

# THE TRUTH ABOUT ORIGINAL SIN

## MAN'S FIRST SIN IN EDEN

The Bible tells us that the first instance of human sin occurred in the place of mankind's origin; the Garden of Eden. So when people speak of 'Original Sin', the word 'original' conveys both that it was man's first sin, and that it was committed in the place of mankind's origin.

God gave Adam and Eve one simple commandment to live by; one that would contain every moral requirement that God would place upon us:

**And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of right and wrong you shall not eat: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. Genesis 2:15-17**

With this commandment God was telling Adam that righteousness cannot be achieved through a knowledge of right and wrong. In the Bible, efforts to achieve righteousness through a knowledge of right and wrong are called 'the works of the Law'. God was commanding Adam to ignore the seeming logic that we can achieve righteousness through this knowledge, and to simply believe Him where the issue of morality was concerned. If Adam had chosen to put his faith in God, and to not eat of the forbidden tree, his faith would have been genuine righteousness.

With His one commandment, God warned Adam that if he did not follow God's path of faith, he would be committing a sin so wicked that he would be justly deserving of death; total destruction. For a fuller explanation of God's commandment in Eden, and why unbelief was wrong, please see **Why God Requires Our Faith**.

In Genesis we are told that Satan approached Adam's wife, Eve, and contradicted God's warning. And then Eve believed Satan, ate the forbidden fruit, and gave the fruit to Adam also:

**But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat the fruit your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God; knowing good and evil."**

**So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.**

**Genesis 3:4-6**

The Biblical message is that when Adam ate the forbidden fruit, all of humanity sinned with him:

**By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Romans 5:12 (also Romans 3:23)**

If the apostle Paul's original Greek words (in his letter to the church in Rome) are to be taken at face value, we must understand him to say that when Adam sinned, each and every member of the human race was consciously present within Adam, personally and individually committing the same act of disobedience that Adam was committing. This is the plain and simple meaning of Paul's words.

How might this have been possible? Adam was made in the image of the Trinity. Just as the three eternal Persons of the Trinity are one God, so also the billions of members of the human race were one man in Eden:

**And God said "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness". Romans 5:12 (also Romans 3:23)**

A 'Trinitarian Union' existed between Adam and the rest of humanity. I have explained this connection with Adam in my web page titled **Death and God's Judgment**. And I have explained a similar union between the last 'Adam', Jesus Christ, and His people in my web page titled **God's Forgiveness**:

**That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You. That they also may be one in Us. That the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given to them; that they may be one, even as We are One. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one. And that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.**

**John 17:21-23**

**And so it is written "The first man Adam was made a living soul. The last Adam (Christ) was made a quickening spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:45**

## **THE PENALTY AND POWER OF SIN**

To understand the consequences of Adam's sin, we must understand God's original plan. When God gave Adam His one simple commandment, to trust Him, it represented the most important commandment in God's Law; 'You shall love the Lord your God'. If Adam had acknowledged God's glory and trustworthiness, and had thus believed and obeyed Him, he would have been fulfilling the first half of Moses' 10 commandments.

And God's plan was that, as Adam obeyed Him, God was going to enter Adam's body through the Holy Spirit and share His own nature with Adam; allowing Adam to know what it is like to be God. Adam would bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace, goodness and kindness.

And thus Adam, through the Holy Spirit, would be enabled to obey the second five of the 10 commandments; to love our fellow man. This is what the Bible means when it talks about 'the righteousness of faith'. It is complete obedience to the 10 commandments, but not through a knowledge of right and wrong:

**And be found in Him (Christ), not having my own righteousness which is through the Law (the knowledge of right and wrong), but that which is through the faith in Christ; the righteousness which is from God by faith.   Philippians 3:9**

When Adam disobeyed God, two things happened. First of all, Adam committed an act of sin. By not believing God he broke the first commandment and brought guilt upon himself.

Secondly, rather than giving his body to God to be used by the Holy Spirit, Adam gave his body to another spirit that exists on the side of evil; a spirit that the Bible calls 'Sin'. Sin is a living spiritual being that has a mind and a will of its own. Its name defines what it is; it lives to break God's Law. And so Adam also brought bondage or slavery upon himself; because Sin became the legal owner of his body:

**Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves (property) of the one whom you obey; either of Sin which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to righteousness?   Romans 6:16**

The spirit of Sin operates on the side of evil in a manner similar to how the Holy Spirit operates on God's side. What needs to be understood is that often when the Bible speaks about sinful actions, it uses the verb 'to sin'. And when the Bible speaks about the spirit of Sin, it refers to it with the noun Sin. The apostle John used the word 'sin' in both of these ways, when he made a general statement about all of humanity:

**If we say we have no Sin (the spirit of Sin), we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins (actions), He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned (action in Eden), we make God a liar and His word is not in us.   1 John 1:8-10**

In John's words we see how crucial a right understanding of our connection with Adam is. It determines whether the truth of God's word is in us at all. Bible commentators often refer to the two results of Adam's sin (guilt and slavery) as the penalty and power of sin. And the Bible tells us that our own choice to sin in Eden has had the same impact in our lives, that Adam's choice had in his life.

When each of us rebelled against God in Eden, we each signed a 'title deed' giving ownership of our bodies to Sin. And so when we are conceived in our mother's womb, Sin immediately takes up residence in that body, because it has a legal right to do so.

King David of Israel discovered the spirit of Sin within his body. Although he was a man after God's own heart and sincerely wanted to honor God, he found himself putting the God of Israel to an open shame.

David's ancestor, Abraham, had reached an agreement with his wife, Sarah, that everywhere they went they would claim that Sarah was Abraham's sister. Abraham did this because Sarah was beautiful, and he feared that ungodly men would kill him and take his wife (Genesis 12:11-13).

Deceived by the Sin within himself, King David took the wife of a foreign man (Uriah), and then had that man killed in order to cover up his adultery (2 Samuel 11). David had always wanted to honor Abraham and the God of Israel, but as he realized that he had done to Uriah what Abraham had feared in the past, he discovered that there was something operating within his body that had deceived him, and brought him to do the very evil that he did not want to do.

And David also realized that this spirit of Sin had been present within his body from the moment that his body was first conceived in the womb:

**Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.  
David's Psalm 51:5**

Although the spirit of Sin had deceived David and overpowered him, David was still responsible for Sin's behavior. This is because it was David himself who had given Sin ownership of his body in the first place; in Eden. What a dreadful situation to be in; trapped in a body owned by Sin and speeding toward hell. The apostle Paul described this experience of discovering Sin, and its power, within one's own body:

**I find then a law (or principle); that when I would do good, evil is present within me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my body, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin which is in my body. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Romans 7:21-24**

## **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO NED?**

Early in the history of the Christian church, around 400 AD, a man named Augustine began to teach that we did not all sin with Adam. Instead he taught that God set things up so that we would inherit the spirit of Sin from Adam biologically; through sexual reproduction. This idea of inherited sinfulness has come to be known as 'Hereditary Depravity'.

Augustine dropped the ...**ned** from the phrase 'all have sinned' (Romans 3:23), and changed it to 'all have sin'.

