

STUDY 3

In Adam: Created and Fallen

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OUR TOPIC AND BAPTISM

It may at first instance seem strange that, in a school on baptism, we should spend time looking at matters of Adam, the creation and the fall. Given a desire for a deeper understanding of baptism and an Old Testament at hand, surely a consideration of the flood, or the exodus through the Red Sea would bear more fruit. At least in these accounts there are people in saving proximity to water! Such an investigation would indeed bear fruit, but I'd suggest that there is nothing more fundamental to our understanding of baptism than what it means to be in Adam, both as he was created, and as he came to be in his fallen state. We cannot know what it means to be baptised into Christ if we do not first know what it means to have been born into Adam. Without such an understanding there is no rationale for the need for baptism, and there cannot be a full appreciation of its grace-filled work in the very essence of who we are.

IN ADAM

That the story of Adam¹ tells us anything at all about baptism, and more personally, *our* baptism, is only the case because the creation account is not a distant story about distant people doing distant things. As the New Testament authors, particularly Paul, reflected upon the first three chapters of Genesis, they saw scripture that spoke to us about ourselves, scripture that set out who we are and how it is we relate to our world and to each other (Matt. 19:3–6; Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–49). They saw in it an intimate story of us. Thus when we hear of our relationship to Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:22, we discover that Paul uses the most intimate language possible. We are not distantly related to Adam, we are in him: ‘all die *in Adam*’ (1 Cor. 15:22).² Indeed, we can discern from this that the story is not of passing interest to a select few, but crucially affects every person who has ever lived, for ‘*all die in Adam*’.

¹ Adam in the Hebrew has an inherent, and I believe purposeful, ambiguity in its meaning. The Hebrew word אָדָם (*adam*) can mean ‘humanity’ or ‘mankind’ as it clearly does in Gen. 1:26–27, or operate as a more particular ‘the man’ (Gen. 2:22), or indeed be used as a proper name, as it certainly is in Gen. 5:3. In light of this, I will similarly move between these meanings throughout this paper.

² Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version.

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What It Means to be ‘in Adam’

So what does it mean to be ‘in Adam’? In all of scripture, there is only one explicit reference to being ‘in Adam’, and that is in the scripture just quoted, 1 Corinthians 15:22. Therefore in order to come to an understanding of what it means to be ‘in Adam’, we essentially need a biblical theology of being ‘in’ someone. As we look at scripture, we discover that by far the greatest number of references to being ‘in’ someone are references to being ‘in Christ’ (e.g. Phil. 1:1; Gal. 1:22; 1 Cor 1:4).³ What we end up with, then, is a biblical theology of being ‘in Christ’ which we then apply to what it means to be ‘in Adam’. In the first instance, it may appear that this approach is backwards, that a proper direction of inference would be *from Adam to Christ*. But scripture itself does not speak this way. Romans 5:14 speaks of Adam as being ‘a type of the one who was to come [Christ]’. The relationship we have to Adam, that is, being in him, is typical of our relationship to Christ. The nature of our relationship to Adam therefore has its source in our relationship to Christ. Karl Barth, commenting on this typological relationship, puts it this way:

The relationship between Adam and us reveals not the primary but only the secondary anthropological truth and ordering principle. The primary anthropological truth and ordering principle, which only mirrors itself in that relationship [the relationship between Adam and us], is made clear only through the relationship between Christ and us.⁴

That being ‘in Adam’ is only a mirror, a type, of the relationship between us and Christ should give us some pause in blithely extrapolating about being in Adam from the relationship between Christ and us. The Greek word for ‘type’ in this passage—τύπος (*tupos*)—originally meant ‘the impression made by striking something’.⁵ Therefore Adam will not embody the fullness of who Christ is, and nor will us being ‘in Adam’ fully express the relationship designated by us being ‘in Christ’. Drawing inferences from what it means to be ‘in Christ’ as a source for what it means to be ‘in Adam’ needs to be done with care, yet they can be drawn. The fact that Adam and Christ are paralleled in scripture on a number of occasions would also seem to give permission for such inferences (see particularly Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:22, 42–53).

