

XII. Contending and Defending the Faith in Biblical Perspective

Contending and Contenders—Defending and Defenders

“Adam and Eve: Historical or Mythical?”

Acts 17:16–34

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

October 12, 2014 – Evening Sermon

This will be our fourth and final visit to this text in Acts 17 as we have attempted to draw from it this case study of how to defend the faith from the Apostle Paul as he is brought before the Athenians at Mars Hill, the intellectual capital of the world. Acts 17:16-23 says [16] *Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.* (This is convicting to me that Paul is provoked by the idols for in this world today I am more drawn to the idols than provoked by them. He didn't go get an idol axe but started proclaiming the idol destroying Gospel.) [17] *So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.* (Every meeting was a Divine appointment according to the Apostle Paul's life.) [18] *Some of the Epicurean* (These are the ones that say 'eat, drink and be merry' and if it feels good do it) *and Stoic* (These are the ones that say you live in a world that is senseless and meaningless so you either grin and bear it or don't grin and bear it, just carve out your own meaning in life.) *philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbling wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.* [19] *And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? [20] For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."* [21] *Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.*

[22] *So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. [23] For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.*

Paul begins to develop his defense of the faith to destroy the arguments raised up against the Lord and win those who are raising them up against the Lord to the Lord. He'll start by talking about God, then man made in the image of God, man as a sinner, God's remedy of Christ with His atoning death and resurrection, the call to faith and repentance and then he'll remind them of the judgment to come where all men must appear, a fixed, final day of judgment. Even though you know people cannot be saved until they hear the Gospel and the Holy Spirit gives them eyes to see and ears to hear it seems like the people there want to talk to us more than we are seemingly ready or desirous to talk to them about Christ.

Before I get to the rest of the text I want to remind you that when Paul starts with God he deals with the doctrine of creation. If God is not Creator then how can He command all men everywhere to repent? If God is not Creator then why do I need a relationship with Him? If God is not Creator then how can He possibly redeem me, create me and regenerate me? If He is not responsible for my origin then how can He re-

originate me with a spiritual new birth? So the doctrine of creation is important and it is not something that can be dismissed. Its truth even by an act of common grace benefits society but it is absolutely essential to claim God as Creator if you are to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

In the midst of that Paul also affirms something that Jesus Himself had affirmed and that is the historicity of Adam. Let's now look at the rest of the text in Acts 17. Acts 17:24-25 says [24] *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.* In other words, God is surrounding us with the sound and sight of His glory in His creation.

I heard something from Dr. Sinclair Ferguson that was interesting to hear about an account in the French Revolution when the proprietors of anarchy in the French Revolution began to go through the cities and the first object of their derision was the churches. They would tear them down. As Christians watched them tear down their places of worship one Revolutionary said, "We are tearing down the houses of your superstitious worship to the mythological God whom you serve." One believer looked at him and said "Oh you may tear this building down but you cannot tear down the stars of heaven, nor the glory of His creation for it shouts His praise and His glory." The God of creation, glory and all of His majesties surrounds us for no temple can house Him. Periodically He will use things like temples and tents of meeting in the Old Testament to teach us lessons but it's not because those things can house Him for the whole earth is full of His glory. The entire universe shouts His praise and majesty.

Speaking of the matter of the reality of creation Paul also goes very specifically to something else. Acts 17:26-34 says [26] *And he made from one man (Adam) every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."*

[29] *Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Christ – God having come in the flesh) whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

[32] *Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." [33] So Paul went out from their midst. [34] But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.*

I want to make a couple of points on the historicity of Adam and Eve and why that's important but before I get there I'd like to give a moment of introduction. In a short series of contending and defending the faith I have laid the strategies of Satan being infiltration and intimidation, the apostolic call to infiltration by contending for the faith in a case study with Paul, defending for the faith with a case study about Paul and then in the last study I pointed out how the doctrine of creation is absolutely crucial to establish

the doctrine of God as our Redeemer in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. We need to affirm the Biblical account of creation in Genesis 1 through 11, yet there is room for discussion about the days and all, because our origin is rooted there.