## **AUGUSTINE CONTRADICTED GOD'S WORD BY CHANGING THE VERB 'SINNED', INTO THE NOUN 'SIN'.**

Augustine denied the direct cause-and-effect relationship between a personal choice to sin, and the guilt and bondage to Sin that are the direct consequences of such choices. Paul carefully explained this cause-and-effect relationship between our sin in Eden, and the sentence of death that has hung over every member of the human race since Eden:

**For until the Law (of Moses) sin was in the world. But sin is not imputed when there is no law (that has been broken). Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. Romans 5:13-14**

Paul was explaining how he knew that it is Adam's sin that is the cause of all human death. First Paul directs our attention to human history before Moses. By doing this Paul was excluding a breaking of the Law of Moses as the cause of universal death. Paul then acknowledged that sins were committed in the world prior to Moses. One needs only consider God's judgment in Noah's flood, and God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, to know this is true.

Paul then went on to point out that death completely reigned from Adam to Moses; even over a class of people who had not sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression". What is this class of people that Paul was talking about? He was talking about people who never sinned outwardly or visibly, in their own physical body.

Paul was talking about people like infants and little children, or people with severe handicaps and disabilities. Paul was arguing that, because such people have all died going all the way back to Adam, it must be Adam's sin that is the root cause of this universal death.

But Paul went beyond tracing death back to Adam. His fundamental moral logic was, because God would never impose death upon someone who has not actually sinned, that universal human death indicates that when Adam sinned, we all sinned.

This is the great principle of God's truthfulness, righteousness and justice. And it is divinely written upon every human conscience. In teaching inherited depravity, Augustine was blaming mankind's death and moral bondage upon God, rather than listening to God's word and his own conscience:

**In those days they shall say no more "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge". But every one shall die for his own iniquity. Every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Jeremiah 31:29-30**

**The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying "What do you mean, that you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?'" "As I live" says the Lord God, "you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine. As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine. The soul that sins, it shall die". Ezekiel 18:1-4**

**Augustine taught that only Adam ate the 'sour grapes', and that all of mankind has had its moral teeth 'set on edge' as a result. Augustine is called a 'doctor' of the Roman Catholic Church, and his doctrine of inherited depravity is foundational to Roman Catholicism. Rome claims that the purpose of Christianity is to overcome this inherited depravity.**

**Rome's priests claim that their sacraments have the power to deliver people from depravity. But because their sacraments are empty falsehoods (pseudo-Christianity), Roman Catholic church members have been left with only one real resource to achieve righteousness and prove the validity of their Roman Catholic faith; their knowledge of right and wrong. And so throughout its history Roman Catholicism has led to a legalism that the Bible calls 'the works of the Law'.**

## **AUGUSTINE THE ARIAN**

**I have not spent much time studying Augustine. I do not know how his conception of mankind's 'original sin' began, or how it evolved during the course of his lifetime. I do know that he had some theological disputes with a monk named Pelagius.**

**From what little is known about Pelagius, it seems that he rejected the idea of sin being 'inherited' by people when they themselves have not actually sinned. It may be that Pelagius' rejection of hereditary depravity stemmed from good 'moral instincts'. But rather than turn to the correct Biblical explanation of mankind's fall in Eden, it seems that Pelagius may have simply retreated to mankind's original condition in Eden before our rebellion. And so Pelagius taught that people are still morally free, and are capable of doing good.**

**This left Augustine in the position of being able to condemn Pelagius for denying original sin, and to portray himself as orthodox, even though Augustine was not faithful to the word of God. To this day many who have embraced Augustine's errors accuse everyone who disagrees with them of being 'Pelagian', or 'semi-Pelagian'. Such claims intimidate those who lack understanding, while allowing these 'orthodox' theologians to cloak their error in worthless distractions.**

**At the heart of Augustine's error is a heresy known as 'Arianism'. Arianism is the claim that, because the Son of God was 'begotten' of the Father, He cannot be as old as the Father. Arianism says that, just as human fathers are always older than their sons, so also the divine Father must be older than His Son. The Son cannot be co-**

eternal with Him. Arianism argues that, because the Son's existence must have had a starting point, therefore He cannot be eternal and fully divine.

Arianism lies at the foundation of many pseudo-Christian cults that deny the full deity of Jesus Christ. But their error can be easily answered. The Son of God is co-eternal with the Father because, in eternity past, before He was begotten of the Father He existed within the Father, and was One with Him. The Son of God pre-existed within the Father, as did also the Holy Spirit. They dwelt as distinct, individual, conscious Persons within the Father, before coming forth from within Him. And so the existence of all three Persons of the Trinity is indeed co-eternal.

And the Bible tells us that God constructed mankind in the same way; making us in the image and likeness of the Trinity:

**And God said "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness".  
Romans 5:12 (also Romans 3:23)**

This explains how all of mankind could have been present within Adam, sinning both in him and with him. The answer is that we all 'pre-existed' within the father of the human race, before coming forth from within him in the course of later human history. Every member of the human race is as old as Adam himself; 'co-eternal' with him. Humanity perfectly reveals the pre-existence of the Son and the Spirit within the Father, before they proceeded or were begotten from Him in eternity past; before time or creation began.

And so, although Augustine may have been 'non-Arian' in his public statements about the Trinity, he was in fact Arian because in denying mankind's pre-existence within our father, he was denying the pre-existence of the Son and the Holy Spirit within the divine Father. This is the fundamental error not only of Augustine, but of all who deny that each member of the human race was consciously present within Adam, and truly sinned with him.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul said that everything that we need to know about God has been revealed to us through the things that He has made:

**For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Romans 1:20**

In referring to God's 'eternal power' and 'Godhead', Paul was condensing the six creation days of Genesis chapter 1 into one short phrase. God revealed His eternal power on day one, when 'in the beginning' He created the heavens and the earth (the universe). And God revealed His intimate personal nature when, in His final labor on day six, He created a human race made in 'Our' image and likeness. Mankind is a full

revelation of the Trinity. And when we refuse to acknowledge this, we ignore truth that is foundational to the entire Bible.

Augustine was a philosopher. He was well trained in the areas of public speaking and debate, and knew his way around the intellectual world. He had been exposed to many ideas, and many perspectives about what the Bible says. It may have been his own rationalism that led him to reject God's claim that we all sinned in Eden.

**Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Colossians 2:8**

What needs to be recognized is the underlying argument that Augustine used to justify his doctrine of hereditary depravity. Augustine rested his theology upon the sovereignty of God. Augustine decided to define original sin in terms of God's choices, rather than in terms of man's choices.

Augustine began a precedent of claiming to honor God by pointing to His sovereignty, when he was in fact insulting God; contradicting His word and portraying Him as a liar and a tyrant (see [Navigating Predestination and Freedom of Choice](#)).

## **REFORMED THEOLOGY'S DOUBLE ERROR**

With the coming of the Protestant Reformation, an additional perspective upon mankind's relationship with Adam was proposed. While embracing Augustine's claim that the power of Adam's sin came upon all mankind through hereditary depravity, many of the Reformers went on to claim that the penalty for Adam's sin has come upon us through an even more remote connection with Adam.

