

ECHOS OF THE *BOOK OF GENESIS* IN THE *EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS*

A Paper

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By

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Introduction

The following paper will attempt to assist the reader in hearing the various echos of the *Book of Genesis* in the *Epistle to the Romans*. In order to do this we will examine several sections of texts searching for particular motifs. It is the desire of the author to convince the reader that these particular references are essential to understanding the Pauline message.

The paper is structured as such: (1) context; (2) overview of large sections of Romans in search of possible Genesis motifs embedded within the text; (3) an overview of these motifs in a more systematic fashion; (4) a summary/conclusion.

“The End Configures the Beginning”

Gary Anderson writes, “Because the end configures the beginning, there is a sense in which we can say the end comes first. This idea has some rather dramatic consequences for how Jews and Christians have interpreted Genesis.”¹ As regard the Apostle Paul the end of all things that been previewed as the renewal of all things in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul opens his epistle identifying himself as an apostle (a royal ambassador) of Christ (1.1). Christ is a messianic candidate as a “son of David” according to his earthly heritage (1.3) but he has been proven *the Messiah* because he was resurrected by the Spirit (1.4). Since the Jewish expectation of an eschatological resurrection has already occurred in Christ it is through Christ that Paul understands both the beginning and end of history.

In this “already, but not yet” era Paul must use his apostolic authority to guide the early Christian communities. For the church in Rome it is most apparent that weakness that threatens the young movement is that Jews and Gentiles are deriving their identity from these ethnic markers. While it would be mostly speculation to say that this was being enacted this way or that it is very clear that it was hindering the maturity and the mission of the church.

In order to distract these divided parties away from Jew-Gentile division Paul must show them

¹ Gary A. Anderson. (2001) *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 1.

where they are unified. He must show them that their identity should not be based around their ethnicity, but rather it should be found in their shared position “in Christ”. Those who are “in Christ” are different from those who are “in Adam”. If there must be an “us-them” it should be “in Christ” and “in Adam”, not Jew and Gentile.

This results in Paul writing this letter which, as we shall see, functions almost as a commentary on Genesis. He must show his readers that those who are “in Christ” share the privilege/responsibility of *being the eschatological people of God* in this age. If Christians are the people of the age to come this means we are part of God's solution to the problem of Adam. If Adamic humanity relives “the Fall” over and over again through idolatrous and immoral behavior which leads to death then Christians must live by the Spirit which guarantees everlasting, resurrection life. If the Adamic humanity has failed to function as the *imago Dei* representing the Creator to the Creation, then Christians must be those humans who actively remind the world that the Creator exists by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ—the King who will restore what Adam lost.

1.1-4.25

Once Paul has announced his apostolic calling as it relates to the resurrected King, Jesus Christ, he apologizes for his inability to visit Rome while promising to do so in the near future (1.7-13). It is his intention to preach the gospel in Rome also (1.15). What is this gospel? Well, first it is about the resurrected Lord whom he magnifies in his opening sentences. Second, it is the answer to the problem that he intends on addressing.

The gospel has a two-fold impact: (1) it is the power for salvation to those who believe. Those who continually affirm loyal trust in this gospel (i.e. “live by faith”, 1.17 citing Hab. 2.4) of Christ can rest secure. This applies to both Jews and Gentiles (1.16). (2) It is an announcement of the wrath of God upon the unrighteous (1.18).

Who are these unrighteous? They “suppress the truth” that God “has made evident to them”. Whether this is some sort of knowledge of God as the next couple of sentences seem to indicate (1.19-

20), or a rejection of the aforementioned gospel, the form is obvious. It includes denying God (1.20), dishonoring God, and not be thankful to God (1.21). This stance toward God results foolish living (1.22) as exemplified by “[exchanging] the glory of God for an image in the form of corruptible humanity and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” (1.23)

It is here that we hear the first reference to Adamic humanity. In Gen. 1.27 God creates humans κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ, which Paul interprets to be “the glory of the incorruptible God” (δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ) but now the “image” (εἰκόνοσ) humans *worship* (rather than function as) are those of “corruptible humanity” (φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου), “birds” (πετεινῶν), “four-footed beast” (τετραπόδων), and “crawling creatures” (ἔρπετων). In Genesis (LXX) humanity is given authority over ἰχθύων (fish, unmentioned), πετεινῶν (birds), κτηνῶν (domesticated animals, τετράποδα included in v. 24), and ἔρπετων τῶν ἔρπόντων (creeping things that crawl) (1.26). It is fairly straightforward here that *Paul understands all humanity to be repeating the primal sin*. The primal sin is more than eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; it is subjugating in worship one's self to the very Creation that humans are called to cultivate for the glory of the Creator (Rom. 1.25)!

