

## Theory #4

### The Redemption: “God in a man-suit”?

Someone might ask: What gives God the right to redeem His creation anyway? If He is no respecter of persons, how can He just give Adam and Eve another chance? After all, they blew it. They failed the test that He Himself set up. How can He just unilaterally, then, shuffle the deck and re-deal? That seems like pulling rank on the devil or something. Is it just “might makes right” in the heavenlies?

And that is a fair question. One not many people ask, but fair nonetheless.

So let’s ask it: By what right could God, who is completely holy, initiate a do-over?

Satan won fair-and-square, *didn’t* he?

Well, not really.

He *lied* to the woman—as to God’s trustworthiness and His veracity, and about the consequence of disobedience—when he said in effect, “You will not surely die. You will be as gods!”

If I could rephrase Satan’s remarks, they would sound something like this:

“Hey, can I let you in on a little secret here? God, that guy you love and trust so much, well...psss, psss, psst...He’s actually holding out on you. You’re really not getting the whole story here. Know why?

Because He wants to keep being the big Kahuna around here, that’s why. Jeez, you guys are pathetic.

You just worship the guy. Oh, I know He tells you He loves you and that the rules are for your own good and all that nonsense, but the truth is, psss,pss,psss, He just wants to control you. He knows if you eat

from that tree, you’ll actually become just as smart and godlike as He is, and of course He doesn’t want *that* to happen. That would ruin everything. He *really* hates competition, you know. C’mon, wise up! If you

guys were smart, I mean *really* smart, you’d break out of this straitjacket He has you in. Take it from me.

I’m speaking from experience here. I used to be like you, bowing and scraping all the time. Doing

everything His way. But I finally caught on to His game and you can, too...if you’re not stupid. You’re *not* stupid, are you?”

For Adam and Eve, who had no experience with evil, this was a clever tack. They lacked wisdom and discernment<sup>1</sup> and Satan knew it. So he used their naiveté against them. Thus God cursed him as well for the part he played that was not according to His standards. And it gave God legal rights to a do-over. Satan cheated.

But still God honored the woman and the man's free will, just as He honors ours today.<sup>2</sup> He respected their autonomy and allowed them to *choose* whether to believe the lie or not (thereby choosing to *disbelieve* Him and His clearly-stated warning) even though they were naïve. Given two choices, what we believe reveals the true attitude of our heart. And Scripture is clear that what we believe pretty much determines what we will *do*,<sup>3</sup> and so they acted on the lie they believed and sinned. And, like any good parent, God delivered on the forewarned consequence: the loss of endless life in a world without curses. God called this consequence "death." That very day they became mortal<sup>4</sup> beings and began the long and slow decline that culminated in their earthly demise. And, to make matters worse, this consequence extended not only to themselves, but to all their offspring.

Well, how fair is that? Why do we have to reap the consequences of Adam's mistake?

The fact is, Adam and Eve were our best shot at success. They were untainted, uncorrupted, and familiar only with Goodness personified. They were the finest human specimens God could create without stacking the deck against the devil by creating them already sanctified or preprogrammed against evil, which would have obviated the need for a test at all. But this means they were also an open book, a clean

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<sup>1</sup> Without the knowledge of evil, one cannot really exercise wisdom because wisdom presupposes that one recognizes the negatives associated with evil and eschews it for the sake of the greater good. Discernment requires that one is able to see both sides of any issue and discern the good. Without knowledge of evil, one cannot exercise discernment in a moral sense.

<sup>2</sup> And just as reasonable human parents honor their children's free will. Parents who lock their children in closets to keep them "under control" are not considered fit for the task. By the same token, parents who do not instruct their children and warn them of the consequences of disobedience are also not doing their job. God operates with a perfect balance of freedom and instruction. He is not an enabler any more than He is negligent.

<sup>3</sup> "For as he thinks within himself, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. What we believe is reflected in our motives, attitudes and desires and is shaped by our perception of reality. This "perception of reality" holds enormous sway over our choices and actions. Consider a simple scenario: you attend a suspenseful movie. While watching, you become engrossed in the action and "forget" that you're watching a fictional story. Before long you are gripping the arms of your seat and your heart is pounding with fear. Something shocking happens onscreen and you let out a gasp! Your emotions and consequently your actions are affected, if not determined by, what your senses and mind tell you is true or real. Our senses and our mind (which together shape our perceptions) determine our interpretation of reality, and subsequently our feelings and choices flow from those interpretations.

<sup>4</sup> It's as if God said, "In the day that you eat of it, you will surely *become mortal*."

slate, vulnerable to whomever they allowed to write on their hearts. They did not have inside knowledge about evil. Though God had given them a command, and warned them of the consequences, we have no evidence that He indoctrinated them against Satan and his schemes. The battle for their hearts had to be played on a level playing field in order to be a genuine test, and so He did not use His power, position and/or superior knowledge to predispose His creatures' hearts. He did not inoculate them with vivid descriptions of what tragedies awaited them.<sup>5</sup> He didn't put them in a straitjacket or monitor their every move and run daily interference for them. Their own fatal and fateful decision to tune their ears to the devil's frequency was their undoing.<sup>6</sup> They fell, just as Lucifer, God's highest *angelic* creation, had fallen, and for the same reason: pride. The desire for self-rule. The desire to exalt the self. The desire to be equal to God. To be their own boss. Satan's lie, "You shall be as gods" found ready soil in their souls.