The Reformers taught that Adam acted as our representative in Eden, having been appointed by God to act in our place. God then simply 'imputed' or 'charged' Adam's choice to each one of us, condemning each one of us to death. This concept is known as the 'Representative' or 'Federal' headship of Adam.

Reformed Theology's entire system is based upon the judgments of a 'sovereign' God, rather than of a truthful and righteous God. In their world condemnation and justification is divorced from reality, and what is actually and subjectively true of us. Condemnation is not the result of real sin, and real righteousness is not required for justification. And it has been this 'fantasy world', which Reformed theologians created, that has been the basis of Rome's criticism of the Protestant Reformation.

There are a number of arguments that 'Reformed Theologians' make for this doctrine. I have heard one say that because Adam was a perfect human specimen, if he could not resist the temptation to sin, then we would not have been able to resist it either.



But the choice to sin, or not to sin is personal. It is not related to ability. It is a matter of the heart. A little child can listen to his conscience and make a proper choice about how to respond to God. And the most brilliant and capable of people can make evil choices. Sin is not about what we are, but about who we are.

Others have argued that God's plan was wise, because somehow by charging sin to people who have not sinned, God has been able to turn around and impute righteousness to people who are not righteous. This is supposed to be gracious, and a morally logical and Biblically valid idea.

Reformed Theology follows Augustine's abuse of the sovereignty of God, calling Him a liar, while denying mankind's moral freedom of choice and accountability. Again, I refer my reader to my web page titled [Navigating Predestination and Freedom of Choice](#).

## WHAT ABOUT THE SINS OF THE FATHERS?

Some theologians have used an important Biblical truth, that God sometimes causes the children of wicked people to suffer, in order to justify the Reformed ideas of inherited and imputed sin. This concept is found in God's word, where it describes God as visiting the sins of the parents upon their children:

**For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me. Exodus 20:5 (also Exodus 34:7, Numbers 14:18, Deuteronomy 5:9)**

We see an early example of this when God brought the Hebrew people out of Egypt. After crossing the Red Sea (around 1480 BC), they were soon met by a tribe of people called the Amalekites, who waged war against the Israelites (Exodus 17:8). Even though the Amalekites knew that God had destroyed Egypt, and had then led Israel through the Red Sea, they came out to wage war against Israel anyway. Their hostility toward God was very profound. In response, God swore to Moses that He would eventually completely destroy the Amalekites from off the face of the earth (Exodus 17:14).

**And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua. For I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven". And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi (The Lord Is My Banner). For he said "Because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation". Exodus 17:13-16**

Approximately 400 years later, God commanded the first King of Israel, Saul, to attack the Amalekites and utterly destroy them; as punishment for their attack against Israel 400 years earlier (1 Samuel 15). But Saul spared the King of the Amalekites, and confiscated their wealth instead of destroying it (as God had commanded). And Saul's

disobedience cost him his kingdom. He was immediately rejected by God as the king of Israel.

The experience of the Jewish people over the past 1900+ years, after their forefathers' rejection of Christ and persecution of Christianity, is another case in point:

**Wherefore, behold, I (Jesus) am sending unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes. And some of them you shall kill and crucify. And some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth; from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom you killed between the temple and the altar. Truly I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.**

**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you. How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house (Temple) is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, you shall not see Me henceforth, until you shall say "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord". Mathew 23:34-39**

We must recognize, however, that when God is 'visiting' the sins of a parent upon his children, He is always clear about it. God never allows any confusion about whose sin lies at the root of the suffering. When a parent's sin is causing the child's suffering, God says so. When a person is suffering because of his own sins, God is clear about that as well. And so there is no reason for us to be confused about Adam's sin, and our involvement in it. God's word clearly states that each one of us dies because when Adam sinned, each one of us sinned also.

It is one thing for a child to suffer as a result of a parent's sin; it is another thing to claim that God accuses the child of that sin, imputing it to him. Even in the midst of visiting a parent's sins upon the children, God proclaims that any child who rejects the ways of a wicked parent will find acceptance with Him:

**If, however, a wicked man begets a son that sees all his father's sins which he has done, and considers but does not do likewise, but has executed My judgments and has walked in My statutes - he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live! Ezekiel 18:14,17**

Sometimes the wrong choices of parents, such as crime, alcoholism, gambling, and drug abuse can bring direct harm upon their children, without God's involvement. And sometimes parents and whole societies can saturate their children with so much evil 'from the cradle', that those children never have a chance to think or do anything but evil. In these cases it is the parents themselves who visit their sins upon their children. And in such circumstances, because the evil in such societies can no longer be reversed, it is necessary for God to completely destroy them.

But sometimes flagrant sins by an individual can be so profoundly wicked, that God's judgment upon them 'must spill over' upon their children. One of the maxims of the Bible is that 'God is not mocked' (Galatians 6:7). In other words, no one blatantly insults God and breaks His laws, and gets away with it. But it should be remembered that God is always clear about whose sin lies at the root of the suffering that follows.

## **GOD'S FOUR JUDGMENTS**

Having explained the simple Biblical truth, that every individual member of the human race rebelled against God in Eden, it is necessary to now look at the unfolding consequences of our sin. In the next sections of this web page I explain the four major judgments of God upon humanity. These four judgments are also explained in my web page titled **Death and God's Judgment**.

God's four major judgments of mankind are...

- 1) GOD'S FIRST JUDGMENT UPON ALL MANKIND IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN**
- 2) GOD'S IMMEDIATE JUDGMENT OF EACH ONE OF US WHEN WE DIE**
- 3) GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING BY JESUS CHRIST AT HIS SECOND COMING**
- 4) GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD BY JESUS CHRIST AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE**

## **JUDGMENT #1: UPON ALL MANKIND IN EDEN**

When God created Adam, He warned him that in the day that he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam would die. It was a warning that Adam would experience total destruction, and the end of his existence:

**And the Lord God commanded the man, saying "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat. But of the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16-17**

And God pronounced a sentence of death upon Adam on that day in which he sinned:

**In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground. For out of it were you taken. For dust you are, and unto dust shall you return. Genesis 3:19**

But while God pronounced a sentence of destruction upon Adam and every individual member of the human race on that day, He delayed the execution of that death penalty by killing innocent animals in Adam's place. God provided Adam and Eve with proper clothing to cover their nakedness:

**Unto Adam also, and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. Genesis 3:21**

The death of those innocent animals was a symbolic and prophetic picture of a Savior who would come to die, and to provide repentant people with a covering for their 'moral nakedness'. God's postponement of death for Adam, and for many other members of the human race, made three things possible:

**1) MERCY** It opened a door for God's undeserved mercy and grace, and the possibility that members of the human race would repent about their rebellion and embrace God's offer of salvation by faith:

**He that covers his sins shall not prosper. But whosoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. Proverbs 28:13**

**Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:21**

**2) A WARNING** It enabled death to serve as an evangelical warning to all mankind. As we see death ending the lives of people all around us, it shows us the tragic consequences of our sin in Eden and the certainty of God's punishments. Death speaks to each of us every day, and calls us to repentance. It was this 'revelation' of God's anger that Paul described in Romans:

**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold (possess) the truth in unrighteousness. Romans 1:18**

**Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? Romans 2:4**

**3) GREATER EVIL** God's mercy made greater wickedness possible. God made it possible for people to scorn His warnings and reject His grace, and to prolong their rebellion and warfare against Him, even though they could see the death that is the consequence of our first sin:

**Blessed is the man that walks not in the advice of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law he does meditate day and night. Psalm 1:1-2**

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by Me your days shall be multiplied, and the years of your life shall be increased. If you are wise, you shall be wise for yourself; but if you scorn, you alone shall bear it. Proverbs 9:10-12**

**But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds. Romans 2:5-6**

The Bible says that we all know that death represents God's judgment upon each of us (Romans 1:18 above), and yet we persist in wickedness anyway:

**Who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:32**

We recognize from childhood that death is dreadful, and represents God's anger toward us; that Someone who is immortal has imposed mortality upon us. But we deceive ourselves. Instead of ignoring death or denying its meaning, God advises us to give serious thought to it, with the promise that if we do so we will be able to draw closer to Him and His salvation. He warns us that, given the seriousness and uncertainty of life, a choice to ignore His message of death can only harm us:

**It is better to go to the house of mourning (the funeral home), than to go to the house of feasting; for death is the end of all men, and the living will take it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by sadness the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (carelessness, joking, merriment, partying). Ecclesiastes 7:2-4**

**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:4**

**But woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe unto that are full, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers speak well of the false prophets. Luke 6:24-26**

**Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up. James 4:7-10**

## **JUDGMENT #2: IMMEDIATELY AFTER WE DIE**

While postponing death for many, offering them the opportunity to repent of their sin and embrace the Gospel of mercy, God has not neglected the importance of prompt and righteous judgment. God does not delay His judgments. God now judges people immediately after they die:

**It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. Hebrews 9:27**

Because of God's postponement of death in Eden, there have been three classes of people who have lived and died in human history:

1) People whose souls have entered into human bodies conceived in the womb, but who have never had the opportunity to sin beyond their rebellion in Eden. This would include those who have died before being born, together with people who have been born but who have been mentally or physically incapable of making moral decisions in this world. I have explained this group of people in a section above; '[Whatever Happened to Ned](#)'. This group of people was described by the apostle Paul:

**Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him (Christ) Who was to come. Romans 5:14**

2) People who have reached an age of moral accountability, have understood the meaning of death, and have rejected God's grace and His command to repent and believe in the Savior. These are people who have chosen to live lives of ongoing disobedience and rebellion against God:

**But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds. Romans 2:5-6**

**Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. Galatians 6:7**

3) People who have repented about their sins, have embraced God's offer of forgiveness, and have gone on to live out the rest of their lives in obedience to Him.

**Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Psalm 116:15**

## **A PLACE CALLED 'DEATH'**

Prior to the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and His fulfillment of God's promise of salvation through His cross, there were two 'holding areas' where God sent people's souls after they died and had been judged by Him. They were...

- 1) A place called 'Death'.
- 2) A place that is called 'Sheol' in Hebrew, 'Hades' in Greek and 'Hell' in English.

Death is the first stop for people when they die. But Hades has followed closely behind death for many people:

**So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. Revelation 6:8**

Death is not simply something that happens to us. It is more than an event; it is a place:

**And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and Death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works. And Death and Hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.**  
**Revelation 20:13-15**

For people who die before they have the opportunity or capability of sinning beyond their first rebellion in Eden, there is a waiting place that the Bible calls 'Death'. This place is exactly what its name implies. It is a place where one is simply dead. It is a place of 'soul-sleep', where one waits in a state of unconsciousness until being resurrected from the dead in a physical body; to stand before Jesus Christ and be judged at the 'Great White Throne' judgment.

Regarding those who have only rebelled against God in Eden, one might ask 'Why not simply leave them in Death?' Why raise them from the dead; to be judged again and to be cast into the Lake of Fire?'

The answer is found in understanding the nature of our disobedience in Eden. When mankind rebelled against God, we did so believing that we would be able to use a knowledge of right and wrong **1)** to achieve our own righteousness, and **2)** to tempt others and prevent anyone else from becoming more righteous than we are. We were entering into moral warfare against God, hoping to bend Him to a compromise with ourselves and Satan.

God is going to resurrect those who never had an opportunity to sin beyond their rebellion in Eden, so that He can show them the failure of their plans, and the victory that He has won over Satan and all evil through His Son, Jesus Christ. God is going to repay all of His enemies 'to their face', and this is going to include those who declared war against Him in Eden, but who never had the opportunity to wage that war:

**Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God. The faithful God, Who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations. And repays them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack to him that hates Him; He will repay him to his face.**  
**Deuteronomy 7:9-10**

I do not believe that those who will be resurrected from 'Death' and cast into the Lake of Fire will suffer. I believe that they will be consumed and destroyed instantly. Jesus described God's judgments as being just and proportional to people's sins. And so I believe that people will suffer in the Lake of Fire for as long as it will take for their sins to be fully punished. Some will be instantly destroyed when they touch that Lake. Others, the Bible warns, will never be fully destroyed. They will be tormented never-endingly in that Lake.

## A PLACE CALLED 'HELL'

The second place that God began to put human souls after death was Hell (also referred to in the Bible with the Greek word 'Hades', and the Hebrew word 'Sheol'). Firstly, it is important to explain that Hell and the Lake of Fire are two very different places. Hell has always been a temporary residence for the souls of men. The Lake of Fire is the 'second death', where people in physical bodies will be cast to experience God's final, permanent judgment. Jesus always distinguished between Hell and the Lake of Fire, and people must recognize this.

When Jesus was talking about the Lake of Fire, He sometimes referred to it as 'Gehenna'. Gehenna was Jerusalem's city dump, south of the city in the 'Valley of Hinnom'. It was a place where fire was consuming trash 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And thus Gehenna was a fitting symbol for the eternal Lake of Fire.

In addition, the Valley of Hinnom was a place where, several hundred years before Jesus' day, the people of Israel had offered their children as burnt sacrifices to the pagan God 'Moloch'. Thus the perpetual fires of Gehenna not only pictured God's final judgment, but brought to mind the fact that people can deserve such a judgment.

Some translations of the Bible fail to convey the distinction between Hell and the Lake of Fire. For instance, consider the following passage:

**And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Matthew 10:28**

In the original Greek, the word that is translated 'Hell' was actually 'Gehenna'. Hell is a place where human souls reside. Gehenna (the Lake of Fire) is a place where resurrected people, with souls and bodies, will be cast. And so Jesus used the word 'Gehenna', warning about a place where both one's soul and body could be destroyed.

Most people have a very negative concept of 'Hades' or 'Hell'; but Hell has not always been a completely unpleasant place. In His story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus described Hell as a place divided into two parts, with the righteous and the unrighteous living in separate sections. Hell (Sheol, Hades) was simply the place where the souls of those who had either obeyed God, or who had disobeyed Him, went to await future events. The righteous dwelt in 'Paradise' or 'Abraham's Bosom'; and the unrighteous dwelt in 'Torments':

**There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and lived luxuriously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.**



And he cried and said "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. For I am tormented in this flame". But Abraham said "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from here to you cannot. Neither can they pass to us, that would come from there". Luke 16:19-26

## HELL HAS CHANGED

Up until the Lord Jesus completed His work of salvation upon the cross, all of God's people had been held in the pleasant side of Hell; Paradise or 'Abraham's bosom'. It was called 'Abraham's bosom' because Abraham himself was there, waiting for God's fulfillment of the promise that someday someone from his family (Abraham's 'Seed') would provide God's promised 'blessing' of salvation.

