

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL VOICE OF ROMANS 8.1-25

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By

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Introduction

When the canonical choir sings eschatological songs we often give much attention to the passages with a higher pitch. Many books have been written on the otherworldly images of the Apocalypse. The cataclysmic vision of 2 Peter 3.10-13 results in “ooohs” and “ahhhs” as we hear of the earth being purged by flames. And what can we say when Jesus himself tells us “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Mt. 24.35; Mk. 13.31; Lk. 21.33). There doesn't seem to be much hope for *this* creation. It would appear that her end is devastation.

Yet in the *Book of Genesis* we are told that God thought his creation to be “good” (1.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25) and when he added humans it became “very good” (1.31). This should cause us to pause. In spite all the passages that seem to indicate that creation is expendable we must ask if there are any passages that harmonize more directly with the creation account.

Before we claim to have heard the whole song we must give heed to the tenor of Pauline eschatology. Whereas the aforementioned passages, and others like them, seem to indicate a *discontinuation* between this world and the one to come, the contribution of the Apostle Paul is that he emphasizes some sort of *continuation*. In this paper it is my desire to *draw attention specifically to the voice of Rom. 8.1-25* as we formulate a Christian eschatology. I will be asking for those who are in attendance to give a hearing to this passage because I believe that it contributes balance to the canonical witness regarding the future of *this current* created order. It is here in these verses that we will see an analogy between the transition which will occur during our resurrection and the “re-birthing” of all creation.

In order for 8.1-25 to be heard correctly we must listen for the reverberation of other Genesis-themes throughout the epistle. These will include the following:

(1) The created order is mentioned multiple times in this epistle. I will attempt display how the language of 1.18-32 should influence how we read 8.1-25. I know most here recognize 8.1-25 as eschatological, but how many consider it to be a valuable text for previewing the future of creation?

(2) Humanity's relationship with the created order. In 1.18-25 we will see that the fall of our race is equated with worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. This will influence the main argument of the epistle as Adam and Christ are continually in contrast throughout. When we get to 8.1-25 it should be apparent that this passage predicts the solution to many of the problems discussed in the first seven chapters.

(3) Humanity's fall into rebellion as an act of Adam that is reenacted by everyone. If Christ is the solution to Adam then he is also the solution to the consequences of Adam's rebellion. One of those consequences according to Gen. 3.17 was a curse upon the earth. I will argue that 8.1-25 should be heard as telling us that this curse will one day be lifted.

(4) The aftermath of human rebellion is death. The solution in Christ is resurrection by the Spirit. In Gen. 2.17 the punishment for sin is death. The Apostle has this in mind as he argues that death will no longer be victorious over the siblings of Christ who will be raised by the same Spirit that raised him. Likewise, the earth that was cursed because of Adam will be resurrected to enjoy “the freedom and the glory of the children of God.” (Rom. 8.21)

The inter-textual relationship to which we must pay attention is *how Paul reads/interprets Genesis-themes in this epistle*. We must realize that Paul takes the goodness of creation seriously enough to see these cosmos as having a prominent place in God's future. Because of this I will argue that our understanding of 8.1-25 is to be shaped by the emergence of the aforementioned themes through the first seven chapters as well as their appearances in chapters nine through sixteen. If these sounds are present as I claim then we have no other option than to hear a creation-affirming tune from Paul that balances our eschatology, especially for those who are pessimistic about earth's future. In 8.1-25 we should be able to recognize this thesis: *The resurrected children of God will reign and rule with Christ over the new creation in the age to come being and doing for the created order what Adam and Eve failed to be and do.*

In the Tune of Genesis to the Key of Resurrection

In Rom. 1.1-6 we are provided with the hermeneutical key to the epistle: the gospel of Jesus Christ, God's Son, whom the Spirit has enthroned by means of resurrection.¹ This Trinitarian gospel is proclaimed to rebellious humanity as a message of salvation or wrath depending on whether one responds in faithfulness (1.16-18). Why is this ultimatum being given? What is the reason for God's wrath and subsequently his offer of mercy? As Pauline scholars have debated: what is the plight-solution relationship?