Others will flesh out for us more fully what it means to be in Christ; my intention here is only to draw out briefly what it means to be ‘in’ someone, giving general conclusions from the scriptural data regarding being ‘in Christ’. From that data it is noted that being in Christ affects our:

³ There are over ninety such references. The only other similar use of the concept of being ‘in’ someone is Gen. 18:18, where all the nations are blessed in Abraham; and Ps. 72:17 where again the nations are blessed in him—referring to a Davidic king—and therefore is likely to be another reference to the Messiah or Christ.

⁴ Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1956), p. 6. See also J. E. Colwell, in his article, ‘The Fall’ in S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright (eds), *New Dictionary of Theology* (InterVarsity Press, Leicester, 2000), p. 250. He writes:

Perhaps the most helpful aspect of Barth’s contribution (and Calvin’s) is the determination to argue from Christ to Adam rather than from Adam to Christ. It is only from the perspective of our inclusion in the righteousness of Christ and its consequences in terms of justification and sanctification that we can comprehend the reality of our inclusion in the sin of Adam with its consequences of guilt, death and total depravity. Our inclusion in Adam may be ‘chronologically’ prior to our inclusion in Christ, but noetically the roles are reversed.

⁵ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996, p. 334.

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- **Relationship to God:** In Christ we are made children of God (Gal. 3:26), brought near to God (Eph. 2:13), and the relationship is characterised by blessing (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:3).
- **Nature:** In Christ we are righteous (2 Cor. 5:21), sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2), and free (Gal. 2:4). We bear the image of Christ (1 Cor. 15:49). It also means a fundamental change in ‘being’, for those in Christ are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
- **Action:** We are in Christ if we walk as he walked (1 John 2:5–6). Thus our actions are a *fundamental* part of being ‘in’ someone.
- **Judicial status before God:** In Christ we are redeemed (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13–14; Eph. 1:7), reconciled (2 Cor. 5:19), forgiven (Eph. 1:7; 4:32), justified (Gal. 2:16), saved (2 Tim. 2:10) and there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

There is of course much more that can be said (and will be said by others at this school!) regarding being in Christ, but what is enumerated above is enough to infer that being ‘in Adam’ means that our relationship with God will be wrapped up in him, our nature will be derived from him, our status before God will be affected by him, and our actions will be his actions.⁶ This, in broad terms, is what it means to be ‘in Adam’. To understand more particularly what it means to be ‘in Adam’, we must turn to what it means to be in Adam as he was created, and what it means to be in Adam after the fall.

ADAM AS HE WAS CREATED

The first thing to say of Adam was that he was created by God and therefore a creature of God. It is a fairly obvious statement, but without it we cannot begin to speak about who Adam is. He is only who he is in relationship to God. His relationship to God is determined by the fact of his creatureliness. God is his Creator and therefore his Lord. As much might be said of all creation, but God is the intimate Creator of Adam. Where the rest of creation spun into being by a word, Adam was intimately fashioned by his Maker and enlivened by the very breath of God (Gen. 2:7). More than simply being a creature of God, Adam is *the* creature of God *par excellence*. He is not just part of the creation, but its pinnacle:⁷

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals [literally: the Son of Adam/man] that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor (Ps. 8:3–5).

⁶ Martin Bleby, speaking about being baptised into Christ, says: ‘it is to be caught up into the character, purpose and action of the one into whom we have been baptised’ (M. Bleby, *The Gift of God: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as Sacraments of the Cross*, NCPI, Blackwood, 2007, pp. 36f.). One might say of being in Adam that it is to be caught up into the character, purpose and action of the one in whom we are born.

⁷ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, Word, Waco, 1987, pp. 27, 38.

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As the psalmist considers what seem to be the greatest wonders of the creation, the greatest wonder of it all is that humanity is above even the heavens in glory and honour. God creates Adam—humanity as male and female—as the last of his acts of creation and the culmination of all his works.

