to the call is the affirmation that God seeks from his people. In no way is this the only occasion that our faith may be affirmed. Another of the Lord's commands is that we must meet whenever we are able, to encourage each other in Christian behaviour (Hebrews 10:25), and to comfort and edify each other (1 Thessalonians 5:11). God knows that we must do this for our own sakes, and also for his own purpose.

Thus at this time and on each day to come we cast all our cares on him, through Jesus, because, through the sacrifice and resurrection of his Son we are convinced that he cares for us, even to eternal life.



# BY ONE MAN'S SIN

(All quotations are from the Revised Version unless otherwise indicated.)

by Paul W. Brownlow

Both Old and New Testaments affirm that all people, ourselves included, are sinners; that is, all are transgressors of God's laws (1 John 3:4).

Ecclesiastes 7:20 For there is not a righteous man upon earth,  
that doeth good, and sinneth not. (KJV)

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned,  
and come short of the glory of God. (KJV)

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,  
and the truth is not in us.

[See also 1 Kings 8:46; Proverbs 20:9; James 3:2; 1 John 1:10.]

## A perceived paradox

Genesis 1:27 And God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God created he him;  
male and female created he them.

To many who believe the Genesis account, the conspicuous immorality of the human race seems irreconcilable with the idea that man was created in the image of God<sup>1</sup>. During the early centuries of the Christian church this perception fostered the belief that a deleterious change had befallen man, such that he was no longer in full possession of the qualities with which God had endowed him.

## Original sin

Not long after the time of the apostles, a school of thought began to emerge that regarded Adam's disobedience as the root cause of man's sinfulness. In the theology of Christendom, this is referred to as 'original sin'. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church defines original sin as "the state of sin in which humankind has been held since the Fall"<sup>2</sup>, and cites Romans 5:12-21 as its scriptural basis. The gradual development of the doctrine can be traced from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century:—

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons from about 178 A.D., in refuting the Gnostic teaching that the created world was intrinsically evil, argued that the creation was essentially good, but that evil had come into the world through the sin of Adam. A century or so later, Methodius of Olympus wrote that man's inherent corruptibility was due to the effects of the fall of Adam. Athanasius, the well-known 4<sup>th</sup>-century bishop of Alexandria, taught that the chief consequence of Adam's sin was his loss of conformity to the image of God; and according to Didymus of Alexandria, a contemporary of Athanasius, the stain of original sin was transmitted by procreation, a view also held by Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the West, first Tertullian, a prominent 2<sup>nd</sup> century apologist, then Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and later Ambrose, bishop of Milan from 374 A.D., taught the involvement of the whole human race, not only in the consequences of Adam's sin but in the sin itself. Ambrose had been instrumental in the conversion of Augustine [354-430], who became bishop of Hippo in North Africa and one of the most influential theologians in church history. He incorporated Ambrose's views into his own teaching on original sin. Augustine "maintained that man was created with certain supernatural gifts which were lost by the Fall of Adam. As a result, man suffers from a hereditary moral disease, and is also subject to the inherited legal liability for Adam's sin; and from these evils he can be saved solely by the grace of God."<sup>2</sup> Despite strong opposition, the principles of Augustine's doctrine were confirmed by a number of church councils, especially the Second Council of Orange (529)<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, the idea of 'original sin' was formally established in the orthodox teaching of the Christian Church. Certain aspects of the Augustinian view were challenged by later theologians, notably Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but its basic features remained intact, i.e., that Adam's sin had left the human race with a burden of guilt and morally debilitated, and in various forms this teaching was retained by Protestant churches after the Reformation.

### **The Old Testament**

There are three passages in Genesis that relate to adverse changes in the lives of Adam and Eve. The first describes their behaviour immediately after having disobeyed God's command:

- Genesis 3:7     And the eyes of them both were opened,  
                    and they knew that they were naked;  
                    and they sewed fig leaves together,  
                    and made themselves aprons.
- 8                And they heard the voice of the LORD God  
                    walking in the garden in the cool of the day:  
                    and the man and his wife hid themselves  
                    from the presence of the LORD God  
                    amongst the trees of the garden.
- 9                And the LORD God called unto the man,  
                    and said unto him, Where art thou?
- 10               And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden,  
                    and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Shame and fear: certainly, feelings that Adam and Eve had not experienced before, but by no means indicative of a new and abiding moral weakness.

The second was the pronouncement of God's judgement:

- Genesis 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.
- 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;
- 18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;
- 19 in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

With these words the LORD predicted the life of hardship that awaited Adam and Eve, and the certainty of their eventual death. The only sin referred to is their disobedience to God's commandment, for which Adam bore sole responsibility.

The third passage relates to the actual eviction of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24), which we will consider shortly; however, although it mentions evil, ("Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil"), it contains nothing that might denote a change in the moral character of Adam.

Given the enormous significance of "a hereditary moral disease", one might expect the events in Eden to have been reflected upon frequently during the course of God's dealings with mankind in Old Testament times, yet this was not the case. I doubt that there is a more incisive observation on the inclinations of man<sup>4</sup> than God's words shortly after the Flood, as Noah offered sacrifices of thanksgiving:

- Genesis 8:21 And the LORD smelled the sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.



“The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” – a scathing indictment, yet the LORD gave no indication that Adam’s disobedience may have been the cause. And while the wickedness of humanity, particularly that of Israel during the Law Covenant period, was deplored and condemned by the prophets, it was not attributed to the fall of Adam. In fact, from Genesis 5 to the end of the Old Testament, excluding genealogies, Adam is mentioned only once:

Job 31:33 If like Adam I covered my transgressions,  
by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom ...

If Augustine and others were correct about inherited guilt and the enduring effect of Adam's sin on the nature of human beings, it would seem that some important details were omitted from the Old Testament. The question naturally arises, Why would God have withheld such important information from His people of old, if that is in fact what He did?