In vv. 18-32 humanity is described as collectively rejecting their Creator in favor of idolatrous worship toward the very creation that God had commanded them to subdue in Gen. 1.26-28. Many readers of this epistle are familiar with the Adam-Christ contrast that appears in the fifth chapter, but “he one who has an ear to hear” will notice that the concert begins much earlier. I suggest here that a juxtaposition between Adam and Christ begins in 1.18-23. *The Adam-Christ motif ought to shape how we hear the message of this epistle as a whole.* In these verses in particular humanity “suppresses the truth in unrighteousness” by denying what God has revealed about himself to them (vv. 18-19); this has been so since the creation (v. 20); they have known God but did not honor God as such making them fools (vv. 21-22); and they “exchanged the glory of God for an image in the form of corruptible humanity and of birds and of four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (v. 23). This resulted in God giving them to their rebellious, fallen state (v. 24). Humanity is described in this passage in such a way that it ought to make us think of the father of our race.

Morna Hooker long ago observed that Adam should be found in this passage. She writes,

“...the sequence of events outlined in Rom. 1 reminds us of the story of Adam as it is told in Gen. 1-3. Of Adam it is supremely true that God manifest to him that which can be known of him (v. 19); that from the creation onwards, God's attributes were

¹ I owe this insight to J.R. Daniel Kirk who writes, “...resurrection is the most pervasive theme of the letter and it functions throughout as a hermeneutical key for reinterpreting the Scriptures and stories of Israel.” (2008) *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 8. In this paper I will see to apply it directly to how the resurrection of Christ leads Paul to read the *Book of Genesis*.

clearly discernible to him in the things which had been made, and that he was thus without excuse (v. 20). Adam, above and before all men, knew and allowed his heart to be darkened (v. 20). Adam's fall was the result of his desire to be as God, to attain knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3.5), so that, claiming to be wise, he in fact became a fool (v. 21). Thus he not only failed to give glory to God but, according to rabbinic tradition, but himself lost the glory of God which was reflected on his face (v. 23). In believing the serpent's lie that his action would not lead to death (Gen. 3.4) he turned his back on the truth of God, and he obeyed, and thus gave his allegiance to a creature, the serpent, rather than to the creator (v. 25).”²

In v. 25 τῷ ψεύδει (“the lie”) seems to indicate that this is referring to a particular lie due to the definite article. If Hooker is right in hearing a Pauline exposition on Adam in these verses then it is very likely that “the lie” is that of the serpent in Gen. 3.4 just as she observes. This would not be odd since it is not the only Genesis-echoes in this passage. The statement φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἔρπετων derives its creational-categories from the LXX of Gen. 1.20-27 where humans are placed in relation to the created order. So not only does Paul see humanity as reenacting Adam's failure to subdue creation when he obeyed the voice of the serpent, but he sees all humans as following Adam into what is essentially the root of idolatry—forsaking the glory of God in order to worship the creation instead. For Adam this took place when he obeyed the serpent; for Adam's descendents it takes place when we make idols out of created things.

Within the first chapter of the epistle we already read about creation; humanity's role toward creation; their rebellion which, as Hooker notes, seems to be an outline of that of Adam's fall; an obscure reference to “the lie” of Gen. 3.4; and the first mention of humans sharing the glory of God which seems to be built on Gen. 1.26-27 where humans are given rule over creation as the image of

2 Morna Hooker. “Adam in Romans 1” in (1990) *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 77-78.

God. The second and third chapters appear to be written in light of this discussion to show that Israel is in Adam just like the Gentiles. There are some exegetes who read the sins of chapter one to be referring to Gentiles only, but it appears evident that while Paul may have let his audience think the same thing he does not let them continue to do so. Instead, in spite of the exegetical difficulties, it is evident that Paul intends to show his reader that the Jews are guilty of being Adamic just like the Gentiles.