As the pinnacle of his creation, God also crowned Adam with his own image:

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind [Heb. *adam*] in our image, according to our likeness . . .’
So God created humankind [Heb. *adam*] in his image,
in the image of God he created them [Heb. *him*];
male and female he created them (Gen. 1:26–27).

Adam, humanity in its fullness as male and female, is given what no other part of all the creation is given—God’s image. This too is actually a picture of the intimacy we have with God. Our very nature and being is formed and infused with God-likeness. To try and define this, tying it down as it has been in the past to our rationality, or to our ethical and cognitive aspects, or to our ability to relate to God,⁸ would be to limit the image of God in us. Scripture does not limit it, scripture never really gives us the detailed content of what being in God’s image entails. Aspects of what the image must include can be inferred from scripture, and it is enormously useful to reflect on these, but always with the understanding that more than we can say is found in our imaging of God. In the end, Geoffrey Bingham’s statement on the image of God is perhaps the most useful:

‘Everything that God is, man is like that, but then anything that God is, man is none of that.’ That is to say, ‘God is God, and man is man’. Man reflects God, but is not God.⁹

To explore and flesh out what this means is for another paper, but for the moment it is enough that we note three things.

Firstly, that being in God’s image does not just suit us for relationship with God, but makes relationship with God essential. A mirror can only reflect that which has drawn near. We can only really image God as we delight in his presence. Part of imaging God is reflecting his character,¹⁰ and we can only really reflect his character as we know him. Likewise, as our nature conforms to his, such a relationship is necessarily one characterised by blessing. Thus his first action in relationship is to bless—‘So God created humankind . . . God blessed them’ (Gen. 1:27–28). To say that we are in the image of God is to say that we are in relationship with him.

Secondly, being in the image of God also puts us in relationship with one another. As God is triune, and relates within himself—‘Let us make humankind in our [own] image’ (Gen. 1:26)—so Adam too relates within his humanity as man and woman. Likewise it has implications for the way in which we relate to one another beyond the unity we have as man and woman:

Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
by a human shall that person’s blood be shed;
for in his own image God made humankind (Gen. 9:6).

⁸ Sinclair B. Ferguson, ‘Image of God’, in *New Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 328f.

⁹ Geoffrey Bingham, *I, The Man!* NCPI, Blackwood, 1983, pp. 15f.

¹⁰ Ian Pennicook, *The Glorious Image of God*, NCPI, Blackwood, 2008, p. 10.

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That we are in the image of God gives us a preciousness that our relationships with each other should reflect.

Thirdly, being in the image of God also puts us in relationship with the rest of creation. As God's image-bearer, Adam's first and primary office is that of dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:26).¹¹ Not as something he does independent of his relationship with God, but within the context of that relationship—as God's image-bearer, he is his representative to the creation, not his replacement.¹²

Adam, humanity, is therefore glorious beyond all else in creation. God has intimately created him, crowned him with his image, blessed him in relationship with God and within his own humanity, and set him above all the world as its lord in conformity with his own Lordship. This is Adam as he was created.

IN ADAM: CREATED

To what extent are we 'in Adam' as he was created? If we return to the four spheres that we discerned earlier of what it means to be biblically 'in' someone, we can move somewhere towards an answer to the question. As we have seen, his *relationship to God* was intimate (Gen. 2:7); that God would speak with Adam personally indicates God was relationally near (Gen. 1:28–30; 2:16–17). Indeed this closeness of relationship was such that Adam could be described as God's son, and therefore knew God as Father (Luke 3:38). In nature, Adam was righteous, free, and fully and perfectly imaging God. His *actions* were in complete conformity with the will of God, and there was therefore at this stage no question of humanity's *judicial status before God*, as God and humanity lived in unbroken love. Clearly, if this is what it means to be 'in Adam' as he was created, we are not in him. Something has intervened between Adam as he was created and Adam as we now experience life in him. That something was of course the fall.

