

No.7. Adam's Federal Headship

Man was created in the image of God, in the image of God's own morality, thus with an inherent obligation to love & serve the God who made him and do so with all of his being. Since the man God created was made in the divine image, it was necessary that the Creator demand this obedience and it was necessary that the man should have given it. Moreover, Adam was created good. He was made upright and holy, and was therefore constituted to give the obedience that the Lord required of him. He was endowed with a character that enabled him to fulfil the demands that his sovereign Creator placed upon him.

Furthermore, it is clear from the language of the early chapters of Genesis that Adam was placed within the framework of a certain administration in which he was to give the obedience required of him. That administration is in view in the negative command of Gen 2: 17, namely that Adam was not to eat of a certain tree as a test of his obedience to God. But the point that we wish to note is that within this administration Adam did not stand alone but acted as the federal or covenant head of the entire human race. We do not know how much Adam knew of this headship or the consequences that would issue forth for those he represented. But Scripture is very clear that God made Adam the federal or natural head of all men.

I. Adam's federal headship is indicated in his original creation

See Gen1: 26-29 -- these verses show that Adam was not created as a single being with no reference to others of the same kind who would succeed him. Rather, it is clear from this description of man's creation that God had in view an entire race, the first of whom He named *Adam* meaning "*man*." Note in v.v. 26-28, the use of the plural personal pronoun *them*. In v.29 twice there is the plural pronoun *you*. So God had the whole race in view when He created Adam. This is also the case in chs.2 & 3. Man was placed in the Garden to dress and keep it -- 2: 19, 20. Thus Adam is beginning to fulfil the command given to "them" i.e. as the representative of the whole race he is initiating dominion "over all the earth." Moreover, the woman is created; marriage is instituted, so that the command to "them" to be fruitful and multiply might be fulfilled. Then, the Fall brought conditions that apply to the entire race -- labour, sorrow etc. This clearly implies that Adam was the federal head of the race since the consequences of his sin are inflicted on all men. With regard to the command against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was originally given to Adam, but Eve saw it as applying to her as well ch. 3: 2, 3.

It should be pointed out that Adam's creation as the Federal Head of the race was such that no better representative for any man could be brought forward. See Ecc1 7: 29, "*God...made man upright*." Eph 4: 24 -- as noted before, these words can be attributed to the first creation of man as well as to his new creation in Christ. Therefore, Adam was created in righteousness and true holiness. See also Col 3: 10. It contains similar language and therefore teaches that Adam had the knowledge of God. So he was created upright, with knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This means that God's representative arrangement in the Garden was perfectly feasible and was the best mode of representation imaginable.

Another important point regarding Adam's creation as the federal head of the race is as follows: man was made to fill the earth through natural generation; but whatever Adam would bring on himself by his response to God's command would be passed on to all his descendants by this natural generation. Thus, see Gen 5: 3 -- since Seth was born after Adam's image and likeness he inherited the awful result of Adam's fall. But so did all men -- Eph 2: 3, Ps 51: 5. The significance of this is that since God intended that the human race would be perpetuated by a natural generation that would pass on the moral results of Adam's success or failure, the Lord obviously viewed Adam in no other way but as Federal Head of the human race.

II. N.T. Scriptures which teach the Federal Headship of Adam

There are two very clear passages which do so -- Rom 5: 12-21; 1 Cor 15: 21-22, 45-49. These Scriptures can only make sense when Adam is viewed as the representative of his descendants. Both passages are structured around a parallel which is drawn between Adam and Christ. They are so strongly linked in the theme of these passages that Adam is said to be "*the figure [or type] of Him that was to come*," Rom. 5: 14. And Christ is said to be the "*last Adam*" and the "*second man*," 1 Cor 15: 45, 47. Thus, Christ and Adam stand in unique relations to man. There is no one before Adam -- he is the first man. There is no other representative man between Adam & Christ, for Christ is the second man. Then, there is none after Christ -- He is the last Adam. The point made in these passages is that just as Adam stood as the head of those in him, and his fall and its consequences were imputed to his posterity, so Christ is the Head of those "in Him," and His merit is imputed to them.

See Rom 5: 18a -- this verse teaches so clearly that penal judgment and condemnation came on all men because of "*the offence of one*," i.e., Adam. It was not merely that his sin and corruption passed to the race through natural generation and caused them to be condemned for their own transgressions, but it was the guilt of *Adam's* sin that brings the judgment referred to in this verse. Moreover, v.19 makes it clear that the focus is on that single transgression that Adam committed -- "one man's disobedience." See also v.16b and read it as follows -- "*for the judgment was by one [offence] to condemnation*." This is what is referred to by the word "one" -- one offence because the focus is on the thought of offences. Note also in v.19 the term "*many were made sinner*." This is a forensic or legal term. It does not mean that we inherited Adam's sinful nature -- that is proved elsewhere. It means that we were constituted guilty in the sight of God. See 2 Cor 5: 21 where Christ was "made to be sin for us." Do not mean that Christ underwent any change in His moral nature and holy person. Rather, they mean that Christ as our Substitute was treated and dealt with as being legally guilty. Our sins were imputed to Him, though they were not imparted to Him. See also Gal 3: 13 -- Christ was "made a curse for us" as the Substitute of God's elect He was judicially placed under the curse of the law by our guilt being transferred to Him. Likewise, Adam's offspring were "*made sinners*" by their head's disobedience in that the guilt of that sin was transferred to them. These Scriptures make it abundantly clear therefore that Adam was the federal head of all men.

Note Rom 5: 12, "*By one man sin entered into the world*." NB -- Eve sinned also; before Adam; so why not "by one woman sin entered the world"? Because Adam was the federal head not Eve. In fact he was her representative as is proved in Gen 3. Eve ate first but no change was manifested. But as soon as Adam ate "*the eyes of them both were opened*." This proves that Adam was Eve's federal head as well as representing all men. But 1 Cor 15: 22 is even more clear -- "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*." In the N.T. the union of Christ with His people is presented as being "in Christ." Even so here we find mankind considered "in Adam." This verse presents two federal heads and the two races they represent