All disobey the Law like Adam disobeyed the command in Eden. All reject the knowledge of God whether it comes through observing creation or reading the ordinances of Moses. All have fallen into idolatrous behavior forsaking their role as God's image-bearers to creation. The string of successive quotations from 3.10-18 show that both the Jew with Torah and the Gentile with conscience fail to be fully human due to their sins against God.

In the fourth chapter there seems to be a thematic switch. Suddenly the patriarch Abraham is the subject. This makes sense if we note the aforementioned Genesis-motifs of this epistle. If one were to read the *Book of Genesis* in the context of the Pentateuch one would see that Abraham and his descendents first appear to be the solution to the Adamic problem only for it to become obvious they are still part of it. The Apostle does not ignore this. He writes in 4.3 that it was Abraham's faith that led to him being counted as righteous before God not his ability to perform works of Law. At this point the Jew should hear that (1) even I am included in the Adamic fall and (2) our father Abraham was not only not the solution to Adam, but he was part of the problem, yet he found justification before God.

Why is Abraham mentioned here as a model of faith? Is it for the sole reason that Abraham's faithfulness is chronologically prior to Sinai? Is he merely a model of faithfulness aside from Law observance? I think there is more to it. As I have noted, there seems to be strong evidence that Paul has the *Book of Genesis* in mind as he writes this epistle. As Peter Bouteneff writes, "Paul is willing...to recast OT passages without regard to what we today may call authorial intent. Many of his adaptations occur as part of his christological use of the Scripture."³ We must realize that as Paul ponders Abraham

³ Peter C. Bouteneff. (2008) *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 36.

he does so on the other side of Christ's resurrection. He sees that it is a *type of faith* and a particular *object of that faith* that made Abraham *the semi-solution* to Adam. This points forward to *the actual* solution to Adam. As N.T. Wright notes, “Abraham's faith...was a trust in specific promises...” which Wright connects to our mandate to believe that “God raised Jesus from the dead.”⁴

Abraham's justification, according to 4.17, is the result of faith in the promises of the God who “gives life to the dead”. In 4.19 Paul says that he believed in the promises of God in spite of the deadness of his own body and that of Sarah's womb. It is implicit in this narrative that Abraham believed that God would make a great nation out of his descendents in spite of death and deadness. Therefore, we can suggest that the command to sacrifice Isaac should be considered as well. In v. 23 Paul says this is something that was written for us “who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

As Paul reads Genesis he does not see Abraham as doing deeds that reverse the fall of Adam. Rather, he sees Abraham as believing something about God that gave hope that there was something beyond the Adamic curse. Abraham believed in a God who raises the dead. This faith in God's ability to overcome death is likely connected to the warning in Eden in Gen. 2.17 that sin would result in death. Abraham did not know how God would raise the dead, but he believed in some sort of resurrection. This belief in resurrection allowed him to see a glimpse of something that Paul sees as unfolding in Christ's resurrection leading to our own resurrection.

I have little doubt that anyone will protest that the fifth chapter has a Genesis-motif. In 5.1-13 Paul sings a song of salvation about how Christ died for us as God's solution to Adam. In v. 10 it is Adam who is mentioned as the one through whom sin entered this world. Bouteneff notes, “...Paul's use of Adam is simple and minimal. Putting Adam and Christ together in Romans 5 is merely a way of showing how the actions of one lone figure can have profound (though opposite) effects on many

4 N.T. Wright. “The Letter to the Romans” in (2002) *The New Interpreter's Bible: V. 10*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 499.

people.⁵

It is interesting to see that just as we proposed that in 1.18-32 that the story of Adam is being retold in broader categories to include all humans, so we hear Paul say in 5.12 that it is more than that sin entered because of Adam, but “death spread to all humans” simply “because all sinned”. In v. 14 Paul clarifies that the sin does not have to have been “in the likeness” (ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιωμάτι) of Adam's sin to be considered sin. All types of sin share the result of Adam's sin just like the list in the first chapter seems to indicate.