The second issue for us to consider is the matter of Adam and Eve. Why would we go there? Is it simply because this is a subset of creation, when God created on the sixth day Adam and Eve and therefore we need to address this issue? Certainly that would be a reason but there is more than that. The historicity of Adam and Eve is under direct assault and that's not new. The skeptics have always assaulted the historicity of Adam and Eve. In the 19th century in particular there was a ramping up of an assault against the historical Adam and Eve that came from the radical, liberal theologians and became embedded in the mainline protestant churches, even in America itself. This was not simply from the skeptics or the materialistic atheists or the radical theologians but it was reinforced at the turn of the century by the neo-orthodox who would say there wasn't a real Adam but that it is important to believe there was in order to get some ideas about God. The Bartian Neo-Orthodoxy attacked the historical Adam and Eve.

That is not where the attack is today. Today the attack is right in what passes off itself as evangelical Christianity. It is rooted in websites like biologos.com and books like The Evolution of Adam by Pete Enns whom I have encountered and have had to deal with in various ways. In it is the direct statement that there is no historic Adam and Eve. How did we get here? Their position is that at least 80,000 or more years ago there was the rising up through the process of evolution species development to other species of which came forth as come to be known as hominids which is almost human-like people but not really human-like because they needed a bit more evolutionary development.

I have no time in this study to critique the notion of evolution but let me simply say that evolution science, while it documents what we would all know which is refinements within species, has been taken and developed to the point of proclaiming factual as science of species development into new species, absent any fossil record of any such notion that species evolved to higher species. It takes a basic truth that we all know which is species development where everything is not the same. We evolve within our species.

I will never forget when I came back to Charlotte, North Carolina and had the opportunity to speak at the Shrine Bowl. I had always wanted to speak there. The Shrine Bowl is a collection of the North Carolina and South Carolina all stars in football and they play each other in the Shrine Bowl game. I loved it because my dad had made it there and had some honors in terms of the Shrine Bowl. I'll never forget this man that was introduced to me there right before I spoke and I said to him "What do you play? Left tackle? Right tackle?" He said "No, I'm a quarterback." All of the quarterbacks were all smaller than me when I was in high school and this guy was about four inches taller than me and outweighed me. He was a massive young man. That was in the 1980s and now I meet football and basketball players today and I can't believe how big they are. Let me tell you that we are evolving through steroid produced, protein enhanced McDonalds like crazy. It is amazing the species evolves within itself. It used to be that if you were over six feet you were tall but now you're just over six feet and shorter than most other guys. So we're fully aware of that.

Where did this notion with no scientific affirmations of species to species come from? It comes from a philosophy called the Hegelian Dialectic. A man named Hegel

took a look at life and said for the basic world life view you need thesis and antithesis. Thesis deals with antithesis to create a synthesis. The synthesis becomes the new thesis that develops a new antithesis. That antithesis and that synthesis will then war with each and do you get the picture? A man named Karl Marx took that and made a whole political system called communism. There is the bourgeoisie (have) and the proletariat (have-nots). They will eventually come to war and it's called a revolution. That creates a new class which eventually becomes the new bourgeoisie. That then creates another proletariat and they then go to war which then creates a new class, the new bourgeoisie. So life is revolution and communism. It is thesis, antithesis, synthesis and new thesis.

What Karl Marx did with political and economic thought is what Charles Darwin did with the evidence observed in science. You have the species and a mutation of the species and the premise is that the two then unite to create a new species. That new species will create its own mutation and it will unite to create another species except as I am illustrating this to you, go the route that we all know where mutation leads us. I kept going downward. By faith, Darwin said 'no it goes upward.' Species with a mutation unite and with a mutation it actually creates a greater species which is unheard of scientifically but that is accepted as gospel by the macro-evolutionist. That is what is at work within Darwinian atheistic evolution.