There is an alternative view, one that now appeals to me as more reasonable, which is that God did not conceal from the ancients anything of importance concerning Adam’s fall from grace, and that the account in Genesis is essentially complete as far as God’s purpose then and now required; but can this view be reconciled with the passage referred to in Romans 5?

### **Romans 5:12-21**

12 Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world,  
and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men,  
for that all sinned:-

In this and the following verses, where Adam’s disobedience and its consequences are referred to, I will endeavour to align the Apostle’s words with the plain statements of the Old Testament. It should soon become obvious whether or not the Old Testament scriptures are sufficient to explain what Paul has written.

### **“as through one man sin entered into the world”**

After God created the first human pair, and instructed them in their role, it is written,

Genesis 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made,  
and, behold, it was very good.

“Very good”, that is, not evil in any way; but first Eve, then Adam, disobeyed God’s commandment concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17; 3:6). Adam was held responsible

(Genesis 3:17-19) and for that reason Paul has written, “through *one man* sin entered into the world”.

According to Strong’s Concordance, the Greek verb *eiserchomai* (#1525), meaning to “to *enter*”, can be used figuratively, just as in the English language, where some momentous innovation may be described as “entering” the world. In this case sin was the innovation: it was committed for the first time in the human domain, an area where previously it had been unknown. “Entered” in Romans 5:12 is therefore a figure of speech, and simply relates to Adam’s act of disobedience.

### **“and death through sin”**

Death was the penalty attached to the commandment:

Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,  
thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest  
thereof thou shalt surely die.

There were no other human beings on the earth at that time, and therefore Adam and Eve alone were bound by the commandment. They ate the fruit of the tree and brought upon themselves the consequence of that disobedience. God’s judgement, likewise addressed to them only, concluded with the words,

Genesis 3:19 ... for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return ...

From Genesis 5:5 onward, the limitation of all human life by death is treated as an established fact, apparently requiring no further explanation. Should “the common death of all men” (Numbers 16:29) be considered as proof that the descendants of Adam had also been judged guilty of his crime?

In both the Law and the Prophets, individual responsibility is set forward as a basic principle in the application of God’s justice:

Deuteronomy 24:16 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.

Ezekiel 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die:  
the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father,  
neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son;  
the righteousness of the righteous  
shall be upon him, and the wickedness  
of the wicked shall be upon him.

I recommend the reading of Ezekiel chapter 18 in its entirety, because it is God's answer to those Jews held captive in Babylon who believed that they were being punished for the sins of their forebears. So clearly illustrated and thorough is the refutation of this belief, that the portion quoted above is beyond contradiction or qualification.

Because these scriptures belong to the Law Covenant period, their relevance to a matter dating from a much earlier time might be questioned; however, as confirmed by Moses' words in Numbers 16:29, death was as much the lot of Israelites under the Law as it had long been for all mankind. Therefore, Israel during that period provides us with a test case. If "the common death of all men" was indeed punishment for Adam's sin, then the subjection of Israel to that punishment would have directly contravened Deuteronomy 24:16.

Plainly, the principles underlying God's laws are not confined to one particular era; as the apostle Paul confirmed during the course of the Gospel ministry,

Romans 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy,  
and the commandment holy,  
and just, and good.

Although the Law Covenant was a temporary arrangement, its commandments reflected the holiness, justice and goodness of God, which are timeless, and on this basis we may be assured that responsibility for Adam's sin was not borne by his offspring.<sup>5</sup>

Romans 5:12 Therefore, as through one man sin entered  
into the world, and death through sin;  
and so death passed unto all men,  
for that all sinned:-

In accordance with Deuteronomy 24:16, the words, "and death through sin", if they refer to the death of the guilty, can only be applied in this place to the punishment of Adam and Eve. Yet Paul went on to say, "and so death passed unto all men".

### **"and so death passed unto all men"**

The Greek word translated "so" is *houtōs* (#3779), meaning 'in this way'.<sup>6</sup> "And *in this way* death passed unto all men". In what way? How did the sin of Adam bring about the death of people who were not responsible for his sin? The answer is in Genesis, which gives us a straightforward explanation of the actual cause of Adam's death:

- Genesis 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man  
 is become as one of us, to know good and evil;  
 and now, lest he put forth his hand,  
 and take also of the tree of life, and live for ever:  
 23 therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden  
 of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.  
 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east  
 of the garden of Eden the Cherubim,  
 and the flame of a sword which turned every way,  
 to keep the way of the tree of life.

Clearly, man was not created as a self-sustaining being. Adam was flesh and blood, and like us he needed to breathe, and to eat and drink (Genesis 1:29; 2:7,16), which demonstrated that he was dependent on his environment for survival, and in particular on the tree of life. Righteousness alone did not sustain Adam's life, and sin by itself did not cause his death. Giving effect to the judgement required God to take action: Adam and Eve were thrust out into an environment that could not support the life of a human being indefinitely, and that was the situation that their children inherited. In this way Adam's condemnation, that is, death, passed to his descendants. There would appear to be nothing mysterious or sinister about it.

### “for that all sinned”

Historically, the understanding of Romans 5:12 has been controversial and that has led to a translation problem in the final clause.

Διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ δι’ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθε,  
 Therefore, as through one man the sin into the world entered,

καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος• καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ  
 and through the sin the death, and so unto all men the

θάνατος διῆλθεν, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. (Romans 5:12; Diaglott)  
 death passed through, [eph hō] all sinned.

A significant disagreement exists over the translation of that Greek expression on the bottom line, “*eph hō*”, a preposition followed by a pronoun. In the King James, the English Revised and American Standard versions the final clause has been translated, “**for that** all (have<sup>7</sup>) sinned”. The RSV, NIV and a number of later versions read, “**because** all sinned”. In the Emphatic Diaglott, Benjamin Wilson’s word-for-word translation has, “**in which** all sinned”, while in his New Translation he has rendered it, “**in whom** all sinned”.

These different translations of “*eph hō*” might seem to suggest that its meaning is uncertain, but in fact the meaning of “*eph hō*” varies according to context; and so the challenge for the translator is, firstly, to discern the proper relationship between “*eph hō*” and its context, and then to respect the grammatical limits that apply to its translation.