And yet, despite their innocence, they fell knowing full-well God's stated consequence. He had warned them it would cost them their immortality—life without any curses. And since mortal cannot give rise to immortal, as progenitors of a race they could not but pass on their fallen state. That state extended, by God's decree, to the whole of the natural world as well.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> To do so would have been to influence their motives powerfully toward self-preservation; thus a choice to follow God and reject Satan's wiles could have been construed as reflecting their own selfishness rather than love for God. God very carefully avoided influencing them unduly, so that the true nature of their hearts would be revealed by this test.

<sup>6</sup> And this scenario is repeated in each of our lives. God gives us a warning but He does not intervene when we choose to step off the cliff anyway. He lets us reap the consequences of our unwise, arrogant choices. Ultimately this is what produces the brokenness that has the potential to lead us to repentance. Virtually every human has his own Garden of Eden event and falls into the same pit of self-will.

<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that animals also were immortal before the fall and that they then began to die as well. It is simply acknowledging that the creation itself was cursed and brought forth thorns and thistles. Some have insisted that nothing died prior to the fall and that the animal God killed to provide coverings for Adam and Eve was the first death in the animal kingdom. But unless they sinned on day one, that position leaves us with some very serious questions. #1: If it was man who was made in God's image, not animals, and God alone possesses immortality, then how could animals possess something only God possesses? #2: Animal death may have been normative even if only from natural causes or old age (two weeks for a bug), which would explain the existence of vultures and other scavengers who would keep the planet in tip-top shape for man's habitation. Imagine a world in which bacteria or insects do not die (and remember, insects were BIG). Or rabbits. The world would soon be overrun and Eden would have been a less-than-perfect place in a few short months or years. Unless their rate and method of reproduction were substantially different, it's hard to imagine a world of immortal animals (all phyla). #3: Are there animals in heaven? If they were destined to be immortal, one would assume so. #4: Will they then be restored to immortality after the Second Coming like men? If they were created to live forever, then one would suppose. #5: Will we share heaven with bugs and lizards? What if we don't particularly like cats, or mice or spiders? #6: Did the animals eat from the Tree of Life? Hardly think so. Then how could they be immortal naturally when man could not? The Scripture tells us that death entered the world because of sin and death passed to all men because all sinned, but it is likely that this is simply telling us that the immortality of *man* was taken away when he could no longer eat from the Tree of Life or when he lost the Spirit of God, not that all beings were immortal. This position does not sanction evolution or the idea that animals predate humans by any more time than scripture indicates. It simply removes the idea of immortality from the animal kingdom. Nor does it presuppose death by violent means before the Fall.

Again, God operates on legal principles. Adam was the legal or federal head of the human race and God had given him dominion over the entire earth. He acted in proxy<sup>8</sup> for all of us. And because he had dominion, his decision, for good or ill, affected everything under his rule.<sup>9</sup> God had to honor that authority since He Himself had bestowed it. And so Adam “bought the farm” for all of us and for creation as well.<sup>10</sup>

Though this failure of Adam and Eve appeared to be a victory for Satan,<sup>11</sup> and to dash God’s hopes for an eternal companion, it wasn’t. God knew in advance that this scenario would develop, and He provided an alternative route to His goal. That route was the agonizing road to the cross.

Bear in mind that God is omniscient. From the outset, He planned a creative course that would result in the achievement of His ultimate objective (an eternal companion) without fail. He was not knocked off track by Satan and then had to come up with Plan B. His original plan incorporated various realities:

- 1) an eternal companion *made in His image* and voluntarily loving Him, must have free will;
- 2) free will must be given choices to be authentic;
- 3) He did not desire a child-Bride, both innocent and naïve, but a peer; a Bride with maturity, wisdom, righteous character and steadfastness;

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<sup>8</sup> Adam was our proxy for two reasons: 1) he was the best human specimen God could create (without preprogramming his sanctification) and thus had the best chance for success, and 2) it would be logistically impossible for God to put each human through the exact same test that Adam endured even if it were required by some code of justice, which it isn’t. We are, however, each tested during our lives, producing our own unique evidence of pride and self-will, and will be judged for our response. Will we admit our guilt and repent? Or stand in opposition to God and continue in our arrogance?

<sup>9</sup> Scripture tells us we are “slaves of the one we obey.” Adam obeyed the devil and became his slave. A slave’s offspring born in the slavemaster’s house belongs to the master. They are his property. They must be purchased out of his hand. Thus all of Adam’s offspring are born as subjects of his master, Satan. They can only be purchased from Satan by the blood of Christ.

