

Adam and the Fall – Part 3

NOTE: This is a reposting of Part 3 of Adam and the Fall due to significant revision and extension of the original article. I do apologize for its length. – *Paul*

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, . . . (Luke 24:44-45)

Even as the disciples could not understand the Old Testament Scriptures because they were blinded by the hardness of their hearts, Adam, not by any hardness of his heart, but through ignorance, simply cannot understand that choosing to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is evil. What is meant in the passage from Luke, Chapter 24 is that the disciples could not grasp the significance of passages of Old Testament Scripture, and that those passages pertained to Christ. In the same way, to Adam, who does not know and cannot conceive good and evil, what is put before him is simply a choice of one thing over another. Though we see that Adam cannot be held guilty due to his innocence, he is indeed guilty by virtue of the fact he was given an express command. However, he does not, as we would, recognize that rejecting the command is an act of rebellion. He simply cannot understand anything good or evil about the command and his transgression of it. It is impossible for Adam to understand how failing to keep the command is wrong. This is a state of pure innocence. It is very much like the innocence of a child, which is described to us in Deuteronomy, Chapter 1:

Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give

it, and they shall possess it. (*Deuteronomy 1:39*)

Now, unlike little children and like the disciples, Adam's state is one of being intelligent yet undiscerning of what it means to be disobedient. He cannot comprehend that disobeying the commandment is an act of evil, any more than he can discern that both he and the creation he inhabits are "very good." In the same way, but looking from the other side, we have almost as much difficulty comprehending Adam's state of existence as he does comprehending that good and evil exist. The difference is that he can't, and if we honestly try, we can. After all, all we have to do is raise a child, and we gain firsthand knowledge of what it is like to deal with someone who cannot comprehend that what they are about to do, or what they just did is wrong.

Thus, there is a parallel that exists between the child reaching the age where they perceive the fact that the law of God exists, and Adam partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This "awareness" of the child is explained by the apostle Paul in Romans, Chapter 7:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (*Romans 7:7-9*)

The parallels do not match completely, as Adam's state cannot ever be duplicated again. However, it is close enough that we can see what is meant by the statements "I had not known sin, but by the law" and "For without the law sin was dead." We may also add the following, as it to confirms the picture presented by the child that becomes cognizant of the law of God, and due to his sin nature, promptly rebels:

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
(*I Corinthians 15:56*)

Hence, immediately after the entrance of the law, sin revives in the heart of the child, deceives the child, the child rebels against the law and is promptly cut off from God. Nonetheless, we are also instructed in the passage from Romans, Chapter 7 cited above, that the apostle Paul was "alive without the law once:" meaning that as a child that could not distinguish between good and evil (yet the sin nature lay dormant in his heart) he lived, and had yet to run afoul of the law no matter what he did, as he was not capable of distinguishing between good and evil. Thus, we have confirmation of what Moses stated in the passage quoted above:

" . . .and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil,. . ." (*Deuteronomy 1:39b*)

Here then is the parallel between Adam and the little child prior to the fall, and a parallel between what happened to Adam when he fell and death ensued, and the child that reaches the age of cognizance of the law of God and death ensues. In both cases, the parties are innocent, innocence is destroyed, and death comes about as direct result of the loss of innocence. Thus, we should have the ability to understand that Adam, as intelligent as he obviously was, could not make a moral judgement about the rightness or wrongness of his action, or of the actions of anyone or anything else. In this regard Adam is like a child (I should say here that to the LORD God, we are all like little children.), but in sheer intelligence, Adam has immense capability. He is, like the disciples, held back from understanding, yet is fully capable of understanding. The problem is not with Adam's intellect, but lies in the fact that the knowledge of what constitutes good and evil itself will kill him.