The church now intimidated by the world's position against a Biblical doctrine of creation has become silent or has been silenced in various forms or fashion. So I am calling you to defend the faith on the reality of creation as we looked at in the last study and in the subset of the historicity of Adam and Eve. Did Adam crawl up out of a cell that we don't know where it came from but said to itself 'let's divide' and then later said 'let's get back together' and somehow through mutation created a more complex cellular form that then said to itself 'let's divide so we can come together'? The only way you can think this has any merit is to postulate according to Carl Sagan that it came about over billions and billions of years. If you can postulate that we can make the unthinkable thinkable and that maybe it did work through that process yet is not scientifically supported by any such evidence that mutation enhanced species, much less created higher levels of species. As this is postulated it becomes accepted as gospel and instead of entering into debate with creationists they then rule creation out, mock them and then give them no place in the forum. They are afraid to do what the Epicureans did, inviting us up to Mars Hill for the debate. They want no part of it whatsoever.

I have listened to debate after debate and have participated in a number of them. In fact, it is not a hard thing to win the truth that man is made in the image of God. Now what about the first man? Is he something that crawled up through this process of cellular development? How did the Bible say that this man came into existence and is that important?

I first want to talk about why I believe this is important because within the "evangelical world" is the notion that Adam was not a historical being, but the writers of the New Testament actually thought he was. You don't believe Adam was historical yet you claim to be an evangelical where you believe in the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture. The writers of Scripture believe Adam was historical. According to this text in Acts 17 Paul felt Adam was a historical reality and that Adam actually existed. Not only did that Adam exist but a new Adam came along that God has appointed whereby

men are saved and by whom the world will be judged by and that is Jesus Christ. Both of those Paul accounted as historical realities.

What do you say about the “Mr. I don’t believe in the historicity of Adam but I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture”? Their answer is “well they were mistaken. It was a good think mistake but they were mistaken. Our God is so great that He took their error to give us an infallible truth that you’re saved through Jesus.” If I can’t trust them to get the first Adam right how am I going to trust them to get the second Adam right? If they were deceived about the first Adam then why would they not be deceived about the second Adam? So I won’t even go there with you but I will say that clearly Jesus on numerous occasions affirmed the historicity of Genesis 1 through 11 and the historicity of Adam. When Jesus defended marriage He said God made the first marriage as one man and one woman, there was Adam and there was Eve in Matthew 19. Their answer would be that Jesus was mistaken in His humanity but God the Holy Spirit would even use that mistake to give us this glorious fiction of this historical Adam to tell us of salvation. If it is a fiction of the Adam why would that salvation not be a fiction?

Is there a historical Adam? I believe it is absolutely crucial and I believe the Bible affirms that. I want to outline this for you in the remaining time in our study. I want to look at a couple of texts and I want to affirm the historicity of Adam. Let’s look back first at the text I opened with in Acts 17:26 which says [26] *And he made from one man (Adam) every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.* What did Paul tell about Adam in this verse?

The first thing he does is he affirms Adam as a historical being created by God in that text. Secondly, he affirms that God created all of humanity when He created Adam. When He created Adam, at the same time He created all of humanity, all of mankind, in Adam through Adam and from Adam. Those are the things Paul affirms here in this text in Acts 17. Now let’s look at Romans 5. Is a historical Adam crucial?

Romans 5:12-21 says [12] *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (references Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—[13] for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. [14] Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one (speaking of Christ) who was to come.*

[15] *But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. [16] And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. [17] For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

[18] *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. [20] Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (in other words, the last Adam in grace is greater*

than the first Adam who fell under the curse of the Law), [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul basically tells the Romans why they have this problem of death and that is that death comes from sin and death has spread to all of humanity. All of humanity is under the curse of death. Why is there death? It is because of sin. Why is there sin? It is because of Adam and his sin. There is not only a historical Adam but there is a historical fall into sin and when Adam sinned we sinned. When Adam sinned he brought death and we now have the sentence of death that is before us. So death comes from sin. Sin comes from Adam. This is what we call the doctrine of original sin. In other words when Adam sinned it brought death and the wages of sin is death. When Adam sinned I sinned. I was in Adam and when he died then I encounter death. So my actual sin and actual death is the infallible result of Adam's actual sin which is original sin and the curse of death. Therefore my actual sin and actual death is there because of Adam's sin and the curse of death and when Adam sinned I sinned right there because I was there in him and so were you.

