



Is Adam for Real?

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The man Adam was either a real-life, flesh and blood, God-fearing human being, or he was not. There is no intermediate position. Either we have Adam wearing his fig leaf, or we have Adam who was only a figment. As much as the issue can be couched in theological mumbo jumbo, i.e. theological truth but historical myth, etc., there is no escaping a fundamental fact. Adam existed in the flesh, or he did not.

When we began to discover enough about the world to see that it was impossible to specifically identify the first human being, who may have lived millions of years ago, an historical Adam was rejected by many denominational Christians, and the presumption was embraced that there was no human Adam at all.

Is Adam a Figment of our Imagination?

For the sake of argument, let us assume Adam did not exist for a moment. Besides the Old Testament narrative in Genesis, let us look at the New Testament, and see what the effects would be.

- Luke 3:38: "... which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of [non-existent] Adam, which was the [non-existent] son of God." Did Seth have no father? Maybe Seth was non-existent too? How about Enos? We could ask that question all the way to Christ himself. At what point could the real persons be phased in with those who had no life, but only fill some hypothetical, theological niche?

- Romans 5:14: "Nevertheless death reigned from [non-existent] Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of [non-existent] Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." How can death come to a non-existent life. Plus, how did he sin if he was never born? How can an Adam who never was be the figure of him who died for us? By implication, this calls into question the legitimacy of the death and resurrection of Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Humans who do not live do not die. So just as a non-existent Adam could not die, therefore we will not die, and do not require being saved by Christ! What a wonderful theological premise that is.
- 1 Corinthians 15:45: "And so it is written, The first man [non-existent] Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." How could Adam, if he did not exist, become a living soul? Would we conclude that since the first man was not, therefore he was not made a "living soul," and "the last Adam" therefore was not made a "quickenning spirit"?
- 1 Timothy 2:13: "For [non-existent] Adam was first formed, then Eve." Would that make any sense at all? A non-existent Adam begs a non-existent Eve. Who needs a wife if you are not alive to appreciate her?
- 1 Timothy 2:14: "And [non-existent] Adam was not deceived, but the [non-existent] woman being deceived was in the transgression." Adam could not be deceived if there was no Adam to deceive. No man, no woman, no deception, no transgression, no sin. It would seem, if there was no Adam, that the ones deceived were Luke and Paul! Apparently they believed there was such a person as Adam.

The pertinent point is this: Taking Adam off the list of historical Bible personalities in order to salvage some Bible respectability solves nothing at all. We cannot climb into an ivory tower, take an inconsistent theological position, and escape the consequences. A fictitious Adam is fraught with unsavory theological implications.

Did Adam Wear a Fig Leaf?

So instead of ruling Adam out of the Bible, why not rule him in? Let us assume that the writer of Genesis, upon whom the gospel writers relied, got his facts right, and that Adam of Genesis, the ultimate father of Christ, was a real-live human being. That position is not exactly without difficulty either. The other part of the problem is that traditional, conservative, Christian beliefs about Adam are based not entirely upon scriptural evidence, but also upon an apparently erroneous assumption. Conservative Christians see Adam as both a flesh and blood human being, and as the father of all humanity.

News & Views

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The presumption that Adam was the first father of human beings everywhere likewise is fraught with difficulties. Remains of early humans and our precursors have been found dating back millions of years. A recent hominid skull found in Chad has been dated by scientists to over six million years ago. A possible solution to this conundrum comes directly from Genesis. The cultural surrounding of Genesis 2-11 places Adam and his immediate successors after the Stone Age and at the threshold of the Bronze Age. References to tents, farming, livestock, musical instruments, and implements of bronze, and even iron, give us valuable historical perspective. Such a person living in the area of the Tigris and Euphrates would have lived about 6-7,000 years ago. There is no trace of human settlement in that area prior to 10,000 years ago.

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Placing Adam in history also places him in the stream of humanity, not at the apex as has been commonly assumed. To trace the biological roots of humankind using DNA markers and archeological findings may eventually arrive at a specific person at a specific locale. But whoever that may turn out to be, he will be forever nameless.

A Potentially Satisfying Answer

A potentially satisfying answer to the historical and theological question of Adam is to recognize the historical Adam as the father of the Adamites-Semites-Israelites-Jews. To be sure there would be pockets and traces of humanity that could claim Jephthite or Hamite ancestry, and both Arabs and Jews regard Abraham as their father. But there are billions of people living all over the globe today whose ancestors cannot be traced to the Tigris and Euphrates, the cradle of civilization in the region of ancient southern Mesopotamia—the home of Adam.

A likelihood that has virtually been ignored by the theological establishment is that no person who lived roughly 7,000 years ago could have been the ultimate father of all of the people who presently inhabit the globe. When we allow for that, some of the creation-evolution difficulties disappear.

Where humankind came from remains a scientific question which has no implications for the authority or inspiration of Scripture. Genesis appears less concerned about where humankind came from, and simply concerned about presenting the origins and some of the history of the line of promise leading to Christ. **



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