Abraham and those with him were not yet able to enter into the presence of God, because the atonement for their sins had not yet been accomplished. But when Jesus cried out upon the cross "It is finished", satisfying the demands of the Law against the sins of man, He was able to enter Paradise (after His death) to announce salvation to God's people, and to proclaim defeat and certain doom to the unrighteous.

This is why Jesus told the repentant thief, who was dying upon a cross next to Him, that they would be together in Paradise later that same day (Luke 23:43):

And one of the criminals which were hanged railed on him, saying "If you be Christ, save yourself and us". But the other answering rebuked him, saying "Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong. And he said unto Jesus "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom". And Jesus said unto him "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise". Luke 23:39-43

The Bible tells us that Jesus spent the time between His death and His resurrection in Sheol (Hades, Hell). This is seen in King David's prophetic Psalm about Jesus' death and resurrection:

For You will not leave My soul in Sheol (Hades, Hell); neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption (bodily decay). Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:27,31 13:35

Jesus broke open the gates of Hell on behalf of God's people, when He Himself was resurrected from the dead:

And I say also unto you that you are Peter (a stone). And upon this rock (Myself) I will build My church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

Mary Magdalene met the Lord Jesus at the point in time when He had been raised from Sheol and had received a resurrected body from His Father, but had not yet ascended into heaven to be reunited with His Father:

**Jesus said unto her "Mary". She turned herself and said unto Him "Rabboni"; which is to say 'Master'. Jesus said unto her "Touch me not. For I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to My brethren and say unto them "I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God". Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.**

**John 20:16-18**

Since Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the souls of people who die are now placed immediately in one of three locations:

- 1) In heaven, to be with God and await bodily resurrection.
- 2) In 'Death', to 'sleep' while awaiting bodily resurrection and judgment.
- 3) In Hell (Sheol or Hades) to suffer, while awaiting bodily resurrection and judgment.

God's people now enter directly into His presence when they die. As the apostle Paul wrote, 'Absent from the body, present with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Hell is now exclusively a place of immediate torment and punishment for those who have died in rebellion against God. There they wait, without hope, for the 'Great White Throne' judgment: when Hell itself will be cast into the Lake of Fire (along with Death). It may seem strange that people who now exist in hell only as souls (without bodies), should be able to experience physical pain. But this is how Jesus described Hell; as a place where God can inflict physical torment upon non-physical beings.

## **JUDGMENT #3: OF THE LIVING AT CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

There is much that has been said and written regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ into the world. The entire prophecy section of this web site addresses this subject, and I would refer my reader to it. Christ's second coming is also referred to throughout the Bible as 'The Day of the Lord'. Here I list a few important aspects of that 'Day':

**1) The time of the 'First Resurrection'**. The second coming of Christ is described in the Bible as 'the first resurrection'; the resurrection of God's people. These people will not remain upon the earth when they are resurrected, but will rise up to the clouds to meet Christ:

**Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52**

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection. Upon such the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Revelation 20:5-6

**2) A time of 'double harvest'.** The Bible tells us that when Jesus comes, there will be a double harvest. The 'harvest' of God's people is foreshadowed in the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles or 'Ingathering' at the end of Israel's religious year (Leviticus 23). But Christ's second coming will also be a 'harvesting' of the wicked:

Whose fan is in His hand (Christ). And He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matthew 3:12, Luke 3:17

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house. And His disciples came unto Him saying "Explain unto us the parable of the tares (weeds) of the field". He answered and said unto them "He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. But the tares (weeds) are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares (weeds) are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do evil, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear". Matthew 13:36-43

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down; and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come forth, and separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus said unto them "Have you understood all these things?" They said unto Him "Yes, Lord". Matthew 13:47-51

And I looked, and behold a white cloud. And upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man (Christ), having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap (gather God's people). For the time is come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire. And he cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe". And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside of the city (Jerusalem). And blood came out of the winepress, even up to the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs (roughly 185 miles). Revelation 14:14-20

**3) A time of widespread death.** Throughout God's word, the 'Day of the Lord' is described as a terrible time for wicked people living upon the earth. It is a time when many will be killed. Its fulfillment is portrayed in the seven trumpets and seven bowls of the book of Revelation:

Enter into the rock and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the Day of the Lord of Hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, and upon everything lifted up. And it shall be brought low. Isaiah 2:10-12

And at that Day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground. Jeremiah 25:33

Woe to you who desire the Day of the Lord! For what good is the Day of the Lord to you? It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him! Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it? Amos 5:18-20

And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying "It is done". And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings. And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts. And the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the

weight of a talent. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for that plague was exceedingly great. Revelation 16:17-21

**4) The time of God's kingdom and Satan's binding.** The second coming of Christ will be to conquer the world and rule over it, ushering in 1000 years of peace (the Millennium):

And the seventh angel sounded. And there were great voices in heaven, saying "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ. And He shall reign for ever and ever". Revelation 11:15

With the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God, based in Jerusalem, the prayer that Jesus taught to His disciples will be fulfilled:

After this manner therefore you should pray: Our Father Who are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

In order to establish God's kingdom, it will be necessary to restrain Satan's activity: And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be fulfilled. And after that he must be loosed a little season. Revelation 20:1-3

The Millennium will be a period of God's supernatural blessing, both upon the nation of Israel and upon the entire world. It is described in the Old Testament:

And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more. Isaiah 2:4

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together. And a little child shall lead them. Isaiah 11:6

**5) The time of judgment upon the Beast and False Prophet.** As I explain in my other web pages on prophecy, I do not believe that the Beast and the False Prophet are single beings. The Beast is something that has existed since 70 AD, while the False Prophet is a technological creature of our own times. I believe that, in these last days, the Beast and the False Prophet are comprised of all those people who will promote and accept the Mark of the Beast.

And I believe that, just as there will be Christians who will not experience death, but who will instantly receive immortal physical bodies and enter into eternal life, so also there will be wicked people upon the earth who will not experience death. Their bodies will also be made immortal, but they will be cast alive directly into the Lake of Fire without experiencing death:

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived those that had received the mark of the beast, and those that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Revelation 19:20

This judgment, where Jesus will send people directly into the Lake of Fire, was described by Him in His Olivet Discourse:

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels". Matthew 25:31-34, 41

The Lord Jesus will not be alone when He judges the nations; He will be accompanied by those who will have refused the Mark of the Beast, and suffered for having done so:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; who had not worshiped the Beast nor his image, nor had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Revelation 20:4

It is important to note that, as the Lord Jesus is surrounded by these saints and answers both the righteous and the wicked about the basis of His judgments, His explanation will be summed up in one single sentence:

“Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me”. Matthew 25:40,45

This judgment, upon those who will have mistreated Christ's 'brethren', will be unspeakably dreadful. This is seen in the fact that these persons will be tormented "in the presence of the Lamb". This means that Jesus will be watching their torment, while they themselves will have to look upon the One who had been willing to die for

them, and whose mercy they had not only rejected for themselves, but had opposed for all mankind.