Through 5.21 we see Paul going back and forth between the outcome of Adam's sin and the results of Christ's obedience. This section has been addressed by many writers and I am sure you are familiar with it. Needless to say, this appears to me to be not the first appearance of the Adam-Christ juxtaposition, but rather it is the unveiling of something that Paul has been saying since the first chapter. There are some in Adam; there are some in Christ. Adam's sin has had global impact; Christ's obedience the same.

In the sixth and seventh chapters it seems that Paul is answering the question, “If I am not Adamic, and I am in Christ, what does this mean?” In 6.1 he addresses whether this new standing in Christ outside the Law means that sinning is somehow a means of grace. No! Paul says, this ignores one's new life that begin in baptism (6.3). Paul must inform his hearers that we must now act out of who we are as Christians or as Thomas Schreiner writes, “The indicative refers to what God has done for believers in Christ, while the imperative calls on believers to live in a way that honors God.”⁶

In 6.3-13 he argues that we have died to sin *already*. We read something similar in Eph. 2.1-6 where we discover that Paul sees us as already having died, been raised, and ruling with Christ (cf. Eph. 1.20). For Paul, this is part of the transition from the old person to the new person (Eph. 4.22-24). Also, in 1 Cor. 4.16 he writes that our outer person is fading, but our inner person is being continually

⁵ Bouteneff, 40.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner. (2001) *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP. 253-254.

renewed. This “already, but not yet” inner person-outer person juxtaposition is spread through the Pauline corpus.

In 6.14-23 Paul changes the analogy now describing us as having been set free from sin as a slave from a master. We are free we have no reason to go back into bondage. This moves us forward into the seventh chapter where Paul begins discussing sin's relationship to Law. It is here that we hear another Genesis-echo.

At this juncture there is this 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 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.”⁷ I have already argued we should take it as far back as chapter one.

Some reject that Adam would be found here 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. 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. In 7.7 Paul uses the tenth commandment against covetousness (both in the Ex. 20.2-17 and Deut. 5.6-11 accounts)⁸ to exemplify “law” as it was known by Adam. This is telling since covetousness explains Adam's desire for the knowledge he did not yet have.

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 (a male figure) but also Eve (a

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

8 Ibid. 26

female figure) that is being viewed here.⁹ 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” (ἀπατάω) that is found in the LXX where Eve blames the serpent (ἠπάτησέν in Gen. 3.13) is found here in reference to the law (ἐξῆπάτησέν). It is as if Paul understand the law to have been used by Satan like the serpent was used 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. Because of this the Law was susceptible to being abused by human frailty (7.8-13).

In 7.14-25 the tenses move from past to present. For many this suggest 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 arch-type, 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 all. For Adam, and everyone since Adam, the plight is the same, “Who will set me free from the body of death?” (7.24b) Likewise, 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 “in Christ” can rejoice because there is “no condemnation” (8.1).

The Crescendo of 8.1-25

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 נִשְׁמָתוֹ , LXX ἐνεφύσησεν). When human life spans begin to drastically

⁹ Austin Busch. "The Figure of Eve in Romans 7.5-25". Biblical Interpretation 12 no 1 2004, pp. 1-36.

shrink it is because God declares “My Spirit will not abide in humanity forever, for he is flesh” (Gen. 6.3) indicating human life is dependent on the breath/Spirit of God.

Other Hebrew expositors noted this connection. For example, the Psalmist writes 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 bringing 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!¹⁰

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” in 1.4. Now he says that the one thing that overrides “the law of sin and death” is the “law of the Spirit” (8.2). 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!¹¹

One cannot help but hear echos 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!

¹⁰ I would like to credit John R. Levison making me aware of the Pneumatology of the OT as found in (2009) *Filled with the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. pp. 14-87.

