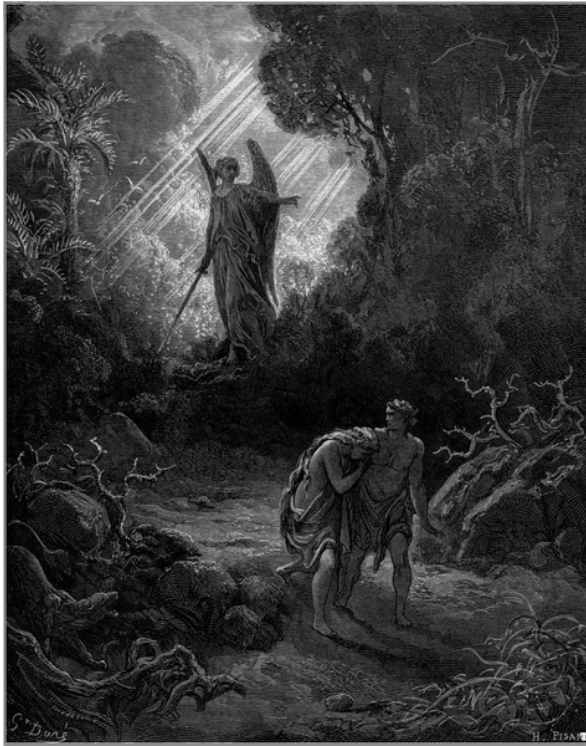




What's the Big Deal about Adam, Eve, and Jesus?
A Sermon Series by Nathan E. Lewis



“Adam & Eve Driven out of Eden” Dore

Nathan E. Lewis, Pastor of Evergreen Presbyterian Church in Beaverton, Oregon, preached an Advent sermon series in 2011 titled, “What’s the Big Deal about Adam, Eve, and Jesus?” Through the Beaverton Religion Forum, hosted by Evergreen, Nathan along with church members have interacted regularly with secular humanists, agnostics, and atheists, most of who believe that the recent DNA genome research proves that an actual Adam and Eve did not exist. In the forums several people have said: “No Adam and Eve; no fall into sin; no need for substitutionary atonement; no need for Jesus as Savior; no need for faith in Christ.” And so, Nathan prepared these sermons to help his congregation as apologists and evangelists to interact with their neighbors. Online at evergreenpca.com you can listen to these sermons.

The Origins of Death

Genesis 2: 16-17; 3: 1-7 and Romans 5: 12-15

There is a present and growing disagreement in the world of natural science. James Trefil of George Mason University, regular contributor to the Smithsonian and science commentator on National Public Radio, has written in his book, 101 Things You Don’t Know About Science and No One Else Does Either, “Today at the end of the 20th Century, a similar conflict seems to be brewing. This time the role of the brash theorists is taken by molecular biologists. Using the new, glamorous techniques of DNA analysis, they are insisting that all modern humans had common ancestors a few hundred thousand years ago. Paleontologists, meanwhile, point to their old-fashioned (and very stylish) collection of fossils and say that the world just didn’t evolve that way. The conflict can be characterized as a duel between the out-of-Africa school and the multi-regionalists. In the out-of-Africa theory, Homo Erectus, the precursors of modern humans, dispersed from Africa 2 million years ago but were then replaced by modern Homo Sapiens, who left Africa about 100,000 years ago. In this theory, human diversity is of fairly recent origin. In support of their ideas, the molecular biologists, these theorists point to family trees derived from analysis of DNA in modern humans from different parts of the globe.”

Now, in the first 12 years of the 21st Century, the genome DNA research suggests that not one couple but several thousand people are necessary to produce the present DNA diversity of the human race. As you can imagine, this has created a stir in the Christian community, especially among those of us who believe the biblical record to be historical narrative presenting to us Adam and Eve as the father and mother of the entire human race. On the street, those who do not consider the Bible to be credible, or that the God of the Bible exists, have rashly begun to taunt the church. They have ignored the genome DNA researchers’ careful wording of theory, suggestions and qualifiers, like, “As best as we can surmise at this point in our research...” This careful wording has been replaced with dogmatic statements like, “We now know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Adam and Eve did not exist as the sole parents of the entire human race.” You can now interact with friends who love to say: “No Adam and Eve; no

fall into sin; no need for substitutionary atonement; no need for Jesus as Savior; no need for faith in Christ.” These are rash conclusions.