### Context

Verse numbers<sup>8</sup> were not present in the original manuscript, and in my view the arbitrary division between verses 12 and 13 of Romans 5 tends to isolate verse 12, encouraging the reader to interpret its final clause with reference only to the information in verse 12 itself. With this limitation, “all sinned” might appear either to be the reason death passed unto all men, or to indicate a connection between the human race and Adam’s transgression; and in most versions it seems that “*eph hō*” has been translated with one or other of these thoughts in mind. However, there is a continuity of theme through verses 12 and 13 that is perhaps more easily seen without the division:

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world,  
and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men,  
[*eph hō*] all sinned:- for until the law sin was in the world:  
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Together, these two verses trace a chronological progression: first came Adam’s sin, followed by the death sentence; but death could not begin to pass “unto all men” until there were other people on the earth, so at this point the narrative has moved on from Adam and Eve to those who came after. “All sinned” is the next phase of the story, and explains *how* sin came to be “in the world” until the inception of the Law Covenant, an event that took place more than 1500 years after the death of Adam. “All sinned” refers to the personal sins of Adam’s descendants, and this, I believe, is the context into which the translation of “*eph hō*” must be accommodated.

### Grammar

What do we know about these two Greek words, “*eph hō*”?

ἐφ’ (*eph*) = ἐπί (*epi*)

*Eph* substitutes for *epi* when followed by an aspirated vowel<sup>9</sup>. According to Strong’s Concordance, *epi* (#1909) is “a primitive preposition properly meaning *superimposition* (of time, place, order, etc.),” that is, one thing laid on something else, literally or figuratively<sup>10</sup>. *Epi* has a range of possible English equivalents, but Dr. Strong has also pointed out that the grammatical case of the associated noun, or in this instance, pronoun, places limits on the way *epi* may be translated. *Hō* is dative case, and so the superimposition represented by *epi* is “a relation of *rest*”; it may mean ‘at’, ‘on’, ‘in’, and there are several other possibilities, depending on context.

ὧ (hō)

*Hō* (#3739) is a relative pronoun. It is dative case, singular, and means *who* or *which*<sup>11</sup>.

After comparison with other New Testament texts where “*eph hō*” has been used, I formed a tentative opinion of how the expression should be translated in Romans 5:12, but wanted confirmation from a published scholar familiar with the subtleties of New Testament Greek. In his *Emphatic Diaglott* I believe Benjamin Wilson has, perhaps reluctantly, left us an insight into the proper translation of “*eph hō*” in Romans 5:12.

### **Romans 5:12**

(Diaglott: word for word)

Διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ δι’ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον  
On account of this, as through one man the sin into the world

εἰσῆλθε, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος• καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας  
entered, and through the sin the death, and so unto all

ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.  
men the death passed through, in which all sinned.

(Diaglott: New Translation)

for this reason, – as through One Man SIN entered into the WORLD,  
(in whom all sinned,) and through SIN, DEATH;  
so also, DEATH passed upon All Men.

In the word-for-word version, Wilson has translated *eph hō* as “in which”, but in his New Translation he has relocated the final clause to the middle of the verse and translated *eph hō* as “in whom”. I can suggest only one explanation: – with the clauses in their original sequence, Wilson conceded that “in which” was the appropriate translation of *eph hō*; nevertheless, in the New Translation he has, apparently for doctrinal reasons, rearranged the clauses to allow *eph hō* to be translated as “in whom”, that is, ‘in Adam all sinned’. As previously pointed out, the idea that culpability for Adam’s sin passed to his descendants is a contradiction of Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20, and for that reason I regard Wilson’s New Translation of Romans 5:12 as unacceptable. On the other hand, his word-for-word translation, by following the original sequence of the Greek text, avoids the doctrinal compromise and is therefore more likely to reflect the intended sense of the verse.

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world,  
And death through sin; and so death passed unto all men,  
*in which* all sinned:- for until the law sin was in the world:  
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

“And so death passed unto all men, *in which* all sinned”. The relative pronoun, “which” (*hō*), stands for the circumstance described in the preceding clause (i.e., the universality of death), while the preposition “in” (*epi*) indicates the superimposition of “all sinned” on that circumstance. What this means is that those after Adam and Eve sinned *while already under the condemnation of death*; and again I stress the need to differentiate between God’s judgement and punishment of Adam and Eve, and the condemnation of their offspring,

### **Romans 5, verses 13 and 14**

Withdrawal of access to the tree of life not only brought about the death of Adam and Eve but also made death inevitable for their descendants, a fact illustrated in the next two verses:

- 13 for until the law sin was in the world:  
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.
- 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses,  
even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam’s  
transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

### **“for until the law sin was in the world”**

While Adam and Eve remained in the garden, God’s commandment (Genesis 2:17) defined the relationship between sin and death. That commandment lapsed with their eviction and it was not until the establishment of the Law Covenant with Israel some 2400 years later that God again issued commandments whereby sin became punishable by death<sup>12</sup>. In the interim “all sinned”, as stated in verse 12.

### **“but sin is not imputed when there is no law”**

Paul had already appealed to this principle in Romans 4:15, regarding responsibility for sin:

for the law worketh wrath; but where there is no law,  
neither is there transgression.

“For the law worketh wrath”, that is, God’s wrath toward those who disobeyed His laws. Adam and Eve were the prime example: they transgressed the commandment that God had given them and incurred His wrath, which led to their punishment. But for others who lived prior to the Law Covenant, there was effectively “no law” to transgress. Their sins were therefore not imputed, that is, not attributed<sup>13</sup> to them, and they were not individually judged or condemned.<sup>14</sup> In 1 Corinthians 15:56, Paul wrote,

The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

Without the responsibility that God's law imposed, sin was powerless to bring death to Adam's children; yet, as Paul has pointed out, that made no difference to the ultimate outcome:

- 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses,  
Even over them that had not sinned after the likeness  
of Adam's transgression ...

