

SESSION 11: JESUS, THE LAST ADAM

According to Peter and other contributors to scripture, Jesus was chosen to be the answer to God's creation project from 'before the creation of the world' (1 Pe 1:20, see also Eph 1:4, Tit 1:2, 1Co 2:7). Jesus is both the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, to all that God is undertaking (Rev 22:13).

Adam's fall, Israel's failure, and the rescue operation were all foreknown by God. The cost to God of realizing His creation dream was also known and accepted in eternity past—long before he had ever breathed the breath of life into perfectly created Man.

What God started in Adam and Adam's family and continued in Abraham and Abraham's family, he was always going to complete in Christ and in Christ's family, which we, by God's grace, are all now part of.

For this reason, Paul refers to Jesus as the last Adam (1 Co 15:45)—the last of Adam's fallen and failed race, and as the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16)! Jesus was, therefore, both the true and faithful Adam and the true and faithful Israel.

What Adam failed to do, Jesus did. And what Israel failed to do, Jesus did! Jesus brings to fruition all that God had purposed and planned.

So what exactly did Jesus do? Well, it's quite simple and at the same time quite profound! Jesus, as **God's Son** (Mt 3:17), lived a life of humble submission and total obedience to God the Father! All the days of his life and throughout his ministry, Jesus loved God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. Adam and Israel, who were both referred to as being God's Son (Adam in Lk 3:38 and Israel in Ex 4:22), were, by contrast, disobedient sons. All of humanity bore the consequences of Adam and Israel's disobedience, and all of humanity bears the consequences of Jesus' obedience!

Paul says in Romans 5:18-19, "Consequently, just as one trespass (Adam) resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act (Christ) resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Christ) the many will be made righteous." The phrase 'the many' simply means 'all.'

Adam's failure and Israel's failure, in their respective journeys of obedience and submission to God, disqualified them from adoption to sonship and to royal family status. Being made, initially, a little lower than the angels, they failed to be conformed to the divine nature and become 'God's heirs' to rule and reign with God, over God's creation!

Jesus, in contrast, successfully completed the journey of 'adoption to sonship.' As a result, the prophetic Psalm 2:7 was finally realized: "You are my son; today I have become your father."

Adoption to sonship confirmed! This Psalm is filled with promises of rulership with God over the nations of the world. It was Psalm 2 that Peter quoted to the Jews concerning Jesus in his preaching, as recorded in Acts 13:32-33.

So, what does all this mean and how did Jesus do this?

To begin to answer this question, it's important to note that Jesus was fully God. He was not only the Son of God—Jesus was God the Son! Salvation was always going to be something God and God alone accomplished (Isa 63:5). So, it was vital that Jesus, the promised Messiah, the promised savior, was God.

But Jesus was also fully Man. In fact, Jesus' favorite title for himself was 'Son of Man' (Mt 9:6). Jesus had to become fully human and fully part of Adam's race, in order for him to do for all humanity what Adam was supposed to do but failed. Jesus was born of a woman (Ga 4:4). Jesus took on flesh and blood (Heb 2:14)—"a body you prepared for me." (Heb 10:5)

So, as a Man and now as part of Adam's race, Jesus lived perfectly the life that Adam was supposed to live. As Man, he was "tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin" (Heb 4:15). Jesus "learned obedience by the things that he suffered" (Heb 5:8). As the Son of God, this was not necessary, but as the Son of Man, it was! Obedience for Jesus as the Son of Man, however, was not learned through the process of 'disobedience – punishment – repentance,' as is the case with us, but through one step of obedience after another, that molded his character and become something he increasingly delighted in.

Psalm 40:6-8 says it all: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'"¹

The reference to the 'piercing of the ears' is the ceremony that a bond-slave goes through when he willingly commits a lifetime of servitude to a benevolent master, once his term of forced service is over (Ex 21:1-6). This Psalm was also quoted in Hebrews 10:5-7 in reference to Jesus.

