

Adam-Christ Typology

Text: Romans 5:10

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Romans 5:15 declares, “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” This verse introduces one of the most profound comparisons in all of Scripture—the contrast between Adam and Christ. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, draws attention to the typological relationship between the first man and the Lord Jesus, but only to magnify their differences. This comparison is not symmetrical in every way; rather, it reveals how the grace of God in Jesus Christ surpasses the ruin that came through Adam’s fall.

The preceding verse, Romans 5:14, makes it plain: “Adam... is the figure of him that was to come.” That is, Adam is a type, a divinely appointed pattern, of Christ. But it is not a type of similarity in every respect; the nature of the comparison lies precisely in the contrast. The purpose of God was never to have a perfect world through Adam; the goal of God from eternity has always been Christ and His glorified church. Adam was included in the plan of God as the one through whom sin and death would enter the world, so that through the second Adam—Jesus Christ—grace and life would abound even more. In examining this profound gospel text, we will consider the nature of the typology in three parts: the contrast in their persons, the distinction in their respective numbers, and the meaning of the expression “much more.”

Their Persons?

The typology between Adam and Christ is not rooted in their personal natures. Adam was fully man and only man; Christ is both fully man and fully God. Adam was *made in* the image of God; Christ is *the* image of the invisible God. Adam came into existence at a point in time; Christ, though born in time, is the eternal Word by whom all things were made. Adam was formed from the dust of the earth; Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. According to I Corinthians 15:47, Adam was “of the earth, earthy”; Christ is “the Lord from heaven.” Adam was innocent and upright at creation, yet capable of falling—and he fell; Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and He *could not* fall.

The difference extends even further: Adam was the first man, made on the sixth day of creation, and was sinless only for a short time. Christ was not created but *begotten*, the eternal Son who *became* man. He was circumcised on the eighth day, obedient under the law from birth to death. Adam was the head of the human race in history, but Christ is the Head of the elect in the eternal counsel of God. So, clearly, the typology does not concern their *persons*. The Scripture does not draw a parallel between Adam and Christ as individuals in terms of their origin, natures, or historical roles.

Where then lies the typology? Adam is a type of Christ as a *federal or covenant head*. He is the representative of a people, and Christ is the representative of a people. A *federal head* is someone appointed by God to *stand in the place of others*, so that what he does is counted as if done by those he represents. This headship is both legal and organic: legal, in that the head's actions are reckoned to the account of his people; and organic, in that there is a real and living bond between the head and his members. There are only two such heads in all of history: Adam and Christ.

Adam was appointed the covenant head of the entire human race, including every human being except the Lord Jesus. Although Christ is truly human, He is not a human *person*; He is the *eternal, divine* person who took to Himself a human nature. That is why He alone is excluded from the condemnation that came through Adam. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is the covenant head of the elect—those chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. He represents not all mankind, but only His sheep, His church, the people whom the Father gave to Him. He obeyed for them, died for them, and rose again for them.

Adam sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, and as our representative, his sin is imputed to all his descendants. We are all born guilty, corrupt, and under condemnation because we were in Adam when he sinned. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." That is, all sinned in Adam. His disobedience brought spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. But Christ obeyed perfectly, and as the covenant head of His people, His righteousness is imputed to them. Those in Christ are justified—declared righteous—before God: "By the obedience of one shall many be made [or constituted] righteous."

Respective Numbers?

Does this passage teach that more are saved in Christ than were lost in Adam? Some claim so. They argue that the terms "much more" and "abounded"

suggest that the number of the saved is greater than the number of the lost. Three groups often make this claim. First, the postmillennialists. They believe a golden age is coming before Christ's return, in which the majority of the world will be converted and live as true believers. They argue that this vast multitude, combined with the smaller numbers saved before the golden age, will outweigh the lost. Second, some premillennialists argue similarly, except their golden age comes after Christ returns. They hold that during the thousand-year reign, vast numbers will be converted, again outweighing the lost. Third, the sentimentalists claim that all who die in infancy, childhood, or youth go to heaven by default. They invent an age of accountability, though no such thing is found in the Bible.

These theories fail for several reasons.

First, the Bible nowhere teaches that most people will be saved. In fact, the consistent witness of Scripture is the opposite. Isaiah 53:1 asks, "Who hath believed our report?" The answer is: *not many*. Joel 2:32 says salvation is found "in the *remnant* whom the LORD shall call." Jesus said, "Many are called, but *few* are chosen." And again, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction... and many there be which go in thereat... and *few there be* that find [the narrow way]." From the Old Testament church to the New, God has always saved a *remnant*.

Second, the age of accountability is not a biblical doctrine. It is sentimentalism. All humans are born in sin. Children die, not because they are innocent, but because they *bear the guilt of Adam*. The declining rates of infant death in modern medicine do not affect this truth. Baptists who deny God's covenant with believers and their children often cling to this myth, while simultaneously denying the promise of God to the seed of believers. But the Bible teaches: "The promise is unto you, *and to your children*." The *Canons of Dordt* declare that children of believers, dying in infancy, should not be doubted in regard to election and salvation (Head 1, Article 17). But nowhere does Scripture promise salvation to the children of *unbelievers* who die young.

Third, Romans 5:15 does not compare numbers. It states that many died in Adam and many receive grace in Christ, but it never says the latter are more numerous. The word "many" applies on both sides. The contrast is not about quantity but *quality*.

“Much More”?

If Romans 5:15 does not compare numbers, what does “much more” mean? The answer is found in the nature and result of grace versus sin. Grace is not just equal to sin; it is *superior*. The blessings that come through Christ far exceed the curse that came through Adam. That is the force of Paul’s argument: “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift... much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace... hath abounded.”

Adam’s sin brought condemnation and death. Christ’s work brings righteousness and life. Adam’s act was one transgression; Christ’s work is a life of obedience, a sacrificial death, and a victorious resurrection. Adam’s action brought destruction; Christ’s brings eternal salvation. The “much more” lies in the surpassing power and glory of Christ’s achievement.

The new heavens and new earth, secured by Christ, are far more glorious than the Garden of Eden ever was. Grace does not merely restore what was lost; it gives *far more*. Union with Adam brings guilt and corruption. Union with Christ brings justification, sanctification, and glorification. In Adam, we are filled with sin; in Christ, we are filled with the Spirit. In Adam, we fall under God’s wrath; in Christ, we are made sons and heirs. In Adam, we die and are buried; in Christ, we rise and reign forever.

Romans 5 reiterates this “much more” in several verses. Verse 17: “Much more they which receive abundance of grace... shall reign in life.” Verse 20: “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Hell is dreadful – but heaven is more glorious. The misery of damnation is real – but the joy of salvation is greater. And all this flows from the free gift of grace.

“Not as the offence, so also is the free gift.” The offence brought ruin; the gift brings glory. Grace is God’s unmerited favour in Christ. The gift is salvation – earned by Christ, applied by the Spirit, and received by faith. This gift abounds. And to you who are in Christ by faith, it abounds to *you*.

Our Father in heaven, strengthen our faith that we may receive the truth of Thy Word. Stretch our hearts and minds to understand the riches of Scripture. Increase in us gratitude, and work in us, Father, the good fruits that flow from the death of Christ, the most fruitful of all things in the history of the world. Amen.