Humans do this in a variety of ways. For Paul the most embodied example of worshipping the image of “corruptible humanity” is homosexual eroticism. In Gen. 1.26 humanity is made “male and female”. In some mysterious way when male and female come together this reflection of “the other” mirrors the being of God. While Paul does not feel obligated to expound of this assertion he does explain that when “men abandon the natural function of the woman” and their lust is toward one another, and visa-versa, (Rom. 1.26-27) this can only be seen as evidence that “they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer” (1.28).

Lest Paul be wrongly accused of homophobia we affirm with Richard Hays that “Paul's betrayal of homosexual behavior is of a secondary and illustrative character”.² It is only the beginning of a long

2 Richard B. Hays. “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to J. Boswell's Exegesis of Rom 1”. *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 no 1Spr 1986. 191.

list that includes everything from greed and gossip (1.29) to arrogance (1.30) and untrustworthy behavior (1.31). It is important for our argument here because unlike the rest of this list his mentioning of homosexual eroticism is made with the creation motif of male-female from Genesis in mind.

As Paul prepares to make a transition in his argument we see another statement that may be an echo of Genesis. He writes, “although they know the ordinances of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.” (1.32) What is interesting is in 2.17-24 Paul lambast his fellow Jews for seeing themselves as “a guide to the blind” (v. 19) who nevertheless condone *and participate* in these same behaviors (see vv. 21-23).

While it is an echo of Genesis, at best, one cannot help but hear the story of Adam standing beside Eve while she listened to the serpent fool her into disobeying God. In Gen. 2.16-17 God creates Adam *first* and God gives Adam the commandment not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Oddly enough when Eve is confronted by the serpent she repeats the command including the statement that they were *not even to touch it* (Gen. 3.3). Soon thereafter she “takes” the fruit and *then* eats it (Gen. 3.6). Many commentators have noticed this whole scenario seems to find meaning within the Pentateuch where Moses tells Israel (e.g. Deut. 4.2). If Eve did not die when she “touched” it why should she expect death at the first bite?

If Deut. 4.2 informs our reading of Gen. 3.3 (and we argue here it should since the narrative of Eden is framed for Israel to hear of their own failure and exile) then the silence *implies* Adam *added to the commandment*. To make matters more interesting Eve merely turns to Adam who is “with her” (as is indicated by the statement לְאִשָּׁה עִמָּהּ וַיֹּאכֵל). Nahum M. Sarna writes,

“The woman is not a temptress. She does not say a word but simply hands her husband the fruit, which he accepts and eats. The absence of any hint of resistance on his part is strange. It should be noted, however, that in speaking to the woman, the serpent consistently uses the

plural form. This suggest that man was all the time within ear's reach of the conversation and was equally seduced by its persuasiveness. In fact, the Hebrew text here literally means, "She also gave her husband with her (*'immah'*)," suggesting that he was a full participant in the sin, thereby refuting in advance his later excuse."³

If the Pentateuch was written so that Israel could see herself in Adam then it may be that Paul is doing this very thing. "Israel, you have been given the commandments, yet you sit by watching the pagan world disobey God." While we are saying more than Paul said it would not be beyond Paul to suggest that the Jews were also adding to the commandments like Adam did (as we see when Paul must over and over against critique his fellow Jewish-Christians for enforcing "works of the law" like circumcision, Sabbath, and so forth). At the very least they are not guides to the blind.

It is from this juncture that Paul lays out his case: Jews, you are Adam. Yes, the Gentiles do these things but your history shows that you do these things as well. In fact, Jewishness means nothing. If a Gentiles without the covenant mark of circumcision obeys the law because the law "is written on their hearts" (see Jer. 31.33; cf. 2 Cor. 3.3 where Paul expects this to be a Pneumatological reality) then being a Jew outwardly does not matter (2.14-16)!