The Fall and Being 'in Adam' as Created

Adam was created good and free. He was created good in the perfection of his relationship with God and the creation (in which his natural state is obedience to God), and free in that he was given the dignity of the ability to choose to remain in his natural relationship of trust and obedience. Provided with everything that he needed in the abundance of Eden, he was also provided with the grace of God's command that both delineated and gave him his freedom:

You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die (Gen. 2:16–17).

There is no obedience without command, and there is no freedom in relationship with God in this world without the opportunity to trust his word and wilfully submit to him. Thus 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' was not an ambivalent part of

¹¹ Dominion was of course not simply Adam's station and office, but also his blessing from God—see v. 28.

¹² See Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, pp. 30–1; and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Temptation* (SCM Pr., London, 1966 [1937]), p. 38.

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an otherwise good creation—a temptation full of dark possibilities—but an integral part of what makes the creation ‘very good’. Indeed the tree is another opportunity for Adam to celebrate his nature as a dependent creature of God.

Yet this is precisely what Adam failed to do. He wanted to be more than God’s creature, he wanted to go beyond dependent trust in his word. Adam, humanity, wanted to choose for himself what was good and evil, and so be ‘as God’. Adam was already in God’s likeness and image, but he wanted more. In eating of the tree he had been forbidden, he sought to claim all that he imaged, all God’s authority and powers, for himself, and so marred the image because he no longer wanted to image God but be God. The serpent said ‘you will be like God’—Adam was already like him in his image, but he wanted to be like him in his essence, that is, to be God.

In this Adam denied his true nature as a creature of God and reached for the absurdity of trying to be something he was not. Such a denial was also an act of rebellion against the one who made Adam who he was. It broke the relationship of trust and dependence between humanity and God and therefore fundamentally altered Adam’s being. We said earlier that Adam is who he is only in relationship to God, and therefore as that relationship fundamentally changes, so too does Adam.

It’s important to note, however, that this doesn’t make Adam an entirely new creation, utterly stripped of his nature as created. All that he was made he still is. For all his attempt to be other, he remains a creature, created by God. There is nothing that Adam can do to alter the historical and ontological fact of his creation by God. Hence the absurdity of denying his creatureliness. Adam remains in God’s image, even after the fall (Gen. 5:1–5; 9:4–6; James 3:9). Adam still has dominion over the earth. Even after the fall, the psalmist can say of humanity that:

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas (Ps. 8:6–8).

Adam’s dominion after the fall remains and is not in the slightest abrogated by his rebellion. The other blessings of God in relationship to Adam also remain—he will still be fruitful and fill the earth.

In all this we are ‘in Adam’ and partakers of his created glory. We, too, are God’s creatures and therefore necessarily have the dignity of being in relationship with him as our Lord, however much we deny it:

For thus says the LORD,
who created the heavens
(he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it
(he established it;
he did not create it a chaos,
he formed it to be inhabited!):
I am the LORD, and there is no other (Isa. 45:18).

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It is by virtue of his acts of creation that he is Lord of the creation and thus it remains true even after the fall that he is our Lord. Likewise we remain in his image, and this continues to give us a preciousness that makes our lives sacred:

Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
by a human shall that person's blood be shed;
for in his own image God made humankind (Gen. 9:6).

We also share in Adam's dominion. The environmental movements of our time often seek to emphasise that we are part of the world and are not over it, yet it is only because we have dominion over the world that the good and right call to properly care for it makes any sense at all. Lastly, we also continue in God's blessing to be fruitful and multiply, as the astonishing increase in the world's population in the last fifty years bears testimony.¹³

As people 'in Adam' we share in his created glories. They should never be underestimated or belittled. We are of immense value and we have an unparalleled dignity and power within the creation. All that Adam was made he still is. Yet it is also true that none of what he was made remains unperverted. That we retain these created glories of Adam after the fall simply serves to make the fall all the more terrible and powerful in its awful effects. For these great powers are turned against God and are perverted from their created goodness.

IN ADAM: FALLEN

If being 'in' someone affects our relationship with God, our nature, our actions and our judicial status before God, we should expect that being 'in Adam' in his fallen state will catch us up—or perhaps more properly will drag us down—into all these things as they stand in the fallen Adam.