Despite the fact that there was "no law" during that period, they all died, and the scriptural evidence points to one cause only: deprivation of that which had formerly sustained the lives of Adam and Eve – the tree of life. Death came to Adam's offspring purely as a consequence of their father's punishment. Had they shared his guilt, they would have been in the same case as Adam himself, and the distinction drawn in verse 14 between their sins and his would be meaningless. Alternatively, had their deaths been due to their own sins, then the apostle's statement in verse 13, "but sin is not imputed when there is no law," would amount to a contradiction of fact. It must be remembered that the edict in Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die", presumes the responsibility for sin which the Mosaic Law imposed (Romans 3:20).

The truth about the underlying cause of death in the human race (Genesis 3:22-24) is crucial to the understanding of Romans 5: 13 and 14. The scripture, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), is frequently quoted without reference to the fact that sin and death become disconnected "when there is no law", and that therefore the death of all Adam's descendants cannot be ascribed to the ongoing process of God's justice. (Romans 7:8).

#### **"... who is a figure of him that was to come"**

The final clause of verse 14 is an introduction to verses 15 to 19. The Greek word *tupon* (#5179), translated "figure", implies some resemblance between Adam and "him that was to come", that is, Jesus Christ, and this analogy is woven into the verses that follow.

#### **Relevance of Romans 5:12-14**

Thus far, Paul's perspective on the effect of Adam's transgression has essentially been that of the Old Testament, which is that Adam, by his disobedience, brought death upon himself and his descendants. The apostle's motive for reviewing this part of man's history relates to the preceding part of his letter, which details the role of Jesus Christ in God's plan for man's salvation (Romans 3:21-5:11). In short, all people are sinners and unworthy of eternal life; however, because of Christ's atoning sacrifice God will graciously justify, or reckon righteousness to, those who have faith in Christ.<sup>15</sup> The alienating effect of sin is thereby removed, allowing believers to be reconciled to God and ultimately to gain everlasting life.



Romans 5:12-14 complements this teaching by supplying the relevant facts for a contrast to now be drawn between the respective effects on the human race of Adam's transgression and Christ's sacrifice.

### **Romans 5:15-19**

This contrast has been presented using a literary device characteristic of Paul's writing, a succession of compact sentences that share the same main elements but vary in detail. Overall, these five verses have the integrity of a single statement, but with the advantage of keeping the salient points before the reader's mind while building a more complex picture around those points than could effectively be done in the conventional way.

- 15 But not as the offence, so [also\*] is the free gift.  
For if through the offence of the one many be dead,  
much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace,  
*which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*  
(KJV)

<sup>16\*</sup> *Vatican MS 1209 omits*

Having alerted his readers to a certain resemblance between Adam and Christ (vs. 14), Paul was quick to point out that this does not lie in the consequences of their respective actions. "The offence of the one" was, of course, Adam's transgression, which imposed death on the human race. That offence was the very antithesis of "the free gift", or "the gift by grace", which is "by one man, Jesus Christ", and has become available to all people. The "free gift" is justification by faith, made possible by Christ's sacrifice, enabling reconciliation with God and opening the way to everlasting life.

In this condensed form, Paul has summarised the chief points of Romans 3:21-5:14, and established a pattern for the verses that follow.

- 16 And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift:  
for the judgement *came* of one unto condemnation,  
but the free gift *came* of many trespasses unto justification. (RV)

Neither is the resemblance between Adam and Christ to be found in their respective moral behaviour, Adam being "one that sinned", while Christ's righteousness is implied by the negative, "**not as** through one that sinned, so is the gift."

The Greek word '*krima*' (#2917), translated "judgement", means a *decision*,<sup>6</sup> in this case God's decision regarding Adam's disobedience, i.e., 'the judgement came of one [trespass] unto condemnation' (vs.18). This expands on the statement in verse 15, "... through the offence of the one many be dead", making it clear that God's judgement was interposed between the trespass and the condemnation; i.e., the consequence of sin did not follow automatically. "Condemnation" is '*katakrima*' (#2631), meaning an *adverse sentence*,<sup>6</sup> and by comparing the corresponding clauses in verses 15 and 16: –

- 15 For if through the offence of the one many be dead ...  
16 for the judgement came of one [trespass] unto condemnation ...

– it can be seen that "condemnation" refers to the death sentence; in real terms, separation from the tree of life. However, that is counterbalanced in each of these verses by the promise of everlasting life to all who are justified from their sins ("many trespasses") through faith in Christ.

### **Christ and Adam**

So, in what way did Christ resemble Adam? Taken together, verses 15 to 19 depict both Christ and Adam as individual human beings, each of whom underwent a test of his obedience to God, with the result in each case having implications for all mankind. These are the similarities that prompted Paul to describe Adam as "a figure of him that was to come".

- 17 For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one;  
Much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace  
and [of the gift\*] of righteousness reign in life through the one,  
*even Jesus Christ.*

\**Vatican MS 1209 omits.*

Here Paul has contrasted the impersonal 'reign' of death, not simply with eternal life through faith in Christ but with the personal rulership which has been promised to the Church, those who presently receive the gift of righteousness and will in the future become joint-heirs with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6).

- 18 So then as through one trespass *the judgement came* unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness *the free gift came* unto all men unto justification of life.

Adam's "one trespass" brought death upon all people; however, Christ's offering of His own life, the "one act of righteousness", has made justification and the prospect of everlasting life available to all who believe.

### **Romans 5:19**

This is the final verse of the series. In its contrast between the respective outcomes of Adam's transgression and Christ's sacrifice it follows the pattern of the four preceding verses.

- 19 For as through one man's disobedience  
the many were made sinners,  
even so through the obedience of the one  
shall the many be made righteous.