This 'face-to-face' torment harkens back to a passage that I have already quoted in this web page:

Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God. The faithful God, Who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations. And repays them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack to him that hates Him; He will repay him to his face.  
Deuteronomy 7:9-10

## **JUDGMENT #4: OF THE DEAD AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE**

At the end of the Millennium Satan will be released, to go out and deceive the nations that remain upon the earth. He will lead them to wage war against the Lord Jesus and His people in Israel. This attack against Israel by "Gog and Magog" was foretold by the prophet Ezekiel, and is described in the book of Revelation:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog; to gather them together to battle (the number of whom is as the sand of the sea). And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints, and the beloved city (Jerusalem). And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the Beast and the False Prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Revelation 20:7-10, Ezekiel 38

Immediately after God's destruction of Gog and Magog, and the casting of Satan into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, we are shown God's final judgment of a rebellious humanity by Jesus Christ; seated upon a 'Great White Throne':

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. And death and hell delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

At the end of the Millennium a second resurrection will take place. This is the final judgment found in the Bible. The righteous will have already been resurrected, judged and rewarded. And so the remaining dead will also be resurrected and judged:

**And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life (the first resurrection before the Millennium), and some to shame and everlasting contempt (the second resurrection after the Millennium). Daniel 12:2**

Some might wonder why God could ever create a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and put anyone into it. But we must see the Great White Throne in its larger context. Jesus will not sit upon that Throne until after...

- 1) He will have died for the sins of mankind.**
- 2) He will have sent His Gospel message to the entire world.**
- 3) He will have come back to earth to cleanse it from the destruction brought upon it by Satan and humanity:**
- 4) He will have given 1000 years of peace and prosperity to the world.**

It will be in this context that a relentlessly evil archangel will be cast into the Lake of Fire; an archangel who, like the Pharaoh of Egypt in Moses' day, would not let his captives go:

**How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, who did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart "I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High".**

**Yet you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see you shall narrowly look upon you, and consider you saying "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble? That did shake kingdoms? That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof? That opened not the house of his prisoners?"**  
Isaiah 14:12-17

And it will be in this same context that a humanity endlessly willing to be deceived by Satan, and to join him in his warfare against God, will also join him in the place originally prepared for him and his angels. The Great White Throne judgment must be seen in this context. If we cannot rejoice over God finally bringing an end to all evil, then it is obvious regarding why we can't understand the Lake of Fire.

While the Bible says that the Lake of Fire will burn forever, it is only Satan, the Beast and the False Prophet who are described as suffering forever in that fire (Revelation 19:20, 20:10). I believe that people will suffer in direct proportion to the sins they have committed. Jesus warned some of the cities of Israel that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them (Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24). He also indicated that those who disobey God in relative ignorance will not be punished as severely as those who knew better and continued in their disobedience (Luke 12:48).



It is my belief that many who have been cast into the Lake of Fire will, at some point, simply cease to exist. This is a terrible fate. Life is precious, and is a terrible thing to lose. But when people stare this total destruction in the face and persist in wickedness, rejecting God's grace, there is only one possible result for them; a prolonged punishment that will end in the same destruction that they chose to ignore in the first place.

## **WHAT ABOUT ANIMAL DEATH?**

There are some Christians who believe that animals did not experience death until Adam sinned. They believe that, because God declared that all that He had made on earth was 'very good' (Genesis 1:31), death could not have been a part of that world. They claim that Adam's sin not only brought death upon humanity, but upon the rest of the planet as well.

I do not believe this. First of all, Romans 5:12 does not say that death came upon the whole earth because Adam sinned, but upon "all men". Nor does the fact that God cursed the ground, creating thorns, weeds and thistles that would make it harder for Adam to farm and eat, mean that God was also bringing death upon the animal world at that time. I believe that death dominated the animal world, and that nature was 'red in tooth and claw', before Adam sinned; that it was present from the very beginning of animal life on earth.

For those who insist that death is very bad, and therefore could not have been a part of God's 'very good' creation, I would respond in three ways:

**1) The universe already contained evil when God created the earth.** When God created our planet and its inhabitants, a great moral struggle between righteousness and wickedness had already begun. Satan had already embraced sin in his heart, and had purposed to challenge God for supremacy. And God would eventually allow Satan to approach Adam and Eve in Eden, to test their obedience. And so it made perfect sense for God to create a home for mankind that reflected this 'life and death' reality.

When God commanded Adam not to learn right from wrong, and warned him that he would die if he disobeyed, Adam fully understood what death was. He had seen predator/prey relationships and bloodshed. Adam understood the stakes associated with obedience and disobedience.

**2) Predator/prey relationships reveal the full glory and nature of God.** God is glorified in lions that kill zebras, eagles that kill fish and rabbits, and killer whales that devour seals. A planet that is red in tooth and claw shows us things about God that we need to appreciate. His creation of the Tyrannosaurus Rex, and so many other predators that roamed the earth before mankind arrived, reveals His creative wisdom. One of the four cherubim surrounding God's throne has the face of a lion. Another has the face of an eagle. All four of these cherubim reflect essential, glorious characteristics of God.

The apostle Peter wrote that there are 'brute beasts that have been made to be taken and destroyed' (2 Peter 2:12). Ruminant grazing animals fall into this category; animals like sheep and goats, cattle and buffalo, deer and gazelles. These creatures support both predatory animals, and mankind in amazing ways. And in fact, the harmony of predators and their prey in nature, at every level from insects on up, reveals to us a planet-wide ecosystem that is amazingly balanced and self-perpetuating. And so I don't believe that lions originally ate grass, that eagles pounced upon vegetables, or that sharks ate seaweed.

**3) God is going to bless the animal world.** The apostle Paul wrote that God didn't impose death upon the created world arbitrarily, but also placed a hope within animals for a far greater world in the future:

**For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Romans 8:18-21**

I believe that Paul was referring to what we call 'soulful' creatures. This would include animals that we ourselves become fond of, and keep with us in our houses; like cats and dogs. But I believe that it includes a much broader population than this. I expect that it includes all animals with 'parental instincts'. Animals that 'court' as males and females, find shelters in which to raise their young, and then support their young for various periods of time until they are able to fend for themselves. I am reminded of Jesus' words, that not one sparrow falls to the ground without His Father seeing it (Matthew 10:29).

As I have pointed out above, there is a Millennium coming when 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb'. Death will be greatly suppressed. But beyond that, I believe that it will be in the world to come, the place of the New Jerusalem described in Revelation chapters 21 & 22, where the animal world will be able to fully possess the glorious liberty of God's children. If a child were to ask me if his beloved cat or dog is in heaven, I would tell him that God has promised a future life for his precious pet. And I would tell him that God wants him to join his pet in that blessing, through repentant faith in the Savior.

