

Adam and the Fall – Part 5

We have now come to the situation that Adam was warned about: that if he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die that day. The question that now arises in the minds of many is:

How is he dead? After all, Adam did not immediately cease to function; how then can Adam be dead?

In the above questions and the attempts of many to answer them, we find that Calvin's commentary is not really any different than most when it comes to their understanding of the death the LORD God plainly stated would occur immediately upon partaking of the tree. Thus, we may use it for an example of what is commonly held to have taken place:

“But it is asked, what kind of death God means in this place? It appears to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell. He was, in every respect, happy; his life, therefore, had alike respect to his body and his soul, since in his soul a right judgment and a proper government of the affections prevailed, there also life reigned; in his body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly free from death. His earthly life truly would have been temporal; yet he would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury. Death, therefore, is now a terror to us; first, because there is a kind of annihilation, as it respects the body; then, because the soul feels the curse of God. We must also see what is the cause of death, namely alienation from God. Thence it follows, that under the name of death is comprehended all those miseries in which Adam involved himself by his defection; for as soon as he revolted from God, the fountain of life, he was cast down from his former state, in order that he might perceive the life of man without God to be wretched and lost, and therefore differing

nothing from death. Hence the condition of man after his sin is not improperly called both the privation of life, and death. The miseries and evils both of soul and body, with which man is beset so long as he is on earth, are a kind of entrance into death, till death itself entirely absorbs him; for the Scripture everywhere calls those dead who, being oppressed by the tyranny of sin and Satan, breath nothing but their own destruction. Wherefore the question is superfluous, how it was that God threatened death to Adam on the day in which he should touch the fruit, when he long deferred the punishment? For then was Adam consigned to death, and death began its reign in him, until supervening grace should bring a remedy.” ((John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, CCEL text edition))

Here Calvin, like so many others, does not go to Scripture and allow Scripture to interpret the meaning of death, but states *“It appears to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell.”* thus not allowing the LORD to explain what He means from His word, but in the end, plainly denying the express statement of the LORD that Adam would die that day:

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)

Now we know that it is manifestly impossible for God to lie, as the Scriptures are plain that God cannot lie:

. . .In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; . . . (Titus 1:2)

And again:

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: . . .
(*Hebrews 6:17-18*)

So when we again look at the warning Adam was given, we must consider that a literal truth was spoken, and we are not seeing what we need to see when we do not view Adam as being dead. It is clear that the term "in the day" was used with direct reference to eating the fruit and death occurring. Again, because the plain references are to literal, 24 hour days to this point, we are not free to think that the LORD meant that Adam would die at some point in the future, or that death had begun its working in Adam, but expressly meant that Adam died that day, and immediately upon eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So it is that we find a clear difference between what we know and perceive, and what the LORD God plainly stated. To reconcile this, we must understand what death is from the LORD God's point of view since He declared Adam would die that day, and understands perfectly how Adam did die.

Moreover, to do this, we must understand the parts of man and what the LORD God looks at to judge man and hold him accountable. In pursuing that end, we must again examine Genesis, Chapter 2, where we see that man was formed of the dust of the ground, which is the physical part of man, and the LORD breathed into man the breath of life so that man became a living soul:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (*Genesis 2:7*)

At this point, we must quickly clarify the error of a particular belief that some have. As was pointed out before,

we see a distinction from the animals due to the fact that the animals were not created with a soul, and man was. However, there exists considerable confusion among some over how animals are made, and whether they have a soul. Although the Scripture never speaks of any animal having a soul, it does indicate that there is a spiritual aspect to animals, even as there is to all things.

In Scripture, we do see that man is a living soul, and that man has a spirit. Moreover, for us, distinguishing between the two is an exceedingly difficult task, bordering on the impossible. We are also told that there is a spirit in everything and all living things have a spirit that is part of them. We see in Scripture that this extends even to inanimate objects, that they also have a spiritual aspect. This is evident from the following passages of Scripture:

And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. (Luke 37-40)

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (Romans 8:22)

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the

Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (*Hebrews 1:1-4*)

Thus, everything in all creation is upheld by spiritual power, and everything has a spiritual component to it. This does not say, and neither is it supported in Scripture, that God is in everything. Rather, it is to say that the LORD God constructed everything with a spirit in it and everything is bound together by a spiritual power. The LORD God is able to communicate with all His creation, and all His creation and the creatures in it acknowledge Him, as can be seen by the following passages in addition to those previously cited:

And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. (*I Kings 17:1-4*)

And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. (*Numbers 22:22-23*)

And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he

said, Nay. Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. (*Numbers 22:28-31*)

Here now it is evident that the animals perceived the spiritual far quicker than man, especially in the case of Balaam. This does not mean that animals are more spiritual than man, it is only to say that Balaam's obstinance and rebellion prevented him from perceiving the presence of the angel. In short, man is spiritually blind through and because of sin, whereas animals, which are not capable of sin, more readily perceived spiritual events.

In returning to man and man's construction (or how we are made), we must understand that there is a distinct difference between the spirit and a soul. Though there are times in Scripture that the word "spirit" refers to the soul, it is only done due to the fact that the soul is strictly spiritual in makeup, and has no physical component. Therefore, it should not surprise us that the soul is sometimes referred to as a spirit. What we must be certain of is the context in which the word is used, and whether the characteristics described are applicable to God and man. Thus, for our proper understanding, we must perceive the differences between the two spiritual parts of man, the soul and spirit, how they interact, and their characteristics. For the purposes of knowing how death occurred that day, our understanding need not be exhaustive, only sufficient to establish what part of man died, and how that death was manifested, for it is undeniable that some part of man died as the LORD clearly stated that Adam would die that day.

In the following verse, it is clearly laid out that man is a tri-unity of parts: spirit, soul, and body, and for man to live in this physical world, all parts must function together.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God

your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*I Thessalonians 5:23*)

Now all that is required is to distinguish the function of each of the parts and how the LORD created them to function. We know, and it is clearly evident that the body only functions in this physical world, and when it ceases to function, it returns to the dust from whence it was. What is not so clear is the function of the soul and spirit, and how they relate to one another. To begin with, the Scripture has much to say about the soul and spirit, and we are told that the soul (and the heart which is the seat of the soul) is the part of man the LORD holds accountable:

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (*Ezekiel 18:4*)

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. (*I Samuel 16:7*)

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. (*Habakkuk 2:4*)

But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: . . . (*Daniel 5:20*)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. (*Jeremiah 17:9-10*)

We are also told that it is the soul that is self-aware, that it thinks and feels:

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. (*Psalms 139:14*)

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (*Psalms 43:5*)

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (*1 Samuel 18:1*)

By the above passages, we see that it is the soul that makes us who we are, that gives us our personality, our individuality and identity, and that we are judged by the condition of our soul. When we become close to someone, it is our soul that is drawn to their soul (or should be), which is why a purely physical relationship is considered shallow and unfulfilling. Our knowledge of God and good and evil are instinctual to our soul. We also have in our soul an awareness of self, of our existence, and an instinctive knowledge that when our body ceases to function, we will continue to exist.

So what then is the spirit? The following passages of Scripture are but a few of many that describe it, and its function:

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. (*Proverbs 20:27*)

With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (*Isaiah 26:9*)

And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. (Luke 9:53-56)

What we are shown by this is that the spirit is the means by which we are communicated with, and communicate with, the spiritual world. It is our spiritual means of communication, and without a spirit, we would have no way of interacting with the spiritual world, even as our body could not perceive and communicate in the physical world without eyes, ears, nose, and the ability to taste, touch and feel. In the spiritual, our spirit accomplishes all the functions that the various sensory organs do for our body.

What we further see, is that our spirit allows us to be affected by things spiritual as James and John were, even though they were saved men with the Holy Ghost indwelling them. Hence, things perceived in the spirit, and being affected spiritually, does not necessarily have anything to do with the condition of the soul. It is also evident that our spirit remains active whether or not we are "dead in trespasses and sins," for even the animals have a spirit that is active as previously cited passages show.

Therefore, when the LORD God instructed Adam that he would die "in the day" he partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and we see that Adam's body continued to function, living in the world, and we also see from Scripture that the spirit never ceases to be active, we can only conclude that it was the soul of Adam that died. Thus we are left with the final question:

What is meant by "death" in relation to the soul?

Knowing all that has gone before, we then must see how the LORD defines death, since the Scripture is quite plain that the soul never ceases to exist.

To be continued . . .