The Jew does have the benefit because, like Adam, the Jew has been given, first and foremost, "the oracles of God" (3.1-2). The Law, these oracles, do not matter if they are disobeyed. This is Paul's message from 2.1-3.3 where he emphasizes over and over Jewish-Gentile solidarity as Adamic humanity. If a Jew "does not believe" (3.3) this doesn't nullify God's promises. In fact, their disobedience only proves the reality that, like Adam, all humans, Jews and Gentiles, "are all under sin" (3.9), do not seek God (3.11), and do no good (3.12).

Since Jew and Gentile share the Adamic predicament it is obvious that both are under the wrath of the same God (3.29). The whole world is accountable to the one God (3.19). The Gentiles without the Law; the Jews with the Law. Yet all have hope because God has sent his Son, the aforementioned

³ Nahum M. Sarna. (1989) *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society. 25.

Jesus whom Paul's gospel proclaims, as a propitiation for human rebellion (3.25)

If one read the Pentateuch as a Jew one see that the answer to Adam *seems to be Abraham*. In Gen. 12.1-3 it appears that Abraham will finally be the one who does what Adam, Abel, Cain, Noah, and other could not do. Abraham will be for the world what Adam was not. Yet this is not how Paul frames it.

Abraham was justified before God (as David later after the Law of Moses had been given, 4.6-8) not because of Abraham, but because of his faith in something else (4.1-5; 9-16). Abraham had faith in God as the one who “gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist” (4.17). Abraham believed the promise of Gen. 12.1-3 in spite of the fact that he was “as good as dead since he was about one hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb” (Rom. 4.18-19). He still believed in God's promise and this was his righteousness (not his ability to be the answer to Adam in and of himself, 4.21)

Paul connects Christians (not Jews, not Gentiles) with Abraham on this basis. Jesus has been crowned King via the resurrection by the Spirit (1.1-3). Those of us “who believe in him (God) who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (4.24) are descendents of Abraham by faith. Unlike the common Protestant reading the issue here is not faith juxtaposed with legalism as much as it is faith *in the God who raises the dead* juxtaposed with the Law as a marker for who constitutes the people of God.

5.1-21

Those who have been justified by faith, who like Abraham believe in the God who raises the dead, “have peace with God” (5.1). These are those who “exalt in the grace of God in which we stand”. Paul earlier had written that “the just shall live by faith” (1.17) and he sees these people as being defined by their Spirit-enhanced perseverance (5.2-5).

Christ died for us (5.8) and therefore we are under a different reign since we have believed the gospel. For Paul it is belief in the gospel that brings forth the resurrecting Spirit in the life of the believer which results in a identity shift. We who were enemies of God are no longer (5.10).

There is still an aspect of humanity that is awaiting the wrath of God (as Paul has stated) that sit under the reign of death. These are characterized by their continued affiliation with their Adamic humanity. Adam's act has been shared by all as Paul showed earlier. It is through this act of Adam that death entered the world (5.12-13). The Law, which the Jews thought to be that which made them superior, only intensified the urge of all to sin against God (5.13, 20). Yet for those who, like Abraham, believe in the God ,who raises the dead and therefore believe in Jesus Christ whom God has raised by the Spirit, receive the free gift of life (5.15-19).

Many expositors see the importance of the Adam-Christ juxtaposition here, yet they ignore that this is not where it first appears. It has been the underlying structure throughout. It is the very tension that causes the concerns that Paul must address! Paul has shown that all sin like Adam and all includes Jew and Gentile. He has argued that the Law does not make the Jew superior, but only further proves their guilt because (1) they do not actually share the command with the pagan world but approve of their behavior letting them die in their sin *and* (2) they actually *do the very things rebuked in the Law!*

The Jew is as much part of the Adamic humanity as the Gentile. There will be no appeal to genetic relations to Abraham. Abraham is not himself the answer to this problem. Abraham is the first one who trusted in the God who raises the dead. Now, if God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead what does this say about Jesus? What does it tell us about those who believe the gospel or reject it? This is the dividing line between who is *really a child of Abraham!* It is not DNA, it is faith!

If one believes one received the Spirit which is God's free gift and we will see soon that this is the agent of resurrection life. Those who do not believe—whether Jew or Gentile—remain Adamic and therefore they remain under the reign of death promised in Genesis.

6.1-8.39

Paul knows that the suggestion that Christians are “in Christ” rather than “in Adam” can lead to some confusion. If it was by the grace of God, and not obedience to the Law, that resulted in righteousness, then should we continue to sin? *μη γένοιτο!* (6.2) Christians have already “died” and

been resurrected in Christ. Since they have died sin is no longer master and the wages of sin have been paid (6.2-7.7).