## **WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN?**

Anyone who teaches, as I do, that all children have sinned and that death represents God's judgment upon them, will be accused of hating children and misrepresenting God. Anyone who advocates, as I do, telling children that they have sinned and that they need to come to the Savior as quickly as possible, in order to escape death, will be accused of terrorizing them and attacking their sense of self-worth. Knowing this, I wish to set forth my position very clearly, beginning with a few preliminary remarks:

When we sinned in Adam we were not children; we were simply people. We were neither male nor female, young nor old, black nor white, rich nor poor. Each one of us was as fully developed, informed and capable as Adam was. We made our individual choices under the most fair and advantageous circumstances, just like Adam did. This is because we were truly 'one' with Adam, just as the Persons of the Trinity are 'One'.

Childhood is a phase of our physical existence after we come into the world in our own bodies. It is a necessary part of physical development, as we progress from an embryo to adulthood. It defines what we are at a point in our lives; but it does not define who we are. Our children may be new to us when they come into the world, but they are not 'new' to God. He has known each one of us personally ever since He placed us in the Garden, and He continues to interact with each one of us on the basis of what happened there.

Children are born relatively harmless, affectionate and adorable. God has given them wonderful characteristics, like beautiful smiles and plump cheeks, that endear them to us and draw out our love. Their beauty prompts us to dote upon them, bond with them and smother them with affection; protecting them as our Creator intended. This is as it should be. We should adore our children. In our children we see the preciousness of humanity itself.

But a part of our child's 'lovableness' is also seen throughout the animal world, in babies of all kinds; from puppies to polar bears. It is their 'cuteness' that helps to insure our parental affection and their survival. And so it is important for us to distinguish between the temporary cuteness of our children, and the kind of love that God wants us to have toward them as persons, in the light of eternity. We must not let our love for our children surpass our love for God, or interfere with putting His will first.

## **CHILDREN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament repeatedly points out the universal sinfulness of mankind, including young people. We find the first indication of this in the book of Genesis, where God's thoughts about mankind before the flood, and again after the flood, reflect this fact.

**And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart. And the Lord said "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth".  
Genesis 6:5-7**

**And the Lord said in His heart "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for 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. Genesis 8:21**

This universality of human wickedness is reaffirmed later in the Old Testament:

The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one. Psalm 14:2-3

For I knew that you (the people of Israel) would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb. Isaiah 48:8

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way. And the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

Lest anyone think that this universal wickedness is a learned behavior, passed on from adults to children, God lays that idea to rest:

The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent. They are like the deaf viper that stops its ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely. Psalm 58:3-5

## CHILDREN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many Christians believe that all children who die go to heaven. This perspective is based upon a passage in the Gospels:

And they brought unto Jesus infants also, that He would touch them. But when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto Him and said "Allow little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

Luke 18:15-17 (also Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16)

What was Jesus saying here? Two things:

**A)** When Jesus said 'of such is the kingdom of God', He was saying that all people must become 'childlike' in their attitude toward God, in order to enter heaven. The very smartest, strongest and greatest people are mere children when compared to God. And it is not until we come to see this that we can even begin to understand our relationship with Him. In Eden, God asked us to trust Him. Our sin was to ignore Him, and to trust in ourselves.

**B)** Jesus was saying that, because children already possess humility, knowing how weak and dependent they are, they can understand the sin of not acknowledging God and trusting Him. And so little children are capable of genuine repentance and faith. Jesus was not saying that children already are saved, but that they can be saved.

One of the most important things that people can do for little children, is to explain the meaning of death to them. Death is one of God's most powerful evangelical tools. Often, when children are allowed to understand the true nature and cause of death, they are able to find their way to the foot of the cross fairly quickly. This is because the cause-and-effect relationship between sin and death is written upon our hearts, and so children are able to quickly grasp the entire message of the Gospel.

But when people obscure the Biblical truth about sin and death, telling children that they will go to heaven when they die, or leading them to false conversions through 'praying the sinner's prayer', 'giving their hearts to Jesus' or being baptized, then these children are deprived of a true understanding of their relationship with God, and of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that is the only solution for their problem.

When the apostle John wrote that 'If we say we have not sinned, God's word is not in us', he was going to the very heart of the matter. This is the starting point of genuine understanding and faith. This is the truth that children already recognize. But they also need to hear it from the Bible; so that they can understand that the Bible is reliable, and that it's answer for their problem can also be trusted.

## **OTHER WORDS FROM JESUS**

My interpretation of Luke 18:15-17 (above) is confirmed by a passage in Matthew 18:1-14, where Jesus set forth almost everything that He wanted to say about children. In the first 4 verses of this passage, Jesus repeated the idea that He expressed in Luke 18:

**At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And Jesus called a little child unto Him, set him in the midst of them, and said "Verily I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."**

**Matthew 18:1-4**

Again, Jesus told His disciples that they must exercise child-like humility toward God in order to enter heaven, and also continue in such humility toward God if they would be great in the kingdom. As I have already mentioned, the strongest and wisest of us are mere babes in comparison to God. Failure to see ourselves in this light hinders our relationship with God.

In verse 5, Jesus went on to instruct His disciples to always interact with children keeping God in mind:

**And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receives me. Matthew 18:5**

In this verse, when He spoke of receiving a little child in His name, Jesus was talking about interacting with children as a Christian. Christians are to be 'ambassadors for

Christ' to the world. This means treating children with respect. Whatever we do in our relationships with children, from mundane everyday interactions to sharing the Gospel with them, should be done with the purpose of glorifying Christ; who humbled Himself for our sakes.

In verses 6-9, Jesus addressed those who do the opposite of what He commands in verse 5:

**But whoso shall offend one of these little ones who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come. But woe to that man by whom the offense comes!**

**Therefore if your hand or your foot offend you, cut them off and cast them from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if your eye offend you, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Matthew 18:6-9**

Jesus was not saying that all little children believe in Him. He was talking about children who have been converted, and have come to believe in Him. Jesus was warning about the severe judgment that will fall upon those who cause young Christians to stumble morally, and to stray from the path of salvation.

But in addition, because we cannot know what is within a young person's heart, and where they are at in their relationship with God, we must assume that God is at least working within their hearts. We must recognize that how we act may have an important bearing upon the conclusions that they will ultimately reach about Him and His salvation.

## **THAT WHICH WAS LOST**

In the final verses of the passage above, we see how God views little children. Children are people whom God has lost, and whom He wishes to recover:

**Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.**

**What think you? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine and go into the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.**

**Matthew 18:10-14**

In these verses, we find a message that is consistent with the rest of the Bible; that children are people who have sinned with Adam, and whom God is eager to save. Here

we are warned not to despise children, or to think that they are incapable of genuine repentance and faith. In our materialistic world we tend to view adults and children as 'productive' or 'nonproductive' members of society respectively. But God does not see us in these outward terms; He sees us inwardly.

Children are sometimes trampled underfoot in the adult world. But Christians are not to despise children. Children are as able to understand God and His word as adults are, and are just as capable of a personal relationship with Him. I fully expect that some of the greatest saints in the kingdom of heaven will be people who came to Christ at an early age, and who may never have had a chance to live beyond childhood.