Relationship with God

Whereas the relationship between God and Adam in his original created glory was marked by intimacy, it is no longer the experience of those 'in Adam'. Just as Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after their act of disobedience (Gen. 3:8), so too those who are 'in Adam' naturally seek to hide from his face:

Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?' (Rev. 6:15–17).

The relationship has been blighted by sin to such an extent that such intimacy is not only no longer possible, but also would be downright dangerous for those who now can only expect his wrath. When the psalmist asks, 'Where can I go from your spirit?

¹³ It is said that there are more people currently living in the world than there have been in the whole of human history put together.

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Or where can I flee from your presence?’ (Ps. 139:7), it is more than idle curiosity and a matter of disinterested philosophical musings. Though the question is posed by a follower of God, it is a question that is symptomatic of broken relationship. Indeed, the relationship is not simply broken, but turned on its head, for those ‘in Adam’ are in fact enemies of God (Rom. 5:10; Ps. 37:20; 92:9; Luke 19:27; Phil. 3:18).

As enemies of God, the relationship that had in the created perfection been characterised by blessing is now characterised by curse:

To the woman [the LORD God] said,

‘I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.’

And to the man he said,

‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you,
“You shall not eat of it,”
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return’ (Gen 3:16–19).

The blessings that flowed within the original relationship are not taken away, yet they are all modified by the curse. They will still be fruitful, but it will be in pain; there will still be relationship within their humanity, yet it will be played out in power struggles; they will still have dominion over the creation, but the creation itself will be unruly and only yield its gifts at the price of sweat and labour. That the curse darkens the relationship between God and all who are ‘in Adam’, and indeed between us and the rest of the creation, is even more the case after the giving of the law:

The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore a curse devours the earth,
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt . . . (Isa. 24:5–6).

As we image God and are therefore in relationship with God, each other and the creation, so too do all three of those spheres of relationship come to be subjected to the curse for those ‘in Adam’.

The relationship is also affected in that God’s fatherhood is denied. Worse, those ‘in Adam’ actually become children of the devil:

Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning (1 John 3:8).

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Those who are ‘in Adam’ participate in a sonship that is contrary to that of the true Father, and so set up another fatherhood:

You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

Such a fatherhood is a false fatherhood and a lying fatherhood, because the devil can never rightly claim a part in our generation nor can he claim a kinship. The devil is utterly other than us, though ‘in Adam’ we listen to his lies and do that which he desires.

Nature

That we listen to the devil’s lies is not simply an expression of a free and uncorrupted will. Adam’s sin also bequeathed to all humanity a nature that pursues sin, and thus makes all to be sinners and under the power of sin:

... we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: ‘There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God’ (Rom. 3:9–11).

Such a universal experience of sin and sinning can only really be explained by a corruption of the nature of humanity as it is in Adam, and indeed this is precisely what the Apostle Paul explains in Romans 5:12–21:

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned . . . Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come . . . For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (Rom. 5:12, 14, 19–20).

This is a justifiably famous passage, one upon which the often controversial doctrine of original sin is founded, and therefore one that has generated a great deal of theological interest and debate. Yet, for all of that, the essential meaning of the passage is clear; Adam’s sin made us sinners. The connection between Adam’s sin and ours isn’t really explained—it may be that we are to understand with Augustine that we were ‘seminally present’ in Adam and therefore actually sinned in him,¹⁴ or with Calvin, that human nature was corrupted and such corruption is hereditary in all the human race,¹⁵ or with Beza that ‘all are born corrupt because they are representatively incorporate in the sin and guilt of Adam’ who is our federal representative,¹⁶ or

¹⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1981 [1939]), p. 237. See also Geoffrey Bingham, *I, The Man!* p. 156. Compare the parallel with Levi being seminally present in Abraham in Heb. 7:10.

¹⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, trans Henry Beveridge (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1983, book 2, ch. 1, para. 8), p. 217 says:

Original sin, then, may be defined a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces within us works which in scripture are termed works of the flesh. This corruption is repeatedly designated by Paul by the term sin.