At this juncture there is some concern. If the Law could not save, and if the Law only showed human sin, then the Law must have been evil. Paul rejects this as well by going into a first person account that many see as a personification of Adam. As Ben Witherington rightly notes, "...to understand Romans 7, we must hear Paul's explicit telling of Adam's tale in Romans 5 first."⁴

Some reject this because the "Law" had not been given at the time of Adam. This seems to miss the point. While "the Law" had not been given, this does not mean that there was not a law of God. Likewise, since in the Pentateuch Adam is the priest of God in the temple (Eden) and he has been given a commandment (briefly discussed above) he is Israel and Israel is he. Adam is an arch-type not only for all sinful humanity, but for Israel with her commandments and priesthood unto God.

Without the law Adam did not know sin. It was not until he had been told not to eat from the tree that he knew of his choice. Paul uses the tenth commandment, covetousness (both in the Ex. 20.2-17 and Deut. 5.6-11 accounts) to exemplify "law" as it was known by Adam (Rom. 7.7).

What we find in 7.8-12 is apparently a connection between the way the law functions to bring forth sin and the way that the serpent acted. While Paul wants to emphasize (unlike the serpent) that the Law is holy, he also wants to show how evil used the law as a tool to draw forth from Adam, and thereafter anyone who is a descendent of Adam, the urge to disobey God.

We should make an aside here to note that this is not only Adam (male) but also Eve that is being viewed here. In 7.11 Paul writes, "For sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me." The same root word for "deceived" that is (*ἀπατάω*) found in the LXX where Eve blames the serpent (*ἠπάτησέν* in Gen. 3.13) are found here in reference to the law (*ἐξηπάτησέν*). It is as if Paul understand the law to have been used by Satan like the serpent was used

4 Ben Witherington III. (2005) *The Problem with Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism and Wesleyanism*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. 9.

by Satan.

The Law is not at fault. It is not the Law that causes humans to be covetous, it merely reveals within humans their own desire to covet. It is the sinner, but this does not create a problem for Paul's argument. It only further proves that the Law was susceptible to human frailty (7.8-13).

In 7.14-25 the tenses move from past to present. For many this suggests that the Adam analogy is complete and now Adam is being connected with someone. Most exegetes cannot agree on who this person should be. Is it Paul the Christian, Paul the pre-Christian Pharisee, a continued personification of the Jew under the Law, or every human under God's law? While this is an important discussion it is not central to the thesis of this paper. What should be acknowledged is that Adam's function as an archetype, which we saw in 1.18-32 where all humans relive Adam's idolatry, comes to fruition once again here where the cry of Adam becomes the cry of one of the possible representatives noted above.

For Adam and everyone since Adam the solution remains the same: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7.25a) Christ is the solution as it was shown a few chapters earlier. Those who are part of the "in Christ" humanity can rejoice because there is "no condemnation" (8.1).

Paul understands the Christian to be free from the curse of death because through Christ the Christian has received the Holy Spirit. In Genesis we see the Spirit of God as being central to life and creation. In Gen. 1.2 the Spirit hovers over the face of the waters as a creative act. In 2.7 God breathes into Adam and it brings life (MT רָפָא , LXX ἐνεφύσησεν). When human life spans begin to drastically shrink it is because God declares "My Spirit will not abide in humanity forever, for he is flesh" (6.3) indicating human life is dependent on the breath/Spirit of God.

Other Hebrew expositors noted this connection. For example, the Psalmist writes a Psalm about the God of Creation and he says (104.28-30),

"When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their

breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.”

It is obvious that the Psalmist has been influenced by the aforementioned statement in Genesis. The Spirit brings life both to *the Creation* and *humanity*. As the prophet Ezekiel notes in 37.1-28 it is the Spirit that restores flesh to the bones and the Spirit brings life. While this is analogous to how Israel will be reconstructed the analogy is based on something. For Ezekiel the analogy that Israel will be “resurrected” and brought from death to life *as a nation* is based on the idea that the same Spirit is the one who brings the individual from death to life!