<sup>10</sup> Satan became the rightful heir to Adam’s dominion the minute Adam submitted to his “lordship.” By knuckling under the devil’s suggestion and his wife’s invitation, Adam forfeited his legitimacy as head over God’s creation. Once he surrendered his leadership to one of those *under* his authority (the serpent), he could no longer claim the right to rule the very creation that had vanquished him. This may be the very reason Satan chose to appear to Adam as a serpent in the Garden, rather than as an “angel of light.” Number one, God may have forbidden Satan to appear as an angel of light because, in their innocent state, it would have been impossible for Adam and Eve to discern the difference between these two glorious beings. And number two, by insinuating himself into the creation and involving one of Adam’s underlings, Satan creates a situation in which Adam becomes a willing slave of the creation. The serpent, as the cleverest of the beasts, acted in proxy for all of creation. (And he was cursed as well for allowing Satan this liberty.) But since Satan was the agent acting behind the scenes in and through the creation, he becomes the winner in this contest, taking charge of all creation. (Here’s a question: Had Satan not acted through the serpent, would Adam have lost dominion over the earth? Satan was not “under Adam” at that point. Satan was outside the legal loop. Without co-opting one of God’s creatures, could he have gotten dominion over Adam and this world? Possibly over Adam, but I can see no legal basis for cursing the earth if it did not participate in the Fall via the serpent.)

<sup>11</sup> In the short term, this was a victory for Satan. But God had anticipated this outcome and woven it into His plan. He would use Satan’s fallen state to further His own goals. That is, the devil and his wiles would be one of the tools God would use to sanctify His children and hone their skills in preparation for ruling and reigning with Him.

- 4) He could not create this Bride already mature else she would not be authentically holy, but your basic preprogrammed doll, also not what He was after;
- 5) this required that she be tested and come through the test refined and confirmed (utterly reliable) in holiness;
- 6) thus His plan provided for a lifelong sanctification process, with this Bride persevering through trials, tribulations and temptations and choosing to follow God to the end from a place of fallenness.

However, even this would not be possible in a fallen world without His help. Sons of Adam born with a fallen nature, born in Satan's clutches as we all are, *will* sin and that sin must be paid for if fellowship with God is to be restored and maintained. Though made in God's image, men cannot qualify for heaven on their own merits because they all sin, and heaven, or the Bridal Suite, is only open to those who are both absolved of all guilt (made judicially righteous) *and* sincerely and reliably committed to righteousness.<sup>12</sup> So, even though God could put his creatures through a sanctification process and produce a righteous character eventually in those who cooperate, the sins they commit along the way must still be repented of and paid for.<sup>13</sup> The justice of God requires it. And "since the wages of sin is death," God had to find a way around His own edict or He would come up empty-handed in the end, with a lot of eternally dead saints.<sup>14</sup>

## REDEMPTION

Thus was born the redemption plan, God's only hope for achieving His desired goal: an eternal companion who is like Himself. This plan must comply in every way with His own laws and righteous standards.<sup>15</sup> The crux of the "do-over" was this: Could God, in a fair-and-square contest, win back the

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<sup>12</sup> This is because heaven is God's home, perfect as He is perfect, and nothing imperfect may enter to defile its character. Those who are ultimately welcomed within its gates will have willingly gone through a purging process during which all their imperfection will be burned away. The hay, wood and stubble of the old nature will never enter, but only gold, silver and precious stones of the refined and sanctified self. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." God cannot be forced to live with those who abuse or reject Him. He *will* not.

<sup>13</sup> By being brought under the blood of Christ through confession and repentance. (1 John 1:9)

<sup>14</sup> "Saints" is the term the Bible uses for those who have chosen to follow the one true God.

<sup>15</sup> God's adherence to His own laws is one of the primary evidences of His righteousness.

keys to the earth and to death and Hades<sup>16</sup> which were lost at the Fall? Could man be set free from the consequences of his sin? Could Satan's victory (tainted as it was) be reversed without violating the free will of man to follow whomever he chose?<sup>17</sup> God honors the will of man because He created him to reflect Himself. To violate the free will of man (on moral/spiritual issues at least), even to effect a good outcome, would be to annihilate that image of Himself that God determined to create in the first place. It would amount to Self-sabotage on a grand scale. So consequently, God keeps His involvement in the redemption process within certain strict parameters that do not undermine man's free moral choice.<sup>18</sup>

In order to be righteous and just, then, God could legitimately wage this contest only on the same basis on which it was first waged; that is, with the same parameters that Adam originally faced. The test must be borne and passed by 1) a fully human son of God,<sup>19</sup> 2) made in God's image,<sup>20</sup> 3) *without a sin nature*, 4) in full fellowship with his Creator, for Adam fell while still in this unfallen state.

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<sup>16</sup> Hades was the holding place of the dead, comprising "Abraham's bosom" on one side, and, across a wide chasm, the place of torment. It is believed that Christ went there when He died and preached to those "in prison," and then "took captivity captive." Some say this means He took to heaven with Him the souls of those who languished in Abraham's care.

