

Introduction

Without law there can be no sin; and without law there can be no building of character, good or bad. With the law mankind must have free-will in order to choose to obey or disobey. God wants us to obey and so build good characters.

Adam was given just one law - 'Thou shalt not eat of a certain tree.' Adam had already been provided with plenty of food for God had said, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat (Genesis 1:29). But of one tree only he was not to eat - and yet he did. Now, there always comes a penalty for breaking a law and in this case Adam had been told that if he ate of that one tree he would die that very day! However, the time had now come for his punishment and so Adam hid in the garden – yes, Adam tried to hide away from God for he feared the penalty. Next we see just how merciful God was to Adam for He spared him the penalty and allowed him to go on living with Eve.

Some say God would not say one thing and then do another and look for an alternative understanding of what God meant – and sure enough they believe they have found it in 2 Peter 2:8 where we read "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." As Adam lived for 930 years and then died some have said that must be the answer – that he died within a thousand years because he sinned. But that will not do as we shall see...

Russell Gregory

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What Was The Sentence Upon Adam?

The usual answer which is generally believed by religiously minded people is that the sentence was natural death. If this was so, then we say at the beginning of this brief article that our Lord Jesus Christ died in vain.

The mistaken theory arises from the passage of Scripture, "dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return." Now we would emphasise the fact that all mankind (apart from accident) from the time of creation up to the present, succumb to a natural death by a process of natural decay.

If approximately, two thousand years ago our Lord was nailed to the cross to save us from natural death, then it is obvious that He has miserably failed, for countless millions have died since His sacrifice and returned unto dust. Assuming that "unto dust shall thou return" was the sentence upon Adam and all in his loins, then we are faced with the difficulties of Enoch and Elijah who did not see death; also those who are alive at Christ's return who do not see corruption.

If confusion and contradiction arises it is not because the Word is at fault but rather because reason and harmony does not develop from wrong premises. Natural death had nothing at all to do with the sentence upon Adam, but rather is that which is common to man along with all the other animal creation.

If we ask ourselves for what was the sentence upon Adam, the answer is transgression of law, otherwise, sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Here is the

commandment without which sin would have been an impossibility, a command which resulted in the writing of the quotation, “by one man Sin entered into the world and Death by Sin.” This quotation in no way denies the fact that death would otherwise have resulted from the constitution of the human body which God had created from the earth. “The first man is of the earth, earthy;” “dust thou art.”

The vital point that is commonly overlooked is that Adam should have died “in the day” he transgressed, “Death by sin,” but a merciful and loving God provided a substitute in the sacrificial Lamb, which was slain because of sin. This was the death that came by sin, a violent death by the shedding of blood, and one which exactly prefigured the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on account of Adam’s sin. Is it not obvious what the sentence was upon Adam? There is no doubt that it was “death by sin,” a violent judicial death.

Is it imperative in order to declare or acknowledge God’s justice that Adam must have paid the price of sin? If so, Adam would have died the day he sinned and man upon the earth would have ceased to exist. Has not God, out of the multitude of His tender mercies, provided a way of forgiveness of sin? If so, did not the same apply to Adam?

On the other hand, assuming that Adam suffered the penalty by his natural death after 950 years, why was it necessary for Christ to pay it also? If natural death was the wages of Adam’s sin, then it is impossible for him to be forgiven the penalty, because he has already paid it.

We are informed that “death is the wages of sin,” yes, and this death is a violent one. “Without the shedding of blood is no remission.” Jesus was the Lamb of God that took away The Sin of the world - one sin, Adam’s sin, to which mankind is related upon enlightenment as being in Adam, by reason of being in his loins at the transgression.

Upon this enlightenment, unless one takes the opportunity of God’s provided means of redemption in Christ Jesus, by symbolically dying to sin (which Christ did literally) in the water of baptism, then he belongs to sin and will be resurrected to suffer sin’s wages – the Second Death.

In many countries, by law, a sentence of violent death is imposed for the crime of murder. If the accused person is found guilty of this crime, and during the previous weeks waiting period before the sentence is carried out, natural death occurs, can it rightly be said that the accused has paid the penalty for the crime he committed? Would he not have died naturally irrespective of the crime? Was the sentence carried out by his death? If so, it would be impossible for an innocent person to pay the penalty by naturally dying.

“Sin is the transgression of the law,” and death by sin. Did this murderer who died naturally die for his sin? It is very evident that he did not; death by natural causes is neither a sentence nor a penalty but rather the result of being created corruptible.

This is applicable to Adam; he was in a similar responsible position to the murderer, the only difference being that Adam, by the mercy of God, obtained a reprieve from the conditions of the sentence – a lamb being provided as a substitute. This lamb foreshadowed Jesus Christ - the “Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,” the Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world,” for “without the shedding of blood is no remission.

Surely the word “slain” implies a violent death, a death which was brought into the world by Adam’s sin, the death which Jesus suffered so that Adam and all his posterity might have both natural life and the opportunity of eternal life.

By His death He has destroyed him “that had the power of death that is the devil.” Can we construe this passage to mean natural death? This death still persists, but rather Death by Sin, Adam’s sin, has been rendered powerless by the price He paid for our redemption.

God’s plan of redemption is revealed in wisdom, mercy, and love; He is not willing that any should, perish; God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

What was the sentence upon Adam? The shortest and simplest answer to this question is that which Christ suffered. Was His death natural? Did He return to dust? Unless the precious blood of Christ had been poured out on Calvary, mankind would have ceased to be, owing to the death (by violence) of our first parents, for “the wages of sin is death,” and “without the shedding of blood is no remission.”

During the period of His manifestation Jesus was able to say, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” By this statement, is it not very evident that the condemnation mentioned cannot be natural death, for this is the experience of all and therefore an impossibility for one to pass from, apart from the return of Christ?

Death, that is, The Death, is the climax of condemnation both final and eternal, a death which many will be raised to suffer who have already naturally died, in short, the Second Death. This is The Death which became operative upon mankind by one man, Adam, because of Sin, a death in harmony with the statement of Jesus (John 5:24), which Adam and all mankind by God’s Grace can pass from by participating in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus by faith. After confirming this faith in the waters of baptism it can be said, “there is therefore now No Condemnation to them which are in Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”. (Romans 8:1,2).

The force of this law of sin and death which was established by Adam’s transgression became operative upon himself and all his enlightened posterity. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” and is the correct answer to the question at the head of this short article, but by the mercy of God, a Lamb was provided in the stead of Adam, which literally suffered the force of this law of sin and death, Adam suffering it symbolically, or by his conscience.

The mind is the man; the members and organs of the physical constitution being but the implements of action which are decided by the brain.

When the lamb died, Adam, by his conscience, would die also; henceforth not to live unto himself but unto Him, by faith, of whom the Lamb prefigured, even the only begotten Son of God.

Likewise Paul, who could say, “for I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” (Galatians 2:19); “likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 2 (Romans 6:11).

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