These Pneumatological characteristics of resurrection influence what Paul has to say next. He has grounded the Lordship of Christ in Jesus' resurrection in “the Spirit of holiness”, a semitism for “Holy Spirit”. Now he says that the one thing that overrides “the law of sin and death” is the “law of the Spirit” (8.2). As in Gen. 6.3 it was the departure of the Spirit that quickened the reign of death so now it is the return of the Spirit that brings resurrection life!

One cannot help but hear echoes of Gen. 6.3 here. Paul's juxtaposition is the very juxtaposition of the Genesis reference: flesh and Spirit. Since humanity was fleshly the Spirit withdrew. For those who are filled with the Spirit of the New Covenant (the one hinted at in 2.14-16; cf. 8.4) have “died” but now experience resurrection life, in part, in this era!

The characteristics of the fleshly humanity according to Paul include (1) hostility toward God; (2) disobedience to his law; (3) and an inability to please God. The Spirit-led on the other hand (1) have life and peace; (2) has life, despite the dying God; (3) and a promise of resurrection! (8.2-11). If the Spirit is within a person that person *cannot stay dead*. As Christ overcame the curse of death found in Genesis so the believer in Christ shall rise from the dead.

Those who have the Spirit have been “adopted as sons” (8.15). Jesus Christ is *the* Son of God (1.1-3). We are adopted because of his work. Since we are children we are filled with the Spirit of God. The Spirit confirms that we are “heirs” with Christ (8.17a).

What should Christians expect to receive as an inheritance with Christ? Paul says if Christians suffer with Christ (endure) this inheritance is their guarantee. This leads directly into the statement, “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (8.19).

The reader must ask why at this juncture is Creation mentioned. We should remember that 1.18-32 depicted all humanity as following Adam and Eve in their failure to function as the *imago Dei* to the Created order. Rather than being the image of God the humans turned as worshiped the very Creation that they were to “subdue” and “rule” (Gen. 1.28).

It was this idolatry that brought death. It was this death that causes the land to be cursed (Gen. 3.17-19). *Adam* who is intimately connected with the *adamah* from which he emerged is now told that he will no longer enjoy her fruits freely, but the ground will be hard, thorny, and resistant. The relationship between humanity and Creation has been broken. No longer does Adam and Eve serve as priest unto God in the temple of Eden cultivating, caring, and guiding Creation toward greatness that honors the Creator. No, rather, human act as if the Creation is a god and in doing this they fail to honor and care for Creation.

As Paul writes about the “sons of God” who await redemption, who will receive an inheritance with Christ if they persevere like Christ, he reminds his readers that the “sons of God” are intimately tied with Creation even to this day. Creation waits for their revealing!

Paul must have Gen. 3.17-19 in mind when he writes, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Rom. 8.20-21) Paul knows that Creation did not rebel against God. Creation was dependent upon Adam and Eve to guide her in her glorifying of the Creator. When Adam and Eve sinned this demanded that the land could no longer be pristine. How could imperfect humanity live in a perfect world?

The Genesis narrative seems to go well with Paul's interpretation here. Creation is not addressed as doing anything wrong. It is obvious from the context that humans were responsible for Creation.

Creation then must wait for humanity to be redeemed. What does this say about Paul's eschatology? It affirms God's repeated emphasis that Creation is "good" and therefore affirms that God has always had good purposes for Creation. She waits for the redemption of the "sons of God" not so she can be vanquished as many Christian theologians and popular authors seem to indicate. Rather, Creation can be led to her full potential when the Spirit-resurrected sons of God rule with the one and only Son of God over a redeemed Creation.

We saw that in Ps. 104.28-30 that the Spirit renews Creation. We see here that Paul has not forgotten this and he knows that the resurrection of the *Adam* must lead to the resurrection of the *adamah*. In Is. 65.17 the prophet proclaims a new heaven and a new earth. This is a renewed Creation. This is a material world restored to its rightful place as a dwelling for the humanity that glorifies God. Pauline eschatology indicates that the destiny of Christians is not in a disembodied state in an ethereal place called "heaven". Christians are not going to be "free" from the material world as the Platonic vision would indicate. No, Creation will be resurrected with her renewed care-takers.

Creation has been "groaning" from then until now. Many commentators have suggested that *συστενάζει* in 8.22 is a sort of birth pain. Creation is bringing forth a new Creation much like a seed brings forth new life. There is continuation, yet discontinuation.