<sup>17</sup> One might ask why God couldn't just rewind the clock so-to-speak, start back over at the beginning, and redo the exact same test with the same two people? Erase their hard drives and start over. Why did he have to grant Satan this dubious victory, which was predicated on a lie? The fact was, Adam and Eve had chosen, of their own free will, to believe someone who cast aspersions on God's character, and that was tantamount to betrayal no matter what the particulars were. It revealed their hearts were not right toward Him. The cat was out of the bag, so to speak. They didn't love Him above what they saw as their own self-interest. And God couldn't just keep making new specimens and running new tests until one of them got it right either. That would make the whole test a charade. Satan wouldn't even participate if he knew the deck was ultimately fixed in God's favor. There had to be a real chance that Satan could win. And for God to interfere in any way would be to treat Adam and Eve as robots that He could manipulate and "brainwash" at will. This does not comport with His intent to produce free creatures who would willingly choose to obey Him, and so He would have defeated His own purpose were He to have taken such a tack.

<sup>18</sup> Man does not have *absolute* freedom of choice in everything, else he would have no limits. For instance, he cannot decide to fly or live underwater without special equipment. He cannot drive any car he wants, but only a car he can afford. He cannot decide to skip work everyday and still have a job. But when it comes to moral and spiritual choices, man is responsible. He cannot blame the devil, his parents, his girlfriend, his mates, or anyone else for his actions, beliefs, choices, attitudes or responses. Even his feelings are the result of his own thoughts and perceptions and conclusions about his own reality. He can point to limiting or damaging circumstances as mitigating influences, but he still must take responsibility before God for how he dealt with everything that came his way.

<sup>19</sup> Adam was a son of God. (Gen. 5:1) So was Jesus. Luke 3:23-38 gives the genealogy of Christ, which lists Him finally as "the son of Seth, (who is) the son of Adam, (who is) the son of God." The difference is, Jesus was begotten, not made like Adam. But He was begotten of God.

<sup>20</sup> Adam was made in God's image. Gen. 5:1 says: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God." But "When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to *his* image, and named him Seth." (Gen.5:3)

With this criteria, it would have been impossible, then, for God to select another human among men for this task of redemption, one born in the normal way.<sup>21</sup> All sons of Adam are born fallen, with a sin nature, and under the curse. And they are made in the image of their earthly father. They are not born “sons of God,” but sons of Adam, born in Satan’s slave camp. (See footnote <sup>19</sup>) Not one single human, descended from Adam, then, could reprise the role of Adam because of this simple fact, already stated above: Adam was not fallen at the Fall. Only *after* the Fall. Therefore, if God were to duplicate the original test, He would have to send another human who met the criteria stated above who was not fallen. And since God finished His creative work on the sixth day and rested (stopped creating) on the seventh day, there were no more unfallen humans to be had. There were only *begotten* humans, fallen sons of Adam.

God’s only alternative then? To become an unfallen human Himself.

Jesus is that One: a *Son of God in unfallen flesh*. He was our Second Chance. It was His job to “get it right” the second time around. The ultimate charge for Christ was to undo the Fall, and then win back the hand of His intended, one heart at a time.<sup>22</sup>

In all this contest, God did not violate His own righteousness or the free will of man, and so retains the right to supreme rulership. Though the Fall gave Satan legal rights over the earth and its inhabitants, it did not give him ultimate authority in a universe created and ruled by God. However, he aspires to this authority. His aim was, and still is, to overthrow God Almighty and to win the right to rule that universe.<sup>23</sup>

So the war isn’t over. The Fall of Adam was Battle #1. Battle #2 took place throughout Jesus’ life and death, but particularly when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness and elsewhere: when He was tested in the **Garden of Gethsemane** just before his betrayal; during His scourging; and at His crucifixion. Note that

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<sup>21</sup> Bye-Bye Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, Sun Myung Moon, et al. All are false Messiah’s because they are literal (fallen) sons of Adam. Jesus is “the Second Adam,” meaning He is not a descendant of Adam, but a precise reprise of the role of Adam.

<sup>22</sup> Though Jesus satisfied God’s judgment for all sin at the cross, access to that payment is only by faith and repentance. Consequently, each heart has to be won individually via the “good news” if men are to be saved and the payment applied to their sins. Those who never hear the “good news” will be judged on their response to the light they received via creation, conscience, etc. Did they live consistent with that light or in opposition to it?