This calls to mind the time when I spoke with a couple of Mormon missionaries. During the discussion, one of them held

up The Book of Mormon and declared “But we have more knowledge!” as a way of supporting their reliance on The Book of Mormon in addition to the Bible. Instantly, (and it was instant) my mind was brought to the fall of man and the very fact that it was the appeal to knowledge, and subsequent “wisdom” that snared Eve, then Adam – and killed them, resulting in misery for us all. Of course, the reply which I gave them was, “Yeah, Adam and Eve got more knowledge, and it killed them.” The point here is that more knowledge is not necessarily a good thing. If we cannot handle the knowledge we receive, then it is ultimately detrimental, and likely to be fatal to us. Even so, the ability to distinguish between good and evil (which is the ability to make moral judgments) destroys us. Unfortunately, we can no more divest ourselves of that knowledge than any of us could jump to the planet Saturn. The “why” of this is critical, and requires examination as well.

It is notable that the tree was expressly named the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” and not the tree of “good and evil.” I have previously pointed out that there are those who fail to make this distinction. This failure flaws their understanding of what happened, and the why of it. The LORD God had, as He does in everything, a very significant point to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is up to us to inquire of it and seek the LORD for an answer to why this is so.

With the creation of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the subsequent instruction that the fruit of it should not be eaten lest death ensue, the LORD places a barrier to a portion of knowledge He determined is destructive to man. Moreover, by telling Adam that “death” would be the direct, immediate result, even if death is not explained, the whole tenor of the command and warning would cause one to shy away from violating it. The clear perception is that death and dying is not a good result, and irrevocable. Hence, there is a

knowledge here that will change things permanently and not in a desirable way. Thus Adam weighed in the balance whether the supposed gain of knowledge was worth the consequent price to be paid. Since we all live the result, we know both the decision and the result of it, neither of which were and are good.

That stated, this tree of the knowledge of good and evil is like a latch, that once tripped, cannot be reset, and we cannot return to the former state of innocence. Why? The answer lies in the very nature of righteousness and in the creation of Adam. The Scripture is plain that Adam was created in righteousness, and had his own righteousness, although finite, by virtue of his creation. Moreover, since Adam cannot differentiate between good and evil, he cannot effect a moral judgment. This makes Adam dwell in a state of innocency where, no matter what he does, it cannot be wrong. He has no ability to determine whether his own actions are good or evil, which is to say, right and wrong. The principle of that is given to us in Romans, Chapter 4:

For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. (*Romans 4:14-15*)

Here the principle is plainly stated, that if there is no law, there can be no transgression. In short, it is impossible to transgress that which does not exist. However, Adam has a law, and only one law:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (*Genesis 2:16-17*)

The law is plain: don't eat of the fruit of one specific tree.

Now, if it happened to be that all the command encompassed was simply 'don't eat the fruit of this tree,' without the fruit thereof imparting knowledge, we would find a somewhat difficult situation in that Adam, having partaken, yet having no knowledge imparted to him, would still be uncomprehending of what he did wrong. Moreover, since he blundered in his innocency and naivete, and remained so, how was he to be dealt with? Righteously and within the law there is nothing specified and not really a way to deal with this situation. To outright destroy Adam is to treat Adam as we are commanded to treat animals that transgress:

If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. (*Exodus 21:28*)

Thus we would find an immediate end to the race of man. Moreover, Adam was not formed as the animals were formed, but was made in the image of God and is a living soul. Scripture clearly testifies that animals were not formed in the image of God, and do not have a soul. Hence, this is not a tenable option in light of righteousness and the law, as the Scripture also demonstrates:

Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (*Exodus 23:7*)

Take heed that ye 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. (*Matthew 18:10*)

“ . . .and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, . . .” (*Deuteronomy 1:39b*)

It is not simply that they are children that causes the Father to look upon the little ones among us, but that they are innocent, and live in innocency until they become cognizant of the law. This is a point of law that the LORD God cannot

transgress, as it would violate His own nature. Even though Adam would have unrighteously eaten of the fruit, had he remained in innocency, the law of God and God's righteousness would have placed Adam in an irresolvable, irreconcilable situation. Therefore, we must look for the resolution of this through righteousness.