In 8.23 Paul makes the connection between Spirit-humans-Creation more explicit. He says that Christians have the "firstfruits of the Spirit". In other words, the Spirit is the first portion of more to come. Paul says that in the meantime we groan with Creation. Our groan, the one which Creation shares in anticipation, is for our "adoption as sons" to be consummated. How does Paul define this event? He says that it is the "resurrection of our bodies".

Paul continues by affirming the calling of Christians and their surety that God's love will make sure their hope is honored. This eschatological vision will come to pass. All of Creation will be restored to her Genesis condition, resurrected humanity will reign with the Second Adam, Christ, and Creation will finally reach her potential.

9.1-11.36

What does the future of Israel have to do with the message of this epistle? For many Protestant expositors this epistle is about the doctrine of *justification by faith*. When Paul turns his attention to Israel this seems to be him sidetracking. All this tell us is that many Protestant expositors are not giving Paul a chance to say what we thinks is the most important part of his message.

Israel is central to the message of Romans and it is a foremost concern for Paul. To understand this we must revisit some of those things that Paul has said thus far. Paul has indicated that the Jews have some advantages but if there is no belief in the God who raises from the dead (and we should add that at this juncture in salvation history it seems that Paul is not satisfied with merely believing that God *can raise the dead*, but that he has done so *in Jesus Christ*) then covenant signs like circumcision are of no avail. In fact, this is exactly Israel's problem! They do not believe in Christ.

Since they do not believe they do not fulfill the Law. Instead, the Law functions only to show the Jew that she is as guilty as her Gentile counterpart. It is even worse when a Gentile who has the Spirit fulfills the Law because the uncircumcised now please God where the circumcised do not.

Israel is like Adam with the Law but failing to convey the truth about God to the pagan world. She is like Adam in that she not only sits beside the Gentiles condoning their sins by not proclaiming, but rather shaming, the God of Israel (2.24). Then she submits to the sin just like Adam did when he let Eve disobey only to in turn obey her voice by taking the fruit himself.

Once Paul laid this groundwork he deconstructed the Jewish understanding of Abraham as *the solution* to Adam in the Pentateuch. Jews read their father Abraham as being the solution to Adam but now Paul is saying the Jew who does not believe in the God who raised Christ from the dead is not in solidarity with Abraham. Abraham's children believe like Abraham believed!

Paul mourns Israel's current standing as apostate (9.1-3). He acknowledges that they have had many advantages (more than just the oracles he noted earlier) such as the adoption as children (interesting statement since Paul just finished saying that Spirit-filled believers are the adopted “sons of

God”), “the glory” (which we may quickly remember referred to being the *imago Dei* at the beginning of this epistle), “the covenant”, “the Law”, “the temple”, “the promises”, “the fathers” (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), and “according to the flesh” the Messiah!

One thing Paul must answer is why anyone should trust the God who has adopted us (as seen in 8.15-17) if Israel was once “adopted” yet God has now rejected them. Paul gives a very straightforward answer: “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.” (9.6)

God has not rejected “Israel” in favor of Gentiles. God has preserved those who were part of ethnic Israel as the true Israel. Paul's solution is that there is a remnant.

For example, Jacob and Esau are both children of Isaac. It did not matter that they were both genetic descendants. It matter that one was of faith and the other was not (9.7-13). While God's solution to Adam does come through Abraham it has never been the case that it comes through Abraham merely because one is born from the line of Abraham. Ishmael and Esau are prime examples.

God's people are those God calls. God has mercy on those whom he will have mercy (9.16). Therefore, if God wants his people to be from both Jew and Gentile, this is how it will be (9.24-25).

Paul writes much on the fact that Israel is rebellious. He understands this as opening the door for Gentiles to be grafted into the people of God but he also expects that it may very well move ethnic Jews toward jealousy causing them to return to their covenant God (10.19; 11.11). We see throughout his argument that his idea of a remnant is supported by themes from Genesis. Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, as well as the rest of the Pentateuch, including Pharaoh. For Paul it is the beginning that gives meaning to current events.

Paul reminds his readers that he is a Jew, a descendent of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin (11.1). He is a living example of God's covenant faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has preserved true Israel. This is how he has done it from the beginning. He has never just chosen a people based on their ethnic qualifications. It has always been by grace (11.5).

The concluding message of this epistle must be read through what has come prior. This is not merely a guide to good living. Rather, Paul presents imperatives to push the believers in Rome to realize their indicative standing before God. Yes, the outer man is Adamic, dying flesh but the inner man is united to the Spirit of God, redeeming the whole person in hope of the resurrection.