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 14:13-14 tells us: “But you (Lucifer) said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”

during the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Satan did not lie. He learned his lesson from the first go-round. He didn't want to foil his chances for victory a second time. (See Matthew 4:3-10).<sup>24</sup>

The **Garden of Gethsemane** is the place where Jesus was betrayed and where He wrestled with His own human will before the final leg of His journey to death. On the night of His betrayal by Judas, Jesus spent hours praying to the Father for the strength to go through with the painful redemption process. At one point He asked, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. But not My will, but Thine be done." As a man, Jesus didn't relish the thought of being beaten to a pulp, having his flesh torn off by cat-o-nine tails, or having spites pounded into his wrists and feet. He wasn't looking forward to hanging on a cross for hours, or perhaps days for all He knew, slowly suffocating, dehydrating, being wracked with excruciating convulsing cramps, and being ridiculed, spat on, and forsaken by His own disciples. Only a sick masochist would relish such things. But there was more than the physical suffering awaiting Him, and this He knew as well and dreaded even more. He was to *become* sin for us; to be judged guilty of all the heinous acts of man, and for the first time in His life, He would taste evil *within*. And for the first time He would experience the separation from the Father that all sinners endure. For Him this must have been the greatest pain He could imagine, if He even comprehended its inevitability. During this time of preparation and personal anguish He wrestled with His own reluctance, and yet, in the end, He submitted to God's plan for our sakes. "Not My will, but Thine be done."

And this second battle was won by Jesus, the Second Adam, as evidenced by the Resurrection, one of the most well-attested events in history,<sup>25</sup> in which He took back the keys of death and Hades (the holding place of the dead). And then, He gave those keys to His followers and told them to go and individually do as He did: drive out demons, cleanse the lepers, set the captives free, spread the good news, make disciples.<sup>26</sup> "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." In other words, "I'm *with* you. Now go be Me. I'm going to the Father to prepare a

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<sup>24</sup> For example, because Satan was the "god of this world," having defeated Adam and Eve, his offer of the kingdoms of the world to Christ was legitimate and Jesus did not dispute his right to make that offer.

<sup>25</sup> For a treatment of the validity of the resurrection narratives in the four gospels, see Who Moved the Stone? by Frank Morrison.

<sup>26</sup> Jesus, by His death and resurrection, established a parallel kingdom here on earth, the Kingdom of Heaven, where individuals are wooed and won back from Satan's kingdom. Satan is the "god of this world" by virtue of the Fall, but this world is passing away. Once the good news of redemption has accomplished its purposes, Jesus will return to take out a people for His name—that is, those who have believed, repented and surrendered to His Lordship. Those who do not choose to "enter the kingdom of heaven" will be left in the vanquished kingdom of outer darkness (or will accompany a cursed Satan to his eternal place of torment). Jesus, speaking to Paul in his heavenly vision, said, "For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister...to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:16a, 18) For now, the dominion of God exists wherever He is submitted to, and today that place is in our hearts. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you," if He rules and reigns there. One day soon it will be in the entire earth.

place for you. I'll be back to get you. In the meantime, you're my Body. My hands and feet. I will put My Spirit within you, to help you do My will. ”<sup>27</sup>

## **GOD IN A MAN SUIT?**

But who was this Jesus figure really? Was He God? Man? Both? Neither?

As Paul says, “Great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”<sup>28</sup>

But if He was truly God revealed in flesh, how could He play the role of the Second Adam without having certain advantages that the first Adam did not have? Surely being *God* gave Him a leg up. And if, on the other hand, “He was made like His brethren (us) in all things” as Scripture says, how do His virgin birth and lack of original sin<sup>29</sup> square with this claim? This is not like us at all!

It's true that, unlike us, Jesus did not have a fallen human nature. And that is precisely because, unlike ours, Jesus' physical body was literally begotten by God; He was not made by the will of any man. The virgin birth was not just a nice miracle God used to show off, or to designate this One as special (though it serves that purpose admirably as well). The virgin birth was *necessary*, for two reasons: 1) to prevent original sin from passing through to Jesus. In order for Him to be like Adam before the Fall, that fatal curse had to be blocked. And that curse is apparently passed through the male as the legal head of any

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<sup>27</sup> The Church in the West has basically almost abandoned the original commands of Christ in favor of a mission of Bible translation and teaching, perhaps because of the intense persecution that tends to accompany real manifestations of God's power. The devil is not so threatened by the Bible and teaching, which are easy to infiltrate and distort; but give him real evidence of God's presence and power and he sets up intense resistance. Jesus did not say, “Go establish seminaries, write commentaries, and translate the Bible into every language.” But that's what we did and do. He *did* tell us to make disciples, teach His commandments, to baptize, heal diseases, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons, and that's what we, by and large, *don't* do. He said we would do greater things than He did. But we settle for those things that have no visible power, and so does the devil. Gladly. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:5: “And my word and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” We seem to have missed this foundational concept in the majority of the Church. See more on this subject in our section on Pharisaism at [www.grace-n-truth.com](http://www.grace-n-truth.com).