If we then look to righteousness, we can see that righteousness is an absolute quality where one is either righteous wholly and completely, or one is not righteous at all:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (*James 2:10*)

But then, without the impartation of knowledge that would bring Adam out of his state of innocency, he would be guilty without understanding why, and would exist in a place that the law does not address, and indeed cannot address. However, if we look at the effect of Adam's action, but not his intention, we can also see that Adam judged the command of God and found it to be lacking, but with no understanding that this was the actual effect of what he did. In accordance with the testimony of Scripture, we find that the knowledge of good and evil is the cognizant ability to make judgements and determine whether something is either good or evil under the law. Thus, once Adam partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of the law was imparted and he became as a god, with the ability to knowingly judge. Since Adam had broken the law, the impartation of the knowledge of the law seals him to always knowing the law, and he cannot escape the fact that everything he sees he will automatically judge as to whether it is good or evil, right or wrong. Instantly, upon partaking of the fruit, we are told:

. . .the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;. . . (*Genesis 3:7a*)

Therefore, we do plainly see that the partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil imparts a certain knowledge, a certain ability, which is the ability to make moral judgments on an instinctual level. Moreover, it is an event that cannot be undone. This is why, though they knew not before that they were naked, they instantly recognized the moral aspects and implications to their nakedness, and knew instantly they should be clothed. Worse yet, having judged the command of the LORD God, and, in their eyes found it wanting, yet without understanding, they now go further and seeing themselves, knowingly judge that the LORD God should have clothed them. By this, without fully realizing it, Adam brought judgment against the LORD God and set himself at variance with the LORD.

With the above, we should now be able to understand the function of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Quite plainly we see that the instruction to not partake of it, was not simply a prohibition for the sake of giving Adam a law to see if he would obey. Rather, there is a larger issue here, one of being able to determine what constitutes righteousness, and conversely wickedness. By the knowledge given in the fruit of this tree, man will be able to knowingly determine whether a thought, type of behavior, action, etc. is ultimately beneficial or detrimental, and why. If man is able to resist the temptation to misuse such knowledge, and operate in perfect harmony with his Creator, then all is well. If not, man "unbalances the equation" in that he is no longer operating according to his design. However, since man was given an express command, the mere fact of partaking, means that man would no longer be operating in harmony with his Creator, thus unbalanced in his thoughts, actions, and behavior and in sin.

Thus, there is a further representation given by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This representation then is a physical manifestation of a realm of spiritual knowledge,

that, had Adam entered into solely in the spiritual (in the thoughts of his heart only) we could never tell the difference, saving that Adam suddenly found it necessary to be clothed. Moreover, if it were only in the spiritual that this occurred, then Eve would not have been, and could not have been guilty, and would have been unrighteously subject to death and destruction. Why? It is plain from both Scripture and from our own experience that a person's thoughts are strictly that person's private thoughts, and are not shared unless and until they are revealed by that individual. Hence, had Adam, who is the head of the race, and to whom was given dominion, transgressed in his heart, and been brought to the knowledge of good and evil, he would have brought death upon all in his dominion. However, Eve, who had not transgressed, and who has a soul and is made in the image of God, would have also been subject to death as well, and thus been unjustly condemned. Moreover, had Eve only transgressed in her heart, then Adam, who had not partaken, would have not fallen, and no death would have entered into Adam's dominion, yet sin would be found in the realm of Adam's existence, confined to Eve. Here we find a situation where sinless Adam could have known sinful Eve, resulting in a situation where the children would have had an irresolvable conflict in their nature.

Hence, by making a physical manifestation (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) of a spiritual realm of knowledge (knowing good and evil), and commanding man to not partake of it, the LORD insures that if transgression occurs, that the race of man is brought wholly and completely into transgression and the transition is visible to all. Moreover, that if it occurred, the event would be undeniable to all involved, and to all who would come to have knowledge of the event in the future.

To be continued . . .