As noted earlier, Romans 5:12 to 21 has been cited by Christian theologians in support of the doctrine of original sin.<sup>2</sup> Augustine's view, endorsed by church councils in the 5th and 6th centuries, was that "man was created with certain supernatural gifts which were lost by the Fall of Adam. As a result, man suffers from a hereditary moral disease, and is also subject to the inherited legal liability for Adam's sin; and from these evils he can be saved solely by the grace of God."<sup>2</sup>

The last few words are true: God's grace is essential to man's salvation; but that is the only part of the Augustinian theory that has a firm basis in scripture.

It has been shown conclusively that Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 rule out the possibility that Adam's descendants ("the many") inherited responsibility, or "legal liability," for his sin, and Paul's teaching in Romans 5:12 to 14 conforms to those precepts.

Augustine's reference to supernatural gifts is entirely speculative, as is the concept of "a hereditary moral disease", although the latter remains a popular explanation for the sinful tendencies of Adam's descendants, with the first clause of Romans 5:19 commonly adduced in evidence. Undeniably, "the many were made sinners" through Adam's disobedience – those are Paul's very words – but by itself this clause does not explain *how* his disobedience made them sinners. Neither, it must be said, does the second clause in isolation reveal how Christ's obedience shall make "the many" righteous. Without answers to these questions verse 19 cannot be properly understood, let alone used to prove any doctrine.

This apparent lack of information simply shows that verse 19 was not intended to be separated from its context. Each verse from 15 to 18 has adhered to a set pattern: death through Adam, but righteousness and ultimately life through Jesus Christ (see also 1 Corinthians 15:21 and 22).

The effectiveness of such a series of verses depends on the solidarity of their shared message, making it most unlikely that Paul would depart abruptly from the harmony of verses 15 to 18 in order to introduce a new teaching that has no connection with the earlier part of his epistle and of which the meaning is unclear.

### **"many were made sinners"**

"Made" in Romans 5:19 is translated from the Greek *kathistēmi* (#2525), which has a fairly narrow definition. It means "to *place down* (permanently), i.e., (fig.) to *designate, constitute, convoy*"<sup>6,17</sup>. Within these constraints, the translation of *kathistēmi* varies with context but is mostly used in the New Testament in the sense of 'appoint' or 'ordain', as in the following examples,

Luke 7:10 But he said unto him, Man, who **made** me a judge or a divider over you?

Acts 7:10 ... he **made** him governor over Egypt and all his house.

However, in circumstances where 'make' or 'made' relates to some intrinsic change, the New Testament does not use *kathistēmi*, but either *ginōmai* (#1096; to *cause to be*<sup>6</sup>) –

John 5:9 And straightway the man **was made** whole, and took up his bed and walked.

or *pōieō* (#4160; to *make* or *do*<sup>6</sup>) --

Matthew 12:33 Either **make** the tree good, and its fruit good; or **make** the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit.

John 4:46 ... unto Cana of Galilee, where he **made** the water wine.

The use of *kathistēmi* in Romans 5:19 tells us that "made sinners" does not signify a change in moral character; it is simply a designated status. The same principle applies to "made righteous" in the same verse.

In defining the outcome of Christ's obedience, each of verses 15 to 18 has conveyed essentially the same teaching, and as we have seen, "many be made righteous" (vs. 19) adheres to this uniformity. Likewise, we should expect "many made sinners" to harmonise with the previous four verses regarding the outcome of Adam's disobedience:

- 15 . . . For if through the offence of the one many be dead . . .  
16 . . . for the judgement *came* of one unto condemnation . . .  
17 . . . by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one . . .  
18 . . . through one trespass *the judgement came* unto all men to condemnation . . .  
19 . . . through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners .

..

Paul frequently used metaphors to illustrate his teaching. A metaphor is the application of a name or descriptive term to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable,<sup>10</sup> for example, "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

The evidence suggests that "the many were made sinners" is another way of expressing the thought contained in verses 15 to 18: that the punishment of Adam, a convicted sinner, caused death to pass to all his offspring, most of whom "had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression", and to whom that punishment was not due. Considering only the effect of Adam's disobedience on the human race, i.e., death, the status of his descendants

has been (in practical terms) the same as that of Adam himself, and Paul has expressed that fact metaphorically by referring to those after Adam as having been "made sinners" through his disobedience.

### **Romans 5:20 and 21**

Earlier in the chapter Paul referred to an era prior to the establishment of the Law Covenant, during which the descendants of Adam were not held responsible for their sins:

Romans 5:13 for until the law sin was in the world:  
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

These final two verses describe the changes that ensued, the first introduced by the Law, and the second by the coming of the Gospel:

Romans 5:20 And the law came in beside,  
that the trespass might abound;  
but where sin abounded,  
grace did abound more exceedingly:

"Came in beside" is a more accurate translation of the Greek word *pareisēlthen* (#3922) than "entered" (KJV). Israel under the Law remained subject to the reign of death that had prevailed since Adam's time (verses 14 and 17). Against that backdrop, the Law defined righteousness through its commandments, at the same time defining sin as any failure to comply. In this way it restored the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). Where formerly there had been "no law", there were now a great many laws, and "sin abounded".

In Romans 7, figuratively transferring Israel's experience to himself, Paul described the transition that the nation had undergone in committing themselves to obey the laws of God:

Romans 7:9 And I was alive apart from the law once:  
but when the commandment came,  
sin revived, and I died;  
10 and the commandment which was unto life,  
this I found to be unto death:

Paul has here used the words "alive" and "died" metaphorically, to illustrate the change brought about by the imputation of sins under the Law; effectively, the 'revival' of sin. All transgressions of the Law required atonement to be made, and the most serious carried the death penalty; however, the "curse of the Law" (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10-12) was not temporal punishment, but the barrier the Law placed between the Israelite and righteousness.

The promised reward for obedience to the Law was eternal life (Leviticus 18:5; Matthew 19:16-19; Romans 10:5); not a continuation of the present life, but inclusion in the resurrection of life (Daniel 12:1-3). As a means of gaining righteousness, however, the Law proved "weak through the flesh" (Romans 8:3), a reference to human frailty. Those subject to the Law found absolute compliance an impossible goal, consequently falling short of righteousness and eternal life. For this reason, Paul described the commandment as being "unto death" (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; 3:10-14, 21; 5:3; James 2:10).

