

Checkmate!

By Malcolm H. Watts

Adam was created righteous and holy, without the least taint of corruption and with all the tendencies of his nature towards the divine Will. God said: 'Let us make man in our image' (Gen 1:26) and no sooner was this said than 'God made man upright' (Eccl 7:29). Endowed however with the power of choice, Adam was at liberty to do either 'good' or 'evil' (Gen 2:16,17) and when tempted by Satan, he chose to rebel and to violate his Creator's express command (3:6). Immediately, he fell from a perfect state into a sinful state and, in consequence, the whole human race was plunged into sin and ruin. 'By the offence of one', the Bible says, 'judgment came upon all men to condemnation' (Rom 5:18; cf 1 Cor

15:22). This is what we mean by 'The Fall of Man'.

According to scripture revelation, God graciously intervened to save sinners of Adam's race. The result is a salvation which glorifies God by the display of his wonderful attributes and which also meets the spiritual and eternal needs of sinful men. God's salvation is really his countermove. Yet a question arises: Why did God choose to save men in the way he did? Sovereignty, of course, determined the method, but we are not to think that it was a mere arbitrary appointment. There were good reasons for it - reasons drawn from events which surrounded the Fall. In fact, it is remarkable how the one answers the other in all significant details. God appears to have matched what happened

when Adam disobeyed, in order to cancel the evils of sin and bestow the blessings of grace.

Observe with me some of the more striking points of contrast:

An evil angel initiated the Fall. It was Satan speaking by a serpent who tempted our first parents with the remark, 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' (Gen 3:1 cf 2 Cor 11:3; Rev 12:9). However, when salvation was to be announced, God sent a holy angel - 'the angel Gabriel' - and he faithfully declared the good news concerning 'Jesus' whose name means 'Jehovah is salvation' (Lk 1:26,31).

The temptation came first to Eve, a virgin. 'The serpent', we read, addressed 'the woman' (Gen 3:1 cf 2 Cor 11:3). The antithesis is the declaration to Mary, 'a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph' (Lk 1:27). In his temptation, Satan used a lie, making that notoriously false promise, 'Ye shall be as gods' (Gen 3:5); but Gabriel's message to Mary contained the truth, which was that in order to save men from their sins, God would become as men - 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God' (Lk 1:35 cf Matt 1:23; Phil 2:6,7; 1 Tim 3:16).

By hearing and believing the lie, Eve became involved in the introduction of sin and the 'curse' (Gen 3:6, 13-19). Mary, on the other hand, received the truth, anticipated redemption, and experienced a foretaste of 'the blessing'. Concerning her, it was said, 'And blessed is she that believed' (Lk 1:45). Her blessing was immediately evident; for whereas Eve's part in the tragedy brought unmitigated 'sorrow' (Gen 3:16,17), Mary's participation caused her to exclaim, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour' (Lk 1:46,47).

It was Adam, however, who was man's head and representative, and therefore it was his disobedience which brought sentence of condemnation upon the world. Offered the forbidden fruit, 'he did eat' (Gen 3:6) and, for that offence, God inflicted punishment of death upon him and all mankind - 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (Gen 3:19 cf Rom 5:12,18). The Gospel provides the only remedy for this condition. It concerns the 'second Adam' through whose 'obedience' believers receive 'justification' entitling them to the possession and enjoyment of eternal life. In the words of the great apostle Paul, 'As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life' (Rom 5:18).

We should perhaps proceed a little further with this line of truth. Adam's sin was committed by taking something from a tree (Gen 2:8, 15-17; 3:6); but redemption was accomplished by affixing someone to a tree. Referring to the Lord Jesus, Peter writes, 'His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Pet 2:24).

Moreover, according to God's Word, there is a strange correspondence between the time of the Fall and redemption. Judgment was pronounced 'in the cool (or breeze) of the day' i.e. in the late afternoon when the wind begins to rise (Gen 3:8); and mercy found expression at the very same hour, even as the evening sacrifice was being offered in the Temple. 'Now from the sixth hour (12 noon) there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour (3 pm). And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice...' (Matt 27:45,46).

