



ADAM: THE FIRST MAN

Paul Goffin

To fully understand the Christmas story, and the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago, we have to start at the beginning, and this is with Adam, the first man. The Bible presents us with a history of the human race and its dealings with God; it begins with Adam and finishes with Jesus and to understand the meaning of the birth of Jesus we need to understand the beginning of mankind and what happened to the first man, Adam.

The Bible makes it plain that Adam was a real person, the father of the human race, and through him we inherit many qualities, physical, mental and spiritual. The book of Genesis makes it clear that God created the entire Universe, including the Earth, and as part of that process God created the first man:

Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' (Genesis 1:26, NIV)

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7, NIV)

We can see that mankind was created by God and given life by God, it was not just an accidental process that created humans, God willed it and brought it about. We are not the creation of random chance. God also created the garden in Eden for Adam to live in, a special place with trees producing delicious fruit, so Adam's physical needs were cared for as well. God did not need to create man, God was not lonely or lacking in anything so that He created men, He did it so that men could have a relationship with Him and glorify God. The fact that God created us when he did not need to shows how much he loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. God created Adam, and gave him a garden to live in, because he loved Adam and wanted to have a relationship with him, and later with us.

Adam was also given some tasks to fulfil by God:

- Cultivate the garden, Genesis 2:15.
- Name the animals, Genesis 2:19-20.
- Follow God's instructions and not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 1:28, 2:16-17.

Adam had life, a place to live, food to eat, a role to fulfil and a relationship with God to enjoy. What he still lacked was a life companion, so God made him a helper who was just right, a woman.

The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She shall be called "woman", for she was taken out of man.' (Genesis 2:23, NIV)

Adam understood the connection between himself and Eve, they were created from one flesh, and she would be a helper to him. They were man and woman in a marriage relationship from this point, and this demonstrates the unity that is God's intention in marriage, shown by the fact that they were both naked and felt no shame, there was nothing else interfering with their relationship with each other or with God. This was God's plan for humanity, to live in a loving relationship with others, and also in a perfect relationship with Him.

Such a relationship of love relies upon there being free will on both sides. To be able to love someone requires that one must be able to make a freewill decision. To be able to love also gives the possibility of not loving, if there is not that ability one cannot truly love. Love has to be a positive individual decision; no-one can make you love them. Love is a personal decision. You can force people to do certain things that you might want them to do, but you cannot force them to love you, that is totally different. God therefore endowed Adam, and by descent us, with the property of freewill, this is what make us humans and not merely machines who do what we are programmed to do. This allows us to love and make correct decisions, but conversely also allows us to not love, and to make bad decisions.

Then came the fall. God had given Adam specific instructions not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan had already rebelled against God and now sought to involve man in his rebellion against what God and what He stood for. He appeared in the form of a serpent to Eve and asked her a question intended to deceive her, "did God say you must not eat any the fruit of any of the trees in the garden?". Satan knew very well that this was not what God had said. Eve truthfully repeated what God had told them, that they must not eat the fruit of the one specific tree. Satan then told a direct lie, and said she would not die if she ate the fruit, and that if she did, she would become like God, knowing both good and evil. She



was convinced by his words and ate the fruit, and then gave some to Adam, who was with her, and he ate it too. Their eyes were opened and they felt shame at their nakedness and sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Sin, which can be defined as any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature, had entered the world.

- Sin struck at the basis for knowledge, for it gave a different answer to the question “what is true?”. Eve, then Adam, decided to doubt the truth of God’s word.
- Sin struck at the basis of moral standards, “what is right?”. Eve, then Adam, did not allow God’s words to define what was right.
- Sin gave a different answer to the question “who am I?”. Adam and Eve were creatures of God and always to be subordinate to Him, but sought to put themselves in the position of being like God, attempting to take His place.

This action was of immense significance for the entire future of humanity, there was now going to be a barrier, called sin, between a holy and righteous God, and his created beings who had fallen into sin and rebellion against Him.

God later walked around the garden and Adam and Eve hid from Him, but God called Adam and Adam confessed that he was hiding because he was naked. God immediately realised what had happened and asked Adam if he had eaten the fruit he had been commanded not to eat. Adam blamed the woman and also God, for giving him the woman. This was a bit disingenuous as Adam was present when Eve was talking to Satan, and could have stopped her eating the fruit.

Consequences, because of the entry of sin into the world, soon followed:

- The serpent would be cursed and always be at enmity with humans. (Genesis 3:14-15)
- Eve would have pain in childbirth and there would be conflict with her husband. (3:16)
- Adam would have to work to get food to eat, and would die and return to dust. (3:17-19)
- God made clothing for them out of animal skins, and they were banished from the garden. (3:21-24)
- Adam and Eve would later have children, Cain and Abel, and Cain later murdered his brother. The effects of sin would continue down through all generations until today.

What can we learn from Adam?

- The Bible deals with Adam as a historical figure who represents humanity as a whole, and we are all Adam’s descendants. God’s mandates in Genesis 1:26-30, and curses in Genesis 3:16-19 affected not only Adam and Eve but the entire human race, we have inherited them from Adam. Adam represents the separation from God that we all experience as humans.
- We are all subject to the power of sin in our lives, and the fact that this sin cuts us off from God, who is holy and righteous. We cannot break down this barrier of sin ourselves, as we cannot make ourselves perfect once we have sinned.

But the story does not end here, it is merely beginning, and the rest of the Bible deals with God’s plan to be reconciled with the fallen creation, firstly through the Law, and lastly with the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God does for us that which we cannot do for ourselves, and once again demonstrates His love for men.

But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. (Romans 5:15-18, NLT)

References:
NLT Study Bible
Systematic Theology: Wayne Grudem