This is how Paul expects Christian to live in the “not yet” part of his “already, but not yet” eschatology. Paul exhorts his reader to “present your bodies a holy and living sacrifice, acceptable to God” (12.1). This can be seen through behavior that juxtaposes what Paul said about Adamic humanity in 1.18-32. Those who are “in Christ” function in unity (hint, hint Jews *and* Gentiles) allowing the whole body to do its part (12.2-8). Those who are “in Christ” are characterized by things like “brotherly love” (12.10), devotion to prayer (12.12, and blessing one's enemies (12.14). This is not the Adamic way of life; this is the Christ-way of life.

If Christians are the new humanity destined to rule with Christ over the redeemed creation (8.18-23) what to do with Rome? For now, as long as Christ does not reign visibly, God has Rome in power (13.1). This means Christians still obey the *human* rulers of this age by paying taxes *and* obeying other laws (13.2-7). On what grounds does Paul base this command? “He who loves his neighbor fulfills the law.” (13.8) As we have seen throughout this epistle Paul sees Spirit filled Christians as fulfilling the law, not by doing “works of the Law”, but by the “Spirit of the Law”. All this should be done in the knowledge that “the day is at hand” (13.12). Christ will return soon as victor.

Inwardly, the community of believers must be gracious in areas not essentially “moral” such as the eating of certain food and the observance of various holy days (14.1-6). Now that we have died to sin we live for the Lord which means we live for one another as well (14.7-9). If we struggle with the actions of other brothers and sisters we must remember that the Lord is the final judge of us all and that the Spirit guides us all in this era (14.10-16; cf. 2.14-16).

Paul continues his exhortation to the end reminding believer to “accept one another, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God” (15.7). It is Paul's hope that a unified church in Rome will

support him as he brings the gospel toward Spain (15.24) where he will continue to announce this message to the Gentiles. As he ends this with greetings to several people he knows or knows about personally he makes this important statement: “the God of grace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” (16.20) This allusion to Gen. 3.15. Paul understands the believers who are “sons of God” who will share the new creation with the “Son of God” to be part of the “seed” of the woman that will crush the serpent. The serpent is fully identified as Satan and the believers, who are the children of Abraham by faith are also the children of Eve who take part in God's vindictive justice against the enemy.

Synthesizing Genesis Motifs

At this juncture we should attempt to synthesize the Genesis motifs in order for the reader to see how all these various illusions can be traced from beginning to end:

Creation

As we saw in 8.18-23 the Creation is understood by Paul to be “good” as it was declared in Gen. 1. The Creation was to be guided by humanity toward her ultimate goal of glorifying her Creator. This was to be accomplished by Adam and Eve, the vice-regents of the Creator God, who were to “fill the earth”, “subdue it”, and “fill” it with their descendents (Gen. 2.28).

When Eve was deceived, and Adam rebelled, God judged the serpent, the woman, and man, and indirectly cursed Creation. The depiction of creation in Eden was simple. The fruits came with ease. The humans maintained it but this seems to have been joyfully. After the rebellion the ground is cursed, thorns and thistles are to prevent humans from easily accessing food, and everything has changed (Gen. 3.17-19).

Paul's additional insight is the idolatry of 1.18-32. Adam listened to Eve who listened to the serpent, but it does not seem from the narrative that Adam was absent. As we mentioned above Eve simply turns to Adam to give him the fruit from which he partakes. So while it was Eve who was directly deceived by the serpent it was Adam who did not subdue Creation. One Satan-possessed

serpent was able to deceive humanity into being separated from God because Adam not only did not correct Eve's misunderstanding of the commandment, supporting her error, but he also submitted himself to the serpent.

For Paul this was the beginning of a long slide away from God toward Creation worship. This includes idolatry. It includes the idolatrous behavior of homosexual eroticism. Finally, it includes a long list of Adamic traits that we see countered by the expected behavior from those who are “in Christ” that Paul notes toward the end of the epistle.

As regards the eschatological implications of this motif we ought to reemphasize the reality that Creation has a place in the eschaton. It has been common amongst popular Christian writers to do away with Creation. “Heaven” is understood as a greater, spiritual reality that is distinct from earth. Yet this is not how Paul sees it.