¹¹ Many of these insights are due, in part, to interacting with James D.G. Dunn. (1998) *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. See especially pp. 100-101, 416-418, 477-481

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 and (2) 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 to be like him as his siblings. 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 (endure) with Christ 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). This is the part of the epistle to which we want to give our attention and to which we have been building thus far by showing how Genesis is read in this epistle.

The reader must ask why at this juncture creation is 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 rebelled and worshiped the very creation that they were to “subdue” and “rule” according to Gen. 1.28.

It was this idolatry that brought death. It was this death that causes the land to be cursed in accordance with 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, humans 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 vaporized as many Christian theologians and popular authors seem to indicate. Rather, creation can be led to her full potential when the Spirit-resurrected children of God rule with the one and only Son of God over a redeemed creation.

We saw that in Ps. 104.28-30 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”. This is when we enter into the “glory” (remember from the first chapter?) of God. Our resurrected restores our humanity. It renews our *imago Dei*.

Paul continues chapter eight 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.

Continuation in the Calmando

We could stop our discussion here since it seems apparent to me that the Genesis-motifs that we hear through the first seven chapters define how we should read the eighth chapter. But I think it is good to see how these themes continue through the rest of the epistle, even after it has reached its climax. On the way back down toward the end we will see that the Adam-Christ contrast continues to shape this epistle.

What does the future of Israel in chapters nine through eleven have to do with the message of this epistle? We must realize that Israel is central to the message of Romans and she 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, so has Israel related to the nations.

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 will 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 descendents. 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). This should bring confidence to Jews and Gentiles alike who have heard Paul say they are adopted by God. Those whom God has adopted in Israel were not rejected. A remnant remains.

The concluding message of this epistle must be read through what has come prior. In the twelfth chapter Paul continues to address what it means to be free from the Adamic curse. The characteristics of the new humanity described in this chapter are the opposite of those of the old humanity in the first chapter.

In 13.1 we are introduced to the question, "If Christians are the new humanity destined to rule with Christ over the redeemed creation 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.

Hearing the Eschatological Harmony

If the Adam-Christ juxtaposition can be heard through the whole epistle as I have claimed then it must be found in 8.1-25. In this passage we saw that God has reversed the curse of death found in Gen. 2.17. We saw that by the Spirit he brings back the life that was lost in Gen. 6.3. In vv. 18-23 we see he is going to lift the curse on creation that was declared in Gen. 3.17. All of these reversals are anchored to the Adam-Christ statements in the fifth chapter. In Christ we see the reversal of the curse and this includes creation's own rebirth.

As we ponder how this passage harmonizes with the canonical context we see that Rom. 8.1-

25 provides an apt metaphor for how to reconcile the continuation and discontinuation that we see regarding creation in various passages. Paul parallels creation's freedom with our resurrection. Resurrection is both the shedding of our old person and the acquisition of our new person in the fullest sense. Yet it is the same us. The resurrected "I" will not be a completely different person, but neither will I be exactly the same. Likewise, the earth can be "destroyed" and "purged" to the point where we can call the earth of the age to come "new", yet still recognize it as earth.

In Rom. 8.1-25 we see that we have a new humanity that is still humanity in new bodies that are still our bodies reigning with our resurrected Lord who is still the Jesus that walked this earth in a new creation that is still the one created for us "in the beginning": continuation and discontinuation; different and the same.

Conclusion

In Rom. 8.1-25 we find that the relationship between God, humanity, and the created order will be made right in the age to come. Humans will reign and rule with the risen Lord Jesus Christ over the renovated earth being and doing for creation what Adam and Eve (and every generation since) has failed to be and do. Humans will point creation toward her Creator rather than worshiping the creation. This will be when the adopted children of God are resurrected with new bodies, overcoming death, setting creation free from the curse that came because of Adam and Eve in Eden. Creation will be set free from her suffering.

This shapes and influences how we think about Christian eschatology and how we interpret other canonical texts that seem to emphasize more discontinuation between the old earth and the earth to come at the eschaton. We see that God's "good" creation will finally experience the potential she has always had once purged, purified, reborn and resurrected.

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