I want to give you an illustration of this. The technical term we use is federal headship that when the head is there everything that is in the head is with that one. When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon there were two things that occurred. Do you know why Armstrong had to jump off the last rung of the ladder which had a larger space than the other rungs of the ladder, to get to the moon? According to evolutionary theory and all the meteoric dust that ought to have accumulated over billions and billions of years they were making allowance for that but there didn't happen to be any. He even bent the flag he brought when he jumped off with that marvelous athletic maneuver. Then he said "This is one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind." In other words, Armstrong is saying "I a man, by landing here, have made a small step (a bigger step than what it was thought to be) but when I got here all of humanity got here and it was a giant leap for humanity through him who represented us there."

Then a second lesson in that very moment occurred. He then walked over and planted the United States flag. Armstrong had been commissioned by our President as our representative so when Neil Armstrong landed and planted the flag every American citizen landed and the country landed where he planted the flag. We operate on federal headship all the time.

I want to use another illustration but this time from the Bible. Abraham went up into Dan and comes back and paid homage to what I believe is a Christophany, Melchizedek, the King of peace and righteousness and they meet in the valley of Shaveh, the King's Valley and that is where Melchizedek is found. He is over Jerusalem and he sits down with Abraham had has a covenant meal with wine and bread. Then Abraham worships Melchizedek bowing before him. Jesus comes and He is of the tribe of Judah and yet it is not only said Jesus is of the tribe of royalty, Judah but He also abolishes the Levitical tribe, the priesthood. How can Jesus abolish the Levitical priesthood if He is not a Levitical priest for He is not of the tribe of Levi?

The way that Jesus abolishes the priesthood of Aaron is because He is the fulfillment of a greater priest, according to the book of Hebrews, and that is the priesthood of Melchizedek which is the eternal priesthood. The writer of Hebrews says the reason the Levitical priesthood is set aside is because Jesus is the fulfillment of the

Melchizedekian priesthood and therefore it does away with the Levitical because the Levitical priesthood bowed to Melchizedek. When did Levi bow to Melchizedek? The writer of Hebrews says that Levi bowed to Melchizedek when Abraham bowed to Melchizedek because Levi is in the loins of Abraham. That is federal headship.

So when Adam sinned it's not simply his sin act is imputed to me but I was also there in him. I sinned in him and through him and from him came a race of sinners. That's why we actually sin and actually die. The historical Adam in his historical sin produced and authored the presence of sin which authors the reality of death but praise the Lord that a second Adam was sent. With the one sin now comes many trespasses and how there is a second Adam, a historical Adam yet not One that comes from that Adam because if Jesus would have come from that Adam He would have been born a sinner under the curse of death. This is a new Adam for He is God having come in the flesh. He is a real man, God having come.

Jesus in all of His glory, now humiliates Himself in what we call subtraction by addition. He is humiliated not by setting aside His deity but by taking upon Himself humanity to be tempted in every point likened to us and goes to the cross and takes all the trespasses of all of His people for all of eternity and pays for them with His obedience. It is His passive obedience as He takes our sin and then His active obedience is by replacing the record of life with perfect righteousness. So my sin is erased by the second Adam and a new record is given to me of His righteousness. I have not only been born a sinner through the trespasses of the one, the first Adam, because I was in him and born from him, but if I now am in Christ my trespasses are removed. All the trespasses of all of His people are removed through His single act of obedience. Then His righteousness now clothes me.

The second Adam is a fulfillment of the first Adam. The first Adam is a type of the One come which is Christ, the One appointed by God for our salvation and if you're not in Him, He has been appointed for your condemnation as the Righteous Judge on a fixed Day yet to come. I'd like to look at one other passage found in I Corinthians 15. There are other passages we could look at but I'm just picking out some key passages. I Corinthians 15 speaks of the glorious resurrection of Christ.

I Corinthians 15:20-23 says [20] *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* [21] *For as by a man (Adam) came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* [22] *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* [23] *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* Do you see how he has brought us full circle? Here is the first Adam. He sinned and he brings the curse of death. In him we sin therefore all of Adam's seed is born sinners under the judgment of God. By a man came sin and death and that sin and death is to all for we all die in Adam.