At the sound of God's voice, the guilty pair anticipating the dread sentence 'hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God' (Gen 3:8). In marked (and intended) contrast, the 'joyful sound' of the Gospel proclaims to sinful men, forgiveness, peace, and life. There is no need to flee from the Lord. He calls us to come to him that we might receive relief and rest. 'Come' was the word so often upon our Saviour's lips and it is a word constantly to be used when addressing unbelievers. 'The Spirit and the bride (or the church)

say, Come' (Rev 22:17).

'Where art thou?' was God's penetrating question to Adam (Gen 3:9). God was not, of course, ignorant of his whereabouts. He simply wanted to impress upon him that he knew of his grievous sin and futile efforts at concealment. As it was, there seemed to be no way for man to escape his punishment. 'Be sure your sin will find you out' (Num 22:23). Yet there is a God-given and certain hope. It is to seek and find Jesus Christ as Saviour (Is 55:6). In the light of this, how significant is the fact that the very first question asked in the New Testament, is: 'Where is he?' (Matt 2:2).

Adam and Eve, conscious of guilt, saw themselves as 'naked' before God (Gen 3:7). This sense of nakedness meant not only that they became aware of the fact that their bodies lacked clothing but also that they realized for the first time that they had been stripped of their righteousness (an interpretation borne out by the use of the term elsewhere e.g. Exod 32:25; 2 Chron 28:19). Now what God has done in the person of his Son is to 'bring in everlasting righteousness' (Dan 9:24 cf Jer 23:5,6). Christ's perfect conformity to the precept and penalty of the Law is reckoned to every believer, so that their nakedness is covered and their shame no longer appears (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 4:6; 5:19). Each justified sinner can say, 'he hath

clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness' (Is 61:10 cf Lk 15:22; Rev 19:8).

Knowing what they had done, our first parents were terribly 'afraid' (Gen 3:8-10). Why? Because they found themselves in the presence of him who was their Judge. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb 10:31). The advent of One, who came not to judge but to save, means the alleviation of all such guilty fears. Precious are the words which repeatedly occur in the Gospels - 'Fear not' (Lk 2:10; Matt 28:5)

The tragic result of the Fall was Paradise Lost. The Lord God 'drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life' (Gen 3:24). The wonderful result of salvation is Paradise Regained. Christ laid bare his breast to the sword of divine, punitive and retributive justice with the intention of removing the one thing which barred man's re-entrance to Paradise (Zech 13:7). As that sword pierced his holy body and soul, he turned to the penitent and believing malefactor, and said, 'Verily, I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Lk 23:43).

'Jehovah bade his sword awake, -

O Christ, it woke 'gainst Thee!

Thy blood the flaming blade must slake;

Thy heart its sheath must be, -

All for my sake, my peace to make;

Now sleeps that sword for me.'

The result, even now, is access to God by faith; but soon we shall see, know, and enjoy the Paradise which was once revealed to John. 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there was no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face...' (Rev 22:1-4).

'There is a land mine eye hath seen

In visions of enraptured thought,

So bright, that all which spreads between

Is with its radiant glories fraught.

A land upon whose blissful shore

There rests no shadow, falls no stain;

There those who meet shall part no more,

And those long parted meet again.

Its skies are not like earthly skies,
With varying hues of shade and light;
It hath no need of suns, to rise
To dissipate the gloom of night.

There sweeps no desolating wind
Across its calm, serene abode;
The wanderer there a home may find
Within the Paradise of God.'

The Bible really is an amazing book.
Harmony pervades the whole, from
beginning to end. Its grand theme is:
'Ruin in Adam: Redemption in Christ'.
May it be given to us all to discover and
appreciate the glories of the written Word
and God's truly great salvation.