This is why it is so important to explain the Bible to children, and to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them at the earliest possible age. It is because 1) they live under the constant threat of death, as we all do. And so the opportunity to repent and believe needs to be made available to them as soon as possible. And since faith comes through hearing God's word, this is what a child needs to hear and to have explained. In addition, 2) in their relative innocence and simplicity, they are very able to understand their danger and repentantly turn to the Savior.

Those who deny that children have sinned, and withhold the Biblical message of the cross from them, are like the birds in Jesus' parable of the sower, which snatch up the 'seed' of God's word before it has a chance to 'grow in a child's heart'. They disobey Jesus' commandment to 'let the little children come to Me':

**Hear, therefore, the parable of the sower. When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the roadside.**

**Matthew 13:18-19**

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO ABORTED CHILDREN?**

I once heard a Baptist pastor give a sermon against abortion. He rightly described the wickedness of it. He then went on, however, to state that there is a silver lining to this great crime. He said that all of the infants that have been aborted throughout history have gone to heaven.

The logical question that one might ask is 'Then where's the crime?' If abortion can make life better for the living, and the unborn child goes to heaven, then why should anyone have a problem with it?

This pastor's statement came out of a mishandling of the words of Jesus that I have discussed above. He denied the real sin of every member of the human race in Eden, and the sentence of destruction that was pronounced upon all of us there. Every child who dies apart from hearing the Gospel, dies as someone already condemned by God:

**He that believes on Him (Jesus) is not condemned. But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18**

The fate of unborn children who die is to suffer the judgment that was pronounced upon them in Eden; the loss of their lives and the end of their existence. But the fate of those who have murdered these unborn children, and have denied them the opportunity to hear the Gospel and be saved, will be much more severe.

We live in a world where abortion has been embraced as a means of population control, and as a way of avoiding the reproductive consequences of sexual intercourse. But abortion is murder. God is going to openly reveal the circumstances surrounding every single abortion that has ever occurred in history. And He is going to judge those who have destroyed unborn children.

**For, behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. Isaiah 26:21**

## **PURGATORY AND MARY**

Two unique errors flow out of the Roman Catholic Church's (RCC) erroneous belief that mankind's primary problem is depravity inherited from Adam.

**First**, the RCC teaches that, if people are not in a right relationship with God when they die, they may receive a second chance to get rid of (purge) their sins in a place called 'Purgatory'. Once these sins have been purged, they can move up to heaven.

Rome's reasoning is that, since we did not sin in Eden, and since this present life is our first opportunity to interact with God personally and individually, any loving and reasonable God will give people a second chance to get things right with Him; before condemning them to eternal fire. That second chance to 'purge our sins' must be a place called 'Purgatory'.

**Secondly**, Rome teaches that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born without any Sin in her body. This idea is called the 'immaculate conception' of Mary ('immaculate' meaning spotless, or sinless). It is Rome's basis for the worship of Mary.

Rome has reasoned that Mary had to be an exception to 'hereditary depravity', so that she herself would not pass Sin on to the Son of God at His conception. Some non-Catholics assume that the phrase 'Immaculate Conception' refers to the conception of Christ. This is not true. Rome teaches that the conception and birth of Mary herself was immaculate, enabling her to be born free of Sin; and thus able to give birth to a sinless Christ-child.



Rome claims that Mary remained a sinless virgin after giving birth to Christ and has deified her, elevating her to a level of worship near that of the Trinity. Rome has done all of this despite the fact that A) there is not a single mention of Mary's sinlessness in the Bible, B) Mary called God her Savior in Luke 1:47, and C) the Bible refers to Jesus' brothers repeatedly, even naming them. And it also mentions Jesus' sisters (thus contradicting Mary's perpetual virginity, Matthew 13:55-56).

The simple facts are these:

**1) Since we did have a free and fair opportunity to choose obedience or disobedience in Eden, we are in 'purgatory' right now. This present time, if we are fortunate enough to live upon the earth, is our one opportunity to have our sins purged through faith in Christ (not faith in Rome). God owes this opportunity to no one. But some are fortunate enough to receive it.**

**It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. Hebrews 9:27**

**Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7**

**2) God did not use a virgin to bring Christ into the world because Sin is passed on biologically. He did it because, if Mary had conceived a child with a man, she could only have brought someone into the world who had been present within Adam in Eden; someone who had already chosen to sin. The Holy Spirit caused Mary's conception because it was necessary to bring Someone from outside of the family of Adam to be our Redeemer.**

In addition, by using a virgin to bring the Savior into the world, God was fulfilling His promise that the 'Seed of the Woman' would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). God was meeting and humiliating Satan at his very point of attack; a woman.

We must not worship Mary. She was an everyday person and a sinner saved by grace, whom God chose to bless and use:

**Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given among men (other than Jesus Christ), whereby we must be saved. Acts 4:12**

Rome's false doctrines have led many millions of people astray; causing them to worship a Jewish girl who cannot save them, and to believe that they will have another chance to get right with God in Purgatory. Not only is Rome sending people to eternal damnation, but she also makes huge amounts of money through the promotion of Mary-worship, and by selling "Masses for the Dead" on behalf of people who Rome claims are struggling to escape Purgatory.

Because Rome has subverted God's word and sold her religious influence for money throughout the world, God describes her as "the mother of whores, and of the abominations of the earth" (Revelation 17:5).

## INFANT BAPTISM

I have explained baptism in my web page titled [Christian Baptism](#). It was initiated by John the Baptist, and John's baptism provides the foundational starting point for all four of the Christian Gospels.

No infants were baptized by John. People came to him openly confessing their sins, and seeking cleansing. Infants obviously cannot do this. Also, John told every person that what he was doing with water was only symbolic. He taught that the real washing that they needed would be accomplished by the One coming after Him (Jesus), through the Holy Spirit.

Nor is there any record in the rest of the New Testament of infants or very young children being baptized. Water-baptism was practiced after repentance and faith, and as a symbolic ritual portraying what the Holy Spirit had already accomplished within the person. This should settle the question of whether or not infant baptism is scriptural.

Baptizing infants has a long tradition. It may have begun in post-apostolic times when parents, concerned for their little ones and fearing that they might die in infancy, had them baptized in order to secure a place for them in heaven. Since those early days, with Augustine's claim that our problem is 'inherited depravity', baptism has been seen as a way of removing this depravity. It has been claimed that, when administered by a Roman Catholic priest, baptism possesses the supernatural power to regenerate and save a child.

There are other reasons that different denominations give to justify infant baptism. While acknowledging that it is only symbolic, some claim that it parallels Old Testament circumcision, making the child part of the 'covenant community' of the church. Others use it as a way of enabling parents to 'dedicate' their child to God.

The problem with infant baptism is twofold:

**Firstly**, water baptism is only symbolic. It has no power. It symbolizes true baptism by the Holy Spirit; where a sinner is united with Christ in His own death, burial and resurrection.

**Secondly**, baptism by the Spirit only follows a person's uncorked repentance about sin and faith in Christ. Just as we all willfully chose rebellion in Eden, so we must also freely choose to condemn our rebellion and acknowledge our need for the shed blood of the Savior. Infants cannot do this.

When we baptize infants, we blind people to the true nature of salvation.