### **"grace did abound more exceedingly"**

God's grace (or, favour) toward those of faith in Christ, Jew or Gentile, is without limitation (Galatians 3:13,14,22; 1 John 2:2). Writing to Timothy, Paul humbly cited his own case as an example:

- 1 Timothy 1:13    though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief;
- 14                and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Jesus Christ.
- 15                Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief:

### **"as sin reigned in death"**

- Romans 5:21    that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Greek word *basilēuō* (#936), translated "reign", means 'to rule'<sup>6</sup>; in other words, to exercise power. Since Adam, death has had power over the human race (Romans 5:14,17). Alongside that, during the currency of the Law, "sin reigned in death" because man's vulnerability to sin ensured that the righteousness necessary to eternal life, which the Law offered, could not be achieved (Romans 7:12-24).

### **"even so might grace reign through righteousness ... "**

With the Gospel has come a transfer of power: away from sin, which under the Law had the power of death; to grace, which has the power of eternal life. On the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice, God will graciously reckon righteousness to those of faith, freeing them from the bondage of the Law and the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14).

- Romans 10:4    For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.

## Conclusion

This completes the comparison between Romans 5:12-21 and the Genesis account. It can be seen that Paul's interpretation of Adam's disobedience and its effect on the human race confirms the integrity of the Old Testament record.

Augustine's idea that all mankind is "subject to the inherited legal liability for Adam's sin" contradicts Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20; consequently, translations of Romans 5:12 that perpetuate that contradiction should be rejected. As for the concept of "an inherited moral disease", Romans 5:19, viewed in context, does not support the theory of a causal link between Adam's sin and the sinful tendencies of the human race.

It wasn't Paul's intention in Romans 5 to explain the sinfulness of man; that issue has been addressed in Romans 7, verses 7 to 25. I think the truth about our inheritance from Adam is much simpler and clearer than the 'original sin' doctrine would have us believe, and I hope to make the Romans 7 passage the subject of a future article. This has been part of the groundwork for that project.

## Numbered references:

- <sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this subject, please see the article, *In The Image of God* (New Covenant News, Dec. 2001) — copies available on request.
- <sup>2</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; art. *Original Sin* p.994-5
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid*; art. *Augustine* p.107
- <sup>4</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed in Genesis 6:5 concerning mankind before the Flood. Although only eight people survived the catastrophe, the "imagination of man's heart" remained the same.
- <sup>5</sup> This should not be seen as inimical to the doctrine of the Ransom (1 Tim. 2:6; Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). For a full discussion please see the article *Ransom Revisited* (New Covenant News, Sept. 2016) – copies available on request.
- <sup>6</sup> Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
- <sup>7</sup> Revised Version and American Standard Version.
- <sup>8</sup> Modern chapter arrangement: Archbishop Stephen Langton (13<sup>th</sup> century). Modern verse arrangement: Robert Estienne (1551)
- <sup>9</sup> The Analytical Greek Lexicon; Harold K. Moulton.
- <sup>10</sup> The Oxford Concise Dictionary.
- <sup>11</sup> The Analytical Greek Lexicon; section 10, table g.
- <sup>12</sup> Although the principle of 'life for life' was established in Noah's time (Genesis 9:5 & 6), it pre-dated the commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder" (Exodus 20:13; RV).
- <sup>13</sup> ἔλλογέω; ἔλλογῆō (#1677); to *reckon in*, i.e. *attribute* (Strong's Concordance)

- 14 The later application of this same principle to people not subject to the Law Covenant is reflected in Acts 17:30: "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent". The requirement for repentance makes it clear that the Gentiles' ignorance of God's laws did not mean that they were righteous by default, simply that they had not been judged for their sins. (Acts 17:30 & 31; Rom.2:4-12).
- 15 For further information on this subject please see the article *Justification by Faith, Grace and Works* (New Covenant News, Feb. 2006) - copies available on request.
- 16 Romans 5:15 has been quoted from the King James Version due to an ambiguity in the Revised and other versions regarding the source of grace.
- 17 The verb 'convoy' is related to 'convey' and means "escort, esp. with armed force" (Oxford Concise Dictionary).



## MERCY AND JUDGMENT

(References quoted from the KJV.)

by Russell Collins

### PSALM 101 - A Psalm of David.

1. *I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.*
2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*
3. *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.*
4. *A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.*
5. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.*
6. *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*
7. *He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*
8. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.*

### Introductory Comments

This Psalm is the first of the trilogy consisting of Psalms 101, 102 and 103. Psalm 101 was a resolve to sing of mercy and judgment, which was to be fulfilled in Psalm 103. The prelude to distress and the prayer for deliverance was developed in Psalm 102.



The substance of the trilogy was, as David said, a desire for his children (and also all believers) to remain in Yahweh's ways so that they may call upon Him in trouble, and they will be given reason to thank and bless Him.

The main thought of Psalm 101 is embodied in Psalm 103, verses 17 and 18: *"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."*

Verses 1 to 4 of Psalm 101 were a declaration of ethical standards by King David, firstly for himself, and secondly, in verses 5 to 8, for his administration. These high and noble standards should be striven for but will, of course, not be fully and truly practised until God's Kingdom is established over all the earth.

### **How David Would Act Privately**

*"I will sing of mercy and judgment"* declared David in verse 1, that is, the mercy and faithfulness of God to fulfil the promises made to David through Nathan the prophet as recorded in 2 Samuel 7, the greatest of which was that David's house and his throne would be established for ever (2 Samuel 7:16). David did indeed sing of God's mercy and judgment, but not until Psalm 103.

Verses 2 to 4 tell how King David meant to behave in his private life so as not to forfeit God's promised mercy and faithfulness. David said, *"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way"*.