Augustine also speaks in similar terms.

¹⁶ See J. E. Colwell’s, articles ‘Fall’ and ‘Sin’ in *New Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 249–51, 641–3.

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indeed a combination of a number of explanations. The point is that our nature is so affected by Adam's sin that it not only makes us sinners, but also people with a predisposition towards sin. Indeed this is what we would expect from our biblical theology of being 'in' someone.

Because of this, in Adam we are also by nature slaves: 'Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin' (John 8:34; see also Rom. 6:16–22; 7:14, 25; Titus 3:3). Created free and with dominion, we have denied our created nature and submitted ourselves to bondage. The scriptures often refer to this inherent sinfulness, and the slavery that comes with it, in terms of 'the flesh'—'For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin' (Rom. 7:14). In 1 Corinthians, those engaged in quarrelling and jealousy are of the flesh, 'behaving according to human inclinations' (1 Cor. 3:3), and our flesh, our natural inclinations, are opposed to the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–17). In Adam we are inherently opposed to God.

In all this we bear the image of the man of dust (1 Cor. 15:49). Created to image God perfectly, we instead reflect the warped and perverted image of God found in Adam after the fall.

Action

That our nature is so affected towards sin by our situation in Adam in no way frees us from the responsibility for our sin, for though we are made sinners by Adam's sin, by choice we keep on sinning. Willing participants in Adam, we choose to do the works of the flesh:

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19–21).

To be in Adam is thus utterly depraved, to act in a way that opposes all of God's righteousness.

Judicial Status before God

As sinners who have chosen to act in the sin of Adam, those in Adam stand condemned in his trespass:

For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation . . . one man's trespass led to condemnation for all (Rom. 5:16, 18).

Being 'in Adam' means we have a share in the judgement that came upon him, and that judgement is one of condemnation. While it is clear from Romans 5 that it was Adam's trespass that brought this condemnation, it is also clear that the condemnation of those 'in Adam' is merited through their own pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:12) and because of their own unbelief, which springs from their evil deeds (John 3:18–21).

This pattern of self-merited condemnation coming together with a condemnation that stems from our nature as it is wrapped up in Adam can be seen most clearly in Ephesians:

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All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else (Eph. 2:3).

We (when still in Adam) wilfully followed the desires of the flesh and senses (desires that have their anti-God character by virtue of our situation in Adam) and thus were by nature (a nature that bears the Adamic stamp) children of wrath. In Adam our status before God is that of the condemned, both because of who we are and who we choose to continue to be.

IN ADAM: A SUMMARY

All this is to say that in Adam, we are dead. God spoke truly when he spoke to Adam in the garden, ‘in the day that you eat of it you shall die’ (Gen. 2:17). In Adam it is true that we die physically, but it is also true that in Adam we are relationally dead to God, we bear a ‘death-ward’ nature, we act in the actions of death and we are condemned to death (Rom. 5:12; 6:23; 7:24; Heb. 6:1; 1 John 3:14; Rev. 20:11–15). No one in Adam can inherit the kingdom of God, and this is the state of all who are born into this world; ‘*all die in Adam*’ (1 Cor. 15:22).

As people in Adam, then, we have a desperate need: to no longer be in Adam. The problem with this, however, is that to not be in Adam would be to deny our humanity. We could not be ‘in’ anyone who is other than Adam.¹⁷ Our desperate need, then, is to be in someone who is the perfect expression of the Adamic nature, but does not share the Adamic fall. Our need is to be in the True Adam, Christ our Lord. Born of Adam, we need to be born again.

That is, we need to be baptised *into* Christ, and so live in him.

FOR FURTHER READING

The following books may be useful for further study:

Bingham, G. C. *Man of Dust, Man of Glory!* NCPI, Blackwood, 1986.

Blocher, H. *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*, InterVarsity Press, Leicester, 1997.

¹⁷ That is why scripture speaks of us being ‘in’ Adam and ‘in’ Christ, but only ever ‘from’ the devil (1 John 5:19; John 8:44; 1 John 3:12).