

WHO SINNED FIRST, ADAM OR EVE?

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

INTRODUCTION

It is commonly thought that Eve was the first human to sin. Is this true or did Adam sin first? If Adam sinned first, how did he sin? If Adam sinned first, what are the implications of this fact? This chapter will set forth evidence from both a “necessary inference” and from explicit statements in the Scriptures that Adam sinned first.

IMPLICATIONS OF ADAM SINNING FIRST

The first implication is that Eve was not cursed with having to be in subjection to man because of her sinning first. It is commonly taught that women are required to be in subjection to men because of Eve sinning first. Is this doctrine sound?

The second implication is that man has certain responsibilities in being the leader in the spiritual realm. This is implied by the conclusions of this chapter.

EVIDENCE THAT ADAM SINNED FIRST

How do we know that Adam was the first to sin? First, Paul sets forth the principle that a husband is to help his wife keep from sinning and a wife is to help her husband keep from sinning (1 Cor. 7:1-6).

1 Cor. 7:1-6 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 But, because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency. 6 But this I say by way of concession, not of commandment.

The “necessary inference” that we derive from this passage is determined by the use of the following enthymeme:

Major Premise: Unstated

Minor Premise: Fornication is a sin.

Conclusion: Fornication is a thing that a spouse is required to help his/her spouse to abstain from committing.

The major premise that is derived from this enthymeme as a “necessary inference” is: “All sins are things that a spouse is required to help his/her spouse to abstain from committing.” This “necessary inference” helps us to see how Adam sinned. Note the following argument:

Major Premise: All sins are things that a spouse is required to help his/her spouse to abstain from committing.

Minor Premise: Disobeying God by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is a sin.

Conclusion: Disobeying God by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is a thing that a spouse is required to help his/her spouse to abstain from committing.

The Scriptures reveal that Eve was thoroughly beguiled (Gen. 3:13, 2 Cor. 11:3 [εξαπαταω {pronounced *exapataō*}], and 1 Tim. 2:14¹), but Adam was not beguiled (απαταω [pronounced *apataō*]) in the least. Adam was present with Eve when she was tempted (Gen. 3:6). Adam was responsible for protecting Eve from Satan, but did not help her when she was thoroughly beguiled by Satan. Adam was not beguiled, therefore he sinned in allowing her to both be beguiled and to sin. If both had been beguiled, Adam might have been excused because of his ignorance.

Second, Eve was in the process of taking the lead in a spiritual matter and Adam allowed her to take the lead. Adam sinned by allowing her to take the lead. Note the following argument that establishes this point:

Major Premise: All sins are things that a husband is required to help his wife to abstain from committing.

Minor Premise: A woman disobeying God by taking the lead over a man (in spiritual matters) is a sin.

Conclusion: A woman disobeying God by taking the lead over a man (in spiritual matters) is a thing that a husband is required to help his wife to abstain from committing.

This constitutes a second sin on the part of Adam that he committed against his wife (Eve). The word translated: "... hearkened" in Gen. 3:17 is translated: "obeyed" in Gen. 22:18, 26:5, etc. Adam's actions were sinful for two different reasons.

Third, the Scriptures explicitly reveal that Adam was the one through whom sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12-14).

Rom. 5:12-14 Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:--13 for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

Any claim that Adam is mentioned when Eve is intended is an assertion that the passage is figurative (a synecdoche). The reader should remember that the norm for the language of the Scriptures is literal language. What compelling reason or reasons can be set forth that this is a figure of speech?
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But, some claim that the family name for Adam and Eve was "Adam" (Gen. 5:2). The claim is then made that it was Eve who sinned and the family name: "Adam" was used for her in Rom. 5:12-14. This forces the language to be figurative (a synecdoche). The reader should remember that figurative language is the exception to the rule, literal language is the norm.

The reader should note that God first spoke to Adam regarding the first sin (Gen. 3:9-11). God only spoke to Eve after Adam blamed her for his sin (Gen. 3:12-13). Eve blamed the serpent and God turned to him (Gen. 3:14-15).

IS THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN TO MEN PUNISHMENT FOR EVE'S SIN?