1 Samuel chapter 18 verses 14 to 16 bear testimony to David's resolve: *"And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them."*

*"Perfect"* is explained by Dr. Strong (8549 and 8552) as 'complete' or 'upright'. To *"behave wisely"* is the result of meditating upon the testimonies of the LORD, and stands in contrast to the sinfulness and lack of wisdom of the godless. Perhaps David had in mind God's words to Abraham, *"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect"* [again Strong 8549 and 8552] (Genesis 17:1).

*"O when wilt thou come unto me?"*, as asked in verse 2, was surely a request to bless and deliver David from trouble according to the promise in Exodus 20:24, *"In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"*, for in Zion, which had become *"the city of the LORD"*

(verse 8) by the presence of the ark of the covenant, God had placed a record of His name. This petition was a prelude to Psalm 102, which expanded it. *"Let my cry come unto thee"* (Psalm 102:1) answered the cry, *"when wilt thou come unto me?"* in Psalm 101:2.

The ark of the covenant had come to Zion, as verse 8 tells us, so God was present to forgive and bless His people as they walked before Him. David seemed to be asking a blessing for himself as God's appointed king.

When David said *"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart"* in verse 2, he meant an upright heart in his private life, as well, of course, in his public conduct in *"the city of the LORD"*.

*"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"* means literally 'no thing of Belial', as pointed out in the Companion Bible, indicating David's firm resolve to reject idolatry and apostasy, as further declared in the words *"I hate the work of them that turn aside"*, that is, apostates, those who depart from the true faith and worship of God. *"It shall not cleave to me"* continued David in verse 3. The word *"cleave"* is shown by Dr. Strong (1692) to mean 'impinge, i.e. cling or adhere', so David was saying that idolatry and apostasy would not be found in him or in his work and worship.

*"A froward heart shall depart from me"* declared David. The word *"froward"* is rarely found in modern English, and means 'crooked' or 'perverted' (Strong 6141), therefore wicked or disobedient. David further declared in verse 4 that he would not know a wicked person or thing. The word 'person' is a supplied word, but seems to be in keeping with verses in Proverbs and Psalms.

*"They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in their way are his delight."* (Proverb 11:20).

*"He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief."* (Proverb 17:20).

*"The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."* (Psalm 34:16).

*"Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah."* (Psalm 52:3).

Up to this point David had spoken mainly of sin, but in the next section of the Psalm he passed on to sinners.

## How David Would Act Publicly

David would not endure slander or pride. He would take only faithful people to serve him and minister to his needs; he would banish deceitful persons from his presence, and would cut off all who behaved wickedly.

In verse 5 David said, "*Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off*". "*Privily*" means 'secretly' or 'covertly' (Strong 5643), while "*slander*" means 'to speak falsely and maliciously of someone, to calumniate' (Strong 3960). David knew from bitter experience in the days of Saul, the cruel effect of slander.

David continued in verse 5, "*Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer*". The same words are found in Proverbs 21:4, "*An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin*". Pride and slander go together for the depreciating of others is with a view to exalting oneself.

"*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me*" declared David in his intention to have faithful counsellors and servants; and he continued in verse 6, "*He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me*", indicating David's own aim to walk "*in a perfect way*", as he said in verse 2, meaning an upright and honest way.

"*He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house*" signified David's determination to have true and honest people in his administration, and "*he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight*", meant, of course, that any lying servants would be dismissed from employment and service.

David declared "*I will early destroy all the wicked of the land*". "*Early*" is literally 'every morning', and referred to the determination of King David to dismiss and expel the wicked, the morning of each day being in those early times the customary time of trials and judgment. Further in verse 8 David stated that he "*may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD*".

David, being God's king over Zion, the city of the Lord, was under a solemn obligation to cut off all who were unworthy of citizenship in that city. The expression "*cut off*" really means 'to destroy' (Strong 3772), so, it would seem, David was determined either to execute or at least expel all evil-doers found in his kingdom.

David sat on "*the throne of the LORD*" at that time, so it is fitting that he should have endeavoured to rule in uprightness and honesty, and although his reign encompassed only the limited kingdom that God promised to Abraham; those characteristics of uprightness and honesty will one day prevail over the whole earth when great David's greater Son will have all enemies put under his feet and will rule in righteousness over the promised Kingdom of God.



# Notes from a Group Study of the Epistle to the HEBREWS

(Continued from NCN No. 150)

## Hebrews 1:13,14

- 13 ***But to which of the angels said he at any time,  
Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?***
- 14 ***Are they not all ministering spirits,  
sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?***

Because of his more honourable status, Jesus was to receive ruler-ship over “... all those who have done good” (John 5:29), and all those who were opposed to or were indifferent to his gospel message (Romans 10:21). At his resurrection God had given him “... authority to execute judgement ...” (John 5:27).

The angels of verse 13 are “...sent forth to minister (that is, assist) for them who shall be the heirs of salvation”. Support was found in Matthew 18:10 in which reference is made to the “little ones”, who are those who have begun the Christian walk, “That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father ...” indicating that angels watch over believers, especially those new to and immature in the faith, such as at the time of the apostles.

## Hebrews 2:1

***Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed  
to the things which we have heard, ...***

To heed to something heard is to focus on it because of its importance, since more important things deserve more concentrated attention. The things heard and referred to here are the aspects of the New Covenant which the apostle had preached to the congregations that he established on his missionary journeys. The covenant brought a new dispensation that relieved them from the demands of the Law Covenant and invited them into a familial relationship with God.

***... lest at any time we should let them slip.***

Strong’s definition of ‘slip’ as meaning ‘to flow by’ gave rise to the thought that believers should not allow scriptural understanding to leak away. The Diaglott rendering has “lest we should ever let them glide away”, giving an exhortation to retain the truth learned from study.

## Hebrews 2:2,3

- 2 ***For if the word spoken by angels were steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;***
- 3 ***How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”***

In verse 2 *“the word spoken by angels that was ‘steadfast’ or ‘binding’* (NIV) was thought to refer to the Law Covenant because of the law *“... ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”* (Galatians 3:19), and because of Stephen’s words in Acts 7:35, where an angel appeared to Moses *“... in the bush”*, and 7:53 where he said that the Jews having *“... received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it”*. Those angels or messengers would be both heavenly and earthly, which agrees with the description of angels as ministering spirits.