<sup>28</sup> 1 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>29</sup> “Original sin” is another term for the fallen human nature which is alienated from God. Since Jesus was born without “original sin” and thus was not alienated from the Father, people assume that He *could not* sin. An understandable, however unwarranted leap. Not having original sin does not negate one's free will. Again, Adam did not have original sin, but he still chose to sin. Once he sinned and was cursed however, he became the begetter of similarly alienated and cursed offspring. Mortal man cannot give birth to immortal children. “Original sin” is basically a theological term referring to this cursed condition which included separation from God's Spirit and consequent death along with the frustrations of dealing with an also cursed creation.

union.<sup>30</sup> Thus God circumvented this eventuality by not using a human male to father the Messiah.<sup>31</sup> And 2), because He also needed to pass divine sonship to Jesus (which Adam also possessed in a legal sense), God had to be directly involved in the conception process.<sup>32</sup> Jesus received divinity from His Father, and humanity from His mother. Not only that, but the Father was actively involved in Jesus' training on a daily basis. "He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient, nor did I turn back." (Isaiah 50:4b-5)

So Jesus was just like Adam in that no human caused His conception, contrary to all other human births. Jesus was "like his brethren in all things" *before the Fall* and this is precisely how He qualified as the Second Adam.<sup>33</sup>

We'll enumerate them again:

- 1) Adam, as a direct creation of God, was made without human interagency; so was Christ.<sup>34</sup>
- 2) Just as Adam was a "son of God" created without a sin nature (was not a fallen creature), so Christ was begotten of God without a sin nature.<sup>35</sup>
- 3) Just as Adam had intimate personal fellowship and communication with God, so did Christ.<sup>36</sup>
- 4) Just as Adam was created in the image of God, so Jesus was the very image of God in human form.

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<sup>30</sup> Though there is no explicit scriptural support for this that we know of except "by one man came sin into the world" or "by the sin of one man all died," it is implied and can be safely asserted that original sin is passed through the male. Adam was head of the race, not Eve, and it was Adam who *chose* to sin. He was not deceived as Eve was (according to Paul in 1Tim. 2:14). Therefore the responsibility for the fall lay with Adam. He was supposed to lead his wife, not the other way around. The Catholic Church has gotten around this question by declaring Mary's birth the Immaculate Conception, contending that she was born without original sin. This is contrary to Scripture, as Mary herself calls God her Savior in her majestic prayer in Luke 1:46-55. She was not divine, nor sinless, by her own admission. The Catholic Church also says that the woman depicted in Rev. 12 with the twelve stars around her head and the moon under her feet is Mary, but in this description the woman is in pain, laboring to give birth. Mary, if born without original sin, would not have been subject to pain in childbirth since she would not be under the curse meted out to Eve in Genesis 3. The woman in John's vision is actually Israel giving birth to the Messiah.

<sup>31</sup> Consequently we expect any attempt to clone humans using two female DNA sources to be vigorously resisted by God.

<sup>32</sup> We are not implying here that God somehow had physical sex with Mary. We are simply saying that God, through miraculous intervention, contributed part of the DNA for Jesus' conception.

<sup>33</sup> See Romans 5 for a discussion of the "second Adam."

<sup>34</sup> Speaking of His humanity. Mary was a willing (and what you could call passive) vessel, not an initiator of this process. She said "Do unto me according to Your will."

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 30.

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 50:4

But there is one way that Adam and Jesus were not alike. Adam did not undergo his test in a fallen world. Jesus did. He endured much that Adam did not, making His triumph all the more spectacular. He endured privation, pain, ridicule and rejection in addition to temptation and exposure to various ungodly influences during His earthly life. And in the end, the supreme test, an excruciating death—martyrdom at the hands of His own people. And yet in all this He did not sin nor turn from God’s path.

People tend to minimize this by saying, “Well, Jesus was God after all. He *couldn’t* sin even if He wanted to! *God* can’t sin!” And they mean well when they say this. God doesn’t sin after all. But Jesus was the God-Man and He carried out the redemption as a man; “the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>37</sup> To say that Jesus couldn’t sin is an affront to Him. When people say this, they don’t realize how it demeans His sacrifice and His victory. They also don’t recognize that, were such a thing true, it would have obviated the need for the temptation in the wilderness at all.<sup>38</sup> Why bother tempting or testing someone who can’t sin? It would make this part of Scripture simply a charade. And yet many Christians will assert this to their dying breath: “Jesus was God! He could not have sinned!” At the same time they avowedly and adamantly hold to the doctrine of the “hypostatic union,” a fancy term for the idea that Jesus was the God-Man, fully human and fully divine.

Well, tell me, what fully human person do *you* know who cannot sin? I know of none. The ability to sin practically *defines* human kind. We don’t say animals sin, or insects. Or plants. But sinning is endemic to humanity. It’s one thing we do extraordinarily well. And *only* we, among earthly creatures. “But,” you say, “Jesus wasn’t fallen!” And I say, neither was Adam. And yet he sinned!

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<sup>37</sup> 1 Tim. 2:5

<sup>38</sup> Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting before being tempted by the devil at the start of his public ministry. Satan came to Him in His weakened state and attempted to convince Him to create His own bread out of a stone. Jesus could not do so without momentarily abandoning His submission to the Father and for selfish reasons, which would constitute sin. Jesus was required to qualify as the Second Adam without resorting to His deity. Satan issued other suggestions, all of which were aimed at getting Jesus to submit to his lordship. Had Jesus complied, He would have failed in the same way that Adam failed, by giving in to the usurper, in effect coming under his authority. “You are slaves of the one whom you obey...” See Matthew 4:1-11 and Romans 6:16. (I suspect that Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness before the test are symbolic of Adam’s 40 years or perhaps 400 years in the Garden before *his* test. This would explain how Cain could be afraid of someone “out there” killing him. They would be a long lost relative who had migrated from the Garden decades earlier.)