But, some claim that Eve was punished by having her husband to rule over her (Gen. 3:16). The Hebrew word translated "rule" (לָמַד)² can convey an oppressive rule. In light of other passages that

¹ The Majority Text and D² read απαταω and most other MSS read: εξαπαταω (as in 2 Cor. 11:3).

² Strong's number 4910 (This word is found in 74 verses.)

reveal the headship of man over woman and attribute it to the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:3, 7-9, 12, and 1 Tim. 2:12-13), it is evident that this is telling Eve that men will rule over women in a different manner than God had intended. God designed the headship of man over woman to represent the headship of Christ over His bride (the church – Eph. 5:31-33). Most societies have abused this role with men treating their wives like chattel or as bondservants. Neither the wife nor the husband is a slave³ to the other (1 Cor. 7:15). God never intended that the rule of man over woman would be an oppressive–crushing–dictatorial rule, but that it was to be a benevolent rule. This is proven by the facts that the rule of Jesus over His wife (the church) is a benevolent rule and that the role of Jesus to His church is a pattern for the role of the husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33). The oppressive–crushing–dictatorial rule of man over woman came as a result of sin. Another factor is that men have been blaming women for their sins from the beginning. Allow me to prove this claim with an argument:

First Premise: If woman is to be in subjection to man (with man ruling with love for his wife) because of primogenitor rights (man being created first – 1 Cor. 11:2-16 etc.), then the rule of Gen. 3:16 must be a different kind of rule.

Second Premise: Woman is to be in subjection to man (with man ruling with love for his wife) because of primogenitor rights (man being created first – 1 Cor. 11:2-16 etc.).

Conclusion: The rule of Gen. 3:16 must be a different kind of rule.

God is righteous and righteousness demands that no person be punished for the sins of other people (Ezek. 18:19-20). On some occasions we may suffer the consequences of the sins of other people, but not the punishment for the sins of others. This interpretation is derived from the same unsound reasoning that the Calvinist uses to support his: “Inherited total depravity” false doctrine. God is not unrighteous, therefore He will not punish one person (women in general) for the sins of another person (Eve). But one may reply: “Aren’t we punished for Adam’s sin?” The answer is: “No!” We suffer some consequences of Adam’s sin, but are not punished for his sin. Adam and Eve and their posterity were separated from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24) and therefore all die physically (this is a consequence of sin). We need to separate consequences from punishment.

One might (properly) argue that man ruling (in a dictatorial manner [contrary to the will of God]) over women was a consequence of Eve’s sin, but it is not a punishment for her sin. How can we say that it was a consequence for her sin? Sin was released into the world by the sins of Adam and Eve. Because women are generally smaller and physically weaker, man is able to forcibly rule a woman (in most cases). This brute force rule is totally contrary to God’s intent for the male-female roles. Submission is more difficult than brute-force rule, but self-sacrificing rule (the rule intended by God – cf. Eph. 5:22-33 and Col. 3:19) is more difficult than submission. Self-sacrificing rule (required of man) is impossible for carnally minded men but, it is possible for spiritually minded men. Carnally minded men do not follow God’s order for the husband’s role but, spiritually minded men do follow God’s order for the husband’s role (cf. Est. 1:1-2:1). This is implied in 1 Cor. 11:3 where man is subject to Christ. Remember that Jesus is the pattern for all people, including husbands (1 Pet. 2:21).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have established from two “necessary inferences” that Adam sinned before Eve sinned. In addition, we have the explicit statements of one passage of Scripture that Adam sinned first (Rom. 5:12-14).

³ The verb translated “... under bondage” is in the perfect tense. “In its most frequent use the perfect Indicative represents an action as standing at the time of speaking complete. The reference of the tense is thus double; it implies a past action and affirms an existing result.” (Burton, p. 37) This is saying that neither the husband nor the wife is now under bondage nor has ever been under bondage to the other one.

There are several important implications from the conclusions of this chapter. First, woman is not in subjection to man because Eve sinned first, but woman is in subjection to man because man was created before woman.⁴ Second, this is an additional argument that establishes that women are to be in subjection to men in both the home and in the spiritual realm. Third, there is a weighty burden for men in their role that requires submission to Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burton, Ernest De Witt. (1966). *Syntax of the moods and tenses in New Testament Greek*. Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark.

⁴ It was not the fact that Eve sinned that caused women to be placed in subjection to man, but the order of creation.