In 1 Kings 19:4-7 there is the record of an angel ministering to Elijah when he was fleeing from Jezebel; and in Numbers chapter 22 describes how God used an ass to give a message to Balaam.

Also, the assistance of angels in the giving of the Law is suggested in Deuteronomy 33:2. The forty years of the Israelites in the wilderness abounded with miracles and messages to them, culminating in the establishment of the Law Covenant, which made clear to them that God was the ultimate law-giver and that laws which had been given earlier had not been rescinded.

It is accepted that the first five books of the Bible were written by Moses through inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16), and that inspiration may have been through an angel, or angels, although Deuteronomy 34:10 records that God knew Moses face to face. Perhaps that is an allusion to the giving of the ten commandments on Mount Sinai, transferring his authority to Moses.

The salvation spoken of is the remission of sin (disobedience), under the terms of the New Covenant, through which salvation is available to all believers. The Israelites failed to keep the Law Covenant and disregarded the promise of the coming of a Messiah, which was a very serious matter, so there is a more serious consequence to neglect the salvation offered through the New Covenant, and allow that knowledge to slip away.

The warning against turning from belief mentioned in Hebrews 10:28-31 was mentioned, but discussion was deferred until those verses were considered in the course of the study.

The "... *salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*" is that recorded in Matthew 4:17, when Jesus had rejected the temptations by Satan, and "*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'.*" The reference to the kingdom of heaven was to the presence of Jesus who brought the gospel message and the promise of the future kingdom age. Thus he himself was a representative of the kingdom of heaven and therefore an assurance of God's promise to have it set up at the proper time.

#### **Hebrews 2:4-8**

- 4 *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?***
- 5 *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.***
- 6 *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?***
- 7 *Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:***
- 8 *Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.***

God had made his benevolence clear to the Israelites through signs and wonders, beginning with their deliverance from Egypt and continuing through the centuries of the Jewish age until he had sent a more powerful message of his care for them through his Son, whose miracles and gifts of the holy spirit should not be ignored.

God's mindfulness of his creation of mankind had been demonstrated by giving man the management of the earthly realm, and to make that point clear the writer asks the rhetorical question about man's importance, from which comes the question, 'Who was made a little lower than the angels?' (verse 7). When this was considered, there were two responses.

The first suggestion was that the subject of verses five to eight is mankind, and therefore it was Adam himself and all his descendants who were made a little lower than the angels. While both spirit beings and human beings were given the faculty to think and reason, the earthly realm is lower than the heavenly realm, putting human beings lower than spirit beings as God created them.

Adam was given the position of glory and honour as the pinnacle of God's earthly creation, as God's representative on earth and to be the overseer of it all, in particular, being given the responsibility of naming the animals (Genesis 2:19). God had direct dealings with Adam and Eve and visited them often. But Adam lost his position of honour and authority through disobedience in the fall, with the consequence that mankind had not, at the time the letter to the Hebrews was written, nor during all the time since the expulsion from the garden in Eden, had all things been put under his authority, and so not everything has been under his control. He does not have the honour and glory which God gave to him originally when placed in the garden in Eden.

The angels also had some responsibility to look after things on earth. Some abused this privilege, took on human form and married women, producing a forbidden race which was destroyed in the flood. The fallen angels, although restricted in their influence, have also been active in the world during this age, as shown by Jesus casting out evil spirits during his ministry. Other angels work as ministering spirits to the believers (Hebrews 1:14).

The second suggestion was that verse 7 refers to Jesus, who is introduced in verse nine.

### **Hebrews 2:9**

***But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.***

Jesus was made a little lower than the angels when he became a man, and as a man he was similar to Adam in that he had the same earthly glory and honour and authority as Adam had. But he also had God's power, as shown by his calming of the storm on Lake Galilee, and by riding the untamed donkey colt into Jerusalem, and most convincingly by his miracles of healing.

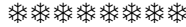
Because Jesus was a man like Adam, and because he did not sin, he was in a position to give his life as the redeeming price for the whole of mankind. Through his sacrifice and resurrection he gained the reward of greater glory and honour. This is an act of grace, which is unmerited favour, because God chose to give favour to man through Christ. The world to come will not be subject to men nor angels but to Jesus and the church, the little flock, the people God is taking out of Jews and Gentiles for his name to serve him as joint-heirs with the Lord. They will bring about the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). Man will be returned to his earthly glory, while Jesus will retain his heavenly glory.

The gospel message preached by the apostles was, in its main aspect, the irrefutable point that the Law Covenant had been replaced by the New

Covenant, which had been ratified by Jesus' death (Hebrews 9:10,11). Since that profound change of God's dispensation with mankind is based on that sacrifice, the writer of this epistle sets out the flawless and irrevocable status of Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant.

He is superior to the angel host and superior to mankind, although he was a man and learned all there was of human nature, making him the complete judge of all of creation.

[To be continued.]



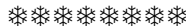
## NEWS AND NOTES

### Autumn Conference

Our annual autumn conference for 2020 will be held from Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> until Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March at the Comfort Inn, Main Lead in Ballarat, about 2 hours' drive from Melbourne. Our conference theme is "What is the World Coming To?", in which we will examine the current state of the world and what the Bible tells us about the future. We are looking forward to a time of blessing with talks, Bible studies, devotions and fellowship. For further information contact [info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au](mailto:info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au).

### Memorial Supper

We plan to commemorate the memorial of the Lord's Supper at 8.00 pm on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April in the hall at Bayswater South Primary School, Enfield Drive, Bayswater (to be confirmed). All Christian believers are welcome to attend. For further information contact [info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au](mailto:info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au).



### THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

The New Covenant News is compiled by an editor responsible to the New Covenant Fellowship. The thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of all the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words: ***"Prove all things"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



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