This assertion, that Jesus *could not* have sinned and yet was fully human, is about as close to a contradiction as one can get. To be human, we *must* have the option to sin, or we are just clever robots. Jesus was not a robot, nor is God interested in marrying one. He was not God in a man-suit. To be even remotely human, He *had* to have a free will, and that *will* had to have the option to freely conform to God's will, without coercion. Anything else is simply not true to Scripture, nor is it a true test of His submission to the Father<sup>39</sup> or His qualification as the spotless *human* Lamb.

One might say, "Yes, but Adam wasn't God and Jesus was." True, but you can't have it both ways. If Jesus was fully man as well as fully God, He had to be a *real* man, and a real man has the ability, and the option, to sin. That's what makes Jesus' victory so astounding. He lived his whole life without violating God's standards and He did it as a man<sup>40</sup> fully surrendered to the Spirit of God.<sup>41</sup>

In this, Adam and Jesus again part company. Adam possessed innocence (unfamiliarity with evil), but not virtue. Virtue comes only with testing and triumph. Adam failed the test. Jesus possessed virtue *and* innocence (judicially speaking), but not ignorance of evil. He was fully aware of the evil around Him. And yet He passed the test. Only Jesus can say this. He is entirely unique and entirely worthy of our adoration. We should regard His accomplishment as a precious gift.

At the consummation of all things, at the final judgment, God will be vindicated as the righteous and holy Person that He is. Every mouth will be shut. No one will be able to find fault with Him. But only if He remains completely righteous and completely above corruption. Had Jesus, the man, been *incapable* of sin, the devil would have cried foul. "This is no contest!" he would have shouted to the principalities and powers. "This is a charade! How can He fail?! It's fixed! It's fixed! No fair!!!"

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<sup>39</sup> Scripture tells us that "Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered." This statement loses all authentic meaning if we assert that Jesus could not sin.

<sup>40</sup> It is not sacrilegious to call Jesus a man. Paul himself did that. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

<sup>41</sup> "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:5-8)

So, in fact, Jesus *could have sinned* in His humanity.<sup>42</sup> He could have refused to go to the cross, too. That's what is so wonderful about His passion in the garden when He sweated as if drops of blood and asked that, if possible (if there were any other way to accomplish redemption), this cup would pass from Him. He didn't want, in His flesh, to go to the cross, an excruciating form of execution. But that was not the worst of it. Jesus was well aware that His death would not only be sacrificial, but judicial. God the Father would literally hold Him responsible for all the sins of the world, and would righteously execute Him. He would, the Bible says, "become sin for us" and feel the full brunt of God's wrath. For this sinless One to contemplate being identified with, and accounted guilty for, all the vile and heinous acts man had perpetrated, and ever would perpetrate, was overwhelmingly grotesque and repugnant. Was He aware that He would also experience loss of fellowship with the Father who had loved and led and counseled Him throughout His earthly life, a thought He could hardly bear? Possibly, although His question "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" just before His death makes one wonder. Perhaps He didn't anticipate this, or perhaps He did but didn't realize how devastating it would be. Nevertheless, He went to the cross anyway, out of love for the world and for those who were His enemies. That is what is so amazing about it. He could have turned aside. He even alluded to this when He told Peter at His arrest: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions (72,000) of angels?" (Matt.26:53) But instead, after much agony, He complied. He surrendered His own will on every point, as He did throughout His life.<sup>43</sup>

So when Satan tempted Him after 40 days without food, He really *was* hungry, and it really *was* a tempting thought to turn that rock into a nice steaming loaf of hot bread. Satan always designs his temptations to test us at our weakest points. He's a master at it. Been at it a long, long time. (And notice: the angels did not come to minister to Him until after He passed the test. It was no free ride.)

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<sup>42</sup> Someone responded to this by saying, "Give me a scripture verse." Our reply? Just read your Bible. It's implied in multiple verses, which if not taken to mean He could sin, are misleading on their face. (Heb. 4:15, Heb. 5:8-9; Romans 5:19) A test is only a test if there is a possibility of failure.

<sup>43</sup> John 8:26, 28, 29: "...the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world....I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." And John 12:49: "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Satan's goal in all this was to entice Jesus to circumvent the cross and take the kingdom the easy way, by falling down before the current "god of this world" in obeisance, which would make Him Satan's subject, even if his vice regent. He would then, having sinned, be disqualified for the role of the innocent mediatorial sacrifice, which was His whole purpose for coming here. To save us. Thus Satan would retain jurisdiction over all men forever.