Paul sees material existence as good. He understands “Heaven” as the reign of God from which the mercy and wrath of God come. When “Heaven” comes to earth we will see the renewal of all things.

The Hebrew prophets envisioned a “new heaven and a new earth”. In preparation for this reality Israel was held to strict laws concerning the Sabbath of the land. Often we see God calling “heaven and earth” as witnesses against Israel. This is because Israel was supposed to care for the Promise Land like Adam and Eve were to care for Creation.

When Israel rebelled one area of disobedience was as concerns the land. When Paul envisions the eschatological people of God serving under the reign of Jesus Christ he sees the Creation rejoicing. It is at this time that the failure of Adam, Eve, Israel, and the people of this age will finally be overcome by the faithfulness of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, and all the adopted sons of God.

Adam-Eve (Humanity)

Adam and Eve were created in the “image of God” (Gen. 1.26). It seems that this is interpreted by Paul to mean that Adam and Eve are vice-regents of the Creator. They are to represent God to

Creation.

As we have noted humans instead become idolatrous. This results in the curse of death which is accompanied by the departure of God's life-giving Spirit in Gen. 6.3. Christ comes as the “new human”. Since he was able to not sin, and he perfectly fulfilled the law, he was exalted by God through his resurrection (Rom. 1.1-3). Christ's obedience to God leads all those who believe in him to receive the free grace-gift of God which removes them from one form of humanity, Adamic, to another, “in Christ”.

Those who are Adamic will still suffer death and death will rule them. Those who are “in Christ” will be resurrected in order to participate in the eschatological, renewed Created order where Christ reigns as God's true regent, restoring “glory” to humanity, sharing his inheritance with the adopted “sons of God”, i.e. Christians.

“The Fall”

Rom. 1-5 find a balance between Adam as the one whose sin brought death to all and the responsibility of each person before God. Yes, Adam rebelled bringing forth, for lack of a better term, “the Fall”. This does not mean humans since Adam are not liable. Rather, everyone sins, no one seeks God, and all relive the idolatry of Adam each generation. If it is not for Christ, and the Spirit that he brings, there is no hope. “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (3.23).

The Seed/The Serpent

While Paul does not divert from his message to the church in Galatia that Christ is the seed of Gen. 3.15, he does not limit it to Christ in Romans. As we have seen, in chapter eight, Christ is the Son who has made the way for the adoption of many “sons”. In 16.20 we see that Paul expects Christians not only to suffer with Christ (see 8.18-23) but also to participate in the crushing of Satan. Christians, who are “in Christ”, are the new humanity. It is through Christ and his fellow “sons of God” that the failure of Adam is reversed.

Abraham

While Genesis is written in a such a way that the reader realizes the answer to Adam is Abraham and his descendents, it is the deconstructive task of Paul to show what this means. Like Ishmael and Esau genetic heritage is not sufficient. What it means to be a descendent of Abraham is not that one be a Jew. Rather, Abraham believed in the God who raises from the dead. For Paul, post Christ's resurrection, this must be redefined. Those who follow Abraham are those who believe in the God who *raised Christ from the dead*.

The Law of Moses, the covenant sign of circumcision, and the DNA of Abraham will not result in one being true "Israel". A Jew is a Jew inwardly, as Paul argues, and therefore a true Jew, post the resurrection of Christ, is one who has the Spirit of the New Covenant in her heart. It is by faith, like Abraham, that one will follow God into this new eschatological age.

Israel

Again, Ishmael and Esau were related to Abraham but this did not make them children of the promise. As has often occurred in the history of Israel God does preserve and save Israel, through a remnant. The true Israel includes those like Paul who are part of this remnant, who recognize Messiah, who believe in him, and who receive the Spirit.

Conclusion

At the very beginning of the epistle we are introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ as the solution for plights of the dying, Adamic humanity. At the end of the epistle we read that those who are servants of Jesus Christ (16.18) are the ones who should anticipate participating in the crushing of Satan (16.20). The message moves from a condemning rebuke of everyone as idolatrous rebels (1.18-32) to a hopeful prayer that the readers will remain obedient citizens under the reign of the exalted Christ. Throughout we see that the beginning is interpreted via the *telos*. The God that made the cosmos and put humanity as his regents will renew everything while resurrecting his chosen people. In Christ all that Adam failed to do will come to pass. This is how Paul reads and interprets Genesis,

through the resurrection, to his readers.

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