There is a second Adam. [21] *For as by a man (Adam) came death, by a man (a real historical Man) has come also the resurrection of the dead* (I Corinthians 15:21). This Adam is no fiction and neither is the second Adam fiction. Neither Adams are a myth. Just as in that Adam we died in this second Adam all shall be made alive. Is that teaching that everybody is going to be saved? No, the text in I Corinthians 15 tells us, [22] *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* There are two Adams and there are two 'alls.' There is Adam number one and his 'all' is all of humanity. There is Adam number two and His 'all' are all of the elect and not one shall

be lost. The text goes on to say that then those who are Christ's shall be saved. He is the Firstfruits of all who are in Christ. Those whom the Father gave Him, He loses not one.

The first Adam is real Adam with a historical sin and 'all' of his seed is under judgment. There is a second historical Adam and all the sins of all of His people are taken upon Himself and therefore He loses not one. In the first Adam all of his seed die. In the second Adam all of His seed shall be made alive and who are all of His seed? They are the elect of God and not one shall be lost. They shall all be raised unto glory. Here clearly is the historical Adam affirmed, both in the first Adam and in the second Adam. Both are affirmed as historical realities and having accomplished all that the Lord has given.

Here are a few thoughts I want to conclude with. If there is no Adam then there is no sin and there is no rational for death. Why do you have death? It is because you have sin. Why do you have sin? It is because you have an Adam, a historical Adam. If there is no historical Adam then there is no first Adam. If there is no first Adam not only do you not have rational for evil and death, but you have no hope for a second Adam. If the one is not a historical reality then you can't play fictionary and have the second one a real one who was really born, lived, died and rose again. If there is no first Adam there was no fall. If there is no first Adam and no fall then there is no second Adam and that means there is no salvation in Christ. So yes we will contend and defend the faith.

There are so many more reasons for this. Why would I contend for a real Adam made in the image of God? I would do that not only to preach redeeming grace but I would do that in order to promote common grace in our society where people realize they are not a cosmic accident and that in reality you have been made in the image of God. Also that God has put you over His creation that shouts His glory. God so loves sinners made in His image that He will redeem through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. I want people to know the reality that there is a God who formed Adam from the dust of the ground and then from Adam's side brought Eve, a historical reality and in the very act of creating her prefigured the marriage of one man joined to one woman for one life. In that marriage God has given to us the very picture of redemption but it starts with a historical Adam and a historical Eve. Here is Adam a corpse until God breaths in him the breath of life. So you have a body that comes in the image of your parents but you have breathed into you the breath of life and you are made in the image of God.

Because of all that we would look upon one another differently. I believe the historical Adam is the key to doing away with all racism, with all due respect to do away with racism. The key to doing away with racism is to deny its roots in Darwinian macro-evolution. That's where the notion of the racist comes from. The Bible talks of ethnos and not our version of racism that come from the Darwinian view. Do you want to know what God thinks about the race? God says, "From one man I made all of humanity." I don't care what their micro-evolution has produced in pigmentation skin color. We all come from one human father and now we can do away with the idiocy of racism rooted in Darwinianism.

There are multiple reasons why I believe in the historical Adam but simply in this study it is in Adam we sinned. It is in the second Adam that we have life. The first Adam was a historical reality with a historical rebellion against God and to that Adam God announced grace when He said "I will bring forth a Seed." He will destroy the evil one. He will be your Redeemer therefore there is a new Adam, a second Adam and that

one nor the first one a fiction and you can put your trust in Him. When Jesus affirms the historicity of Adam He is at the same time affirming Himself, the second Adam, in whom we have life evermore but you must be in Him. How are you in Christ? It is through the electing love of God the Father and your responsive love to surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and none in Him shall die but live forever. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. We pray O God that You would continue to teach us and grow us in grace and that we would thank You for the reliability of Your Word that it is faithful, inerrant and infallible for it is not playing fiction games to get across so called existential truth. Your Word reveals the truth. Just as there was an Adam in a garden who fell into sin, so there is also a Jesus, a second Adam, who went into the wilderness and withstood a temptation and then went to a hill and died for our sins. He was buried in a garden and all in Him shall be taken to paradise, a new heavens and a new earth forever, for I thank You in Jesus' Name, Amen.