But Jesus resisted each attack, and He did this as a man. An unfallen man, but a man nonetheless, one fully connected to and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Though He was God incarnated, Jesus "emptied Himself" when He took on human flesh. That means He yielded His sovereign right or prerogative to access His divine powers to accomplish the redemption. He did not use those powers, then, to vanquish His accusers, to resist temptation, to circumvent the cross, to conquer sin, or to anesthetize Himself to pain and suffering. He *really* suffered. He was *really* tempted. He *really* died. His humanity was, and is, *real*. Otherwise all these things, the temptation, the scourging, the cross, were just an act—not really painful, not really difficult, not really requiring faith and obedience. Easy and automatic.

And fake.

Had He taken those powers back and tried to carry out the redemption on that basis, again Satan would have cried, "Foul!" After the kingdom was delivered, he would have declared Jesus an illegitimate king. The battle would have been won on a completely different basis than the basis on which it was originally lost.

But it *wasn't* fake. During Jesus' earthly life He had perfect unbroken fellowship (in His humanity) with the Father<sup>44</sup> and that was the source of His wisdom and power and perfection. But at the cross, the moment

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<sup>44</sup> It was a daily choice He made to remain in fellowship.

God laid on Him our sins,<sup>45</sup> He experienced, for the first time in His life, that loss of fellowship with God that human sinners are so familiar with. Thus His heart-rending cry.<sup>46</sup> Since God cannot look on sin or fraternize with it, He removed Himself from Jesus at the moment our sin was imputed to Him, and thus Jesus' divinity was separated from His humanity for the first time. The God part of Him left. After all, God cannot die and God cannot be identified with sin. Jesus died a man, albeit a perfect man, for human sin.<sup>47</sup> A spotless human lamb for guilty sinners. Satan would have accepted nothing more, or less. Only a lowly (though unfallen) human could qualify to redo Adam's test, and at the moment the Father removed Himself, Jesus became in every sense the Second Adam; no longer the God-Man, but "the man Christ Jesus."<sup>48</sup> And He died as that man. As soon as He accomplished this work of death for sin,<sup>49</sup> His full deity (the Spirit of God) was restored to Him and He rose from the dead. Death's chains could not hold captive the Lord of life. Once sin and its curse was dealt with, it could no longer hold Him prisoner. Hallelujah.

Well, no wonder we have such a poor conception of the cost of redemption. No wonder we minimize in our own hearts what God did for us. We think it was easy for Him somehow, because He was God after all! But, the fact is, He left His deity on the shelf so-to-speak, to carry out this redemptive work.<sup>50</sup> He did it perfectly, as a man, by walking in faith, fellowship and obedience with the Father moment by moment.<sup>51</sup> Amazing! Don't let Satan rob you of the wonder of that truth.

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<sup>45</sup> In the same way that the Jewish High Priest would lay the sins of the people on the sacrificial lamb before slaying it...

<sup>46</sup> "My God, My God, why have you forsaken (left) Me?!"

<sup>47</sup> 1 Tim. 2:5 He was not a God-Man at the moment our sins were imputed to His account and He died. After all, God can't die, He's immortal. So in order for Jesus to be able to die physically (a curse), He had to be separated from His divinity. But He remained a perfect man, and that is all that was required for the substitutionary sacrifice to be effective. A perfect human Lamb died for human sin. As through one man came sin into the world, through one man came righteousness to all men. It's even-steven.

<sup>48</sup> Does this freak you out? Sound like heresy? It's just that seldom does anyone discuss this. God could not be joined to sin. So He had to separate Himself from Jesus the moment our sins were imputed to Him, and since Jesus was the very incarnation of the Father via the Word, but also fully human, that part of Him that was divine had to be pulled off because God cannot be tainted by sin. I know, it's a hard one. As Paul said, "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5)

<sup>49</sup> After three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

<sup>50</sup> Some will argue that Jesus' miracles were the outworking of His deity. But we would argue that it was by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit and His complete submission to and confidence in that power that was the source of His miraculous deeds. He said He only did those things He saw the Father doing. Jesus could have accessed His deity to do His works, but the Scripture says "although He existed in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant..." (Phil.2:6-7) He went so far as to say "greater things would we do" if we followed Him. We certainly aren't God, but we can, by accessing the power of the Holy Spirit through faith, do exploits.

<sup>51</sup> God is fair and eminently just. Adam represented us and we are reaping his failure. By the same token, Jesus represented us on the cross and we can reap His success and resurrection, if we so choose. It's even-steven. "As through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin...so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men...For as through

That is also why He can identify with *us* though. That is why, when we stand with Him at the marriage altar, we will not feel like we are marrying someone who can't possibly love us, understand us, relate to us or comprehend our lives. That is why He is our perfect **High Priest** and Intercessor. He *gets* us.

As our **High Priest**, Jesus stands before the Father and pleads His blood over our sin when we repent. He acts as our Advocate, or defense attorney, before a Holy and Righteous God who requires all who enter His heaven to be perfect (as in guiltless or forgiven), even as He is perfect.

His work is finished. But there is another battle that still rages, and that is the battle that is fought individually, in each man's heart, over this question: Whom will you serve: self or God. To whom will you bow?

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the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:12a, 18b, 19)