Jesus made it abundantly clear that he was committed to, and delighted in, loving God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. To his detractors, Jesus was crystal clear: "I always do what pleases him" (Jn 8:29). In fact, he "only did those things that he saw his father doing" (Jn 5:19) and he was fully focused on "the work the Father had given him to do, a work that he was determined to finish" (Jn 5:36). From the earliest record of his life, when he was found in the Temple at the tender age of

¹ Reference to the ears being 'pierced' is found in the NIV 1984 edition. Most other translation use 'opened' but some such as the NASB has a footnote referencing 'pierced' as an alternate reading!

twelve, his response to his parents was, "Did you not know I must be about my father's business?" (Lk 2:49 NKJV)

In the Old Testament, we read further prophetic passages that affirm Jesus' commitment to obeying the Father in humble submission, for it was for this reason he came! Isaiah 50:4-5 says, "...He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away."

Jesus did not come to die on the cross, as such. He came to live an obedient life—dying on the cross was simply part of this journey of obedience and yielded submission to the Father's will.

Making free moral choices in favor of the Father was no easy feat. The sweat of blood that dripped from Jesus' forehead (Heb 2:18a) while in the garden, struggling with that final and greatest act of submission and obedience, provides us with some indication as to the fierceness of the battle for obedience, that he waged not just for that ultimate conquest at Calvary (Lk 22:44) but throughout his entire life on a daily basis!

During the intense season of temptations in the wilderness, for example, as recorded by Mathew in chapter four, Satan focused on enticing Jesus away from dependence upon God to self-assertion, and to grasp for equality like he tempted the first Adam. For Jesus, taking an independent route was very tempting indeed, as it would have spared him the agony of the cross, but he overcame and submitted himself to that agonizing death of crucifixion. He was resolute in his commitment to obeying father God!

In fact, throughout his life, Jesus was constantly making critical decisions of obedience towards the Father's will. Daily, he would take up his cross, deny self, and yield to his father's will.

As a Son of Man, this was a learning experience for him (Heb 5:8). The possibility of self-willed, independent decision-making was a constant temptation and possibility. A wrong decision, a decision made independent of the Father or contrary to the will of the Father, would have plunged the entire human race into eternal oblivion, and God's glorious purpose into total disarray and defeat. Remember what happened to Moses when he took just one disobedient step in the wilderness, by striking the rock instead of speaking to it. He was forbidden entrance into the Promised Land (Nu 20:8).

So, we can understand then, when the Father from time to time, just couldn't contain his excitement with Jesus' humble submission and faithful obedience, and would shout from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," as recorded in Matthew 3:17, and then a second time in Matthew 17:5. Peter included this in his epistle in 2 Pe 1:17.

In the same sentence in 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul refers to Jesus as the last Adam (:45) he also refers to Jesus as the 'second man' (:47)! Not only did Jesus bring an end to Adam's fallen, defeated race, as the 'last Adam,' he also gave birth to an entirely new race of humanity by becoming the 'second man.' Jesus became the firstborn (Col 1:18) of an entirely new creation of humanity, and we who are in Christ become part of this new humanity, as Paul says in 2 Cor 5:17, "If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation."

The final act of the journey to new creation was the resurrection. It was as a result of the resurrection that God said to Jesus, as prophesied in Psalm 2:7: "You are my son; today I have become your father."

Jesus has always been the eternal Son of God but today, through his life, death and resurrection, God becomes the Father of Jesus as a new creation, as the second man, as the firstborn of a new humanity. The Jesus that is now sitting next to the Father is a different Jesus who was sitting next to the Father prior to Jesus' coming. It was the same eternal Son of God but in an entirely new form—the form of the first-born of an entirely new creation of humanity! And this is what God had been after from 'before the world began,' and it is this that is at the heart of the Story of the Bible!

But before we move onto the theme of 'new creation,' which Jesus' resurrection launches, we need to look at Israel – the 'second son of God' following Adam, or—to be precise, as mentioned in Exodus 4:22—God's 'firstborn son'. Israel, in the Old Testament, was a type of Christ in his resurrection.

It's important that we look at Israel, as the Story of the Bible isn't just a First Adam and a Last Adam story. To ignore Israel would be to ignore well over 95% of the Old Testament. God's Story includes Israel. Jesus fulfills God's purpose for both these two very important sons and the people they represent.

Jesus as the true Israel, is what we will look at in our next session.