I have titled this Advent sermon series, “What’s the Big Deal about Adam, Eve, and Jesus?” What we believe about Adam and Eve influences what we believe about Jesus. What we believe about Adam, Eve and Jesus influences our view of the human race. These four sermons seek to show the importance of what the Bible teaches about Adam, Eve, and Jesus. The first sermon addresses the origins of death. The Bible presents death as a consequence of humanity’s fall into sin. It is popular today among those who reject the biblical text to view death as a part of the original design of humanity. The second sermon addresses the value of our common ancestry. The Bible presents the entire human race made in the image of God maintaining equal and inestimable value for every individual human being. Multiple origins of the human race fracture this unity. The third sermon addresses the difficulty in making the human race. The Bible presents the making of the human race as a supernatural process. Many of our neighbors may think of it solely as a natural process. The fourth sermon explores Jesus’ view of Adam and Eve as actual historical persons.

These four sermons are designed to help us engage biblically in present conversations about the origins of humanity. Those of us who are united to God through Jesus Christ seek to proclaim the gospel in every field of study, in any community and in any ongoing conversation. God began to whisper the gospel to Adam and Eve in the day of their first sin. The gospel is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus, its proclamation ringing loudly and clearly into the 21st century. **The gospel makes Adam, Eve and Jesus a big deal.**

In recent discussions about Adam and Eve a popular and central presupposition has surfaced. This presupposition is that death has always been a part of human experience. The Bible teaches that God made the human race very good to live eternally but our race’s fall into sin produced death as a consequence. The question arises: How does the Bible define “death”? And then the question, “Had Adam and Eve never sinned would they have ever died?” The purpose of the Bible is to define “death” or any other term of our natural experience in relation to the gospel.

I have chosen three biblical texts for our consideration today, both clearly putting forth the Christian worldview of life and death. The first is

Genesis 2:16-17 preserving God’s command to Adam: *“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

Apparently, death was not part of the original experience of humanity prior to the breaking of this law. What is the Christian view of death? What does the text mean by “death”? For at least 400 years, Christians have been served well by the careful textual work of John Calvin, who died in 1564. In his commentary on Genesis, he supplies us with a biblical presentation of death:

“But it is asked, what kind of death God means in this place? It appears to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell. He was, in every respect, happy; his life, therefore, had alike respect to his body and his soul, since in his soul a right judgment and a proper government of the affections prevailed, there also life reigned; in his body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly free from death. His earthly life truly would have been temporal; yet he would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury.”

Calvin biblically defines death firstly as the opposite of perfect life, free of defect and despair. Calvin then defines death as a marring of the human passage from this life into heaven. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, they would have lived out their temporal life spans on earth freely entering heaven without any injury or separation of their souls from their bodies, and more profoundly without experiencing any moral corruption or separation from a Holy God. The Apostle Paul writing with the Genesis narrative in mind defines death as the separation of the body from the soul for a period of time until the final Day of Judgment. Paul also uses the word “death” to refer to moral corruption and separation from God. Any of our friends who are given wholly to Naturalism, would define death purely as the cessation of vital functions. **None of us have the right to superimpose such a limited view of death upon the biblical language.**

John Calvin continues: “Thence it follows, that under the name of death is comprehended all those miseries in which Adam involved himself by his defection; for as soon as he revolted from God, the fountain of life, he was cast down from his former state, in order that he might perceive the life of man without God to be wretched and lost, and therefore differing

nothing from death. Hence the condition of man after his sin is not improperly called both the privation of life, and death. The miseries and evils both of soul and body, with which man is beset so long as he is on earth, are a kind of entrance into death, till death itself entirely absorbs him; for the Scripture everywhere calls those dead who, being oppressed by the tyranny of sin and Satan, breathe nothing but their own destruction. Wherefore the question is superfluous, how it was that God threatened death to Adam on the day in which he should touch the fruit, when he long deferred the punishment? For then was Adam consigned to death, and death began its reign in him, until supervening grace should bring a remedy.”

First of all, notice how relevant are the words of the Holy Scriptures along with the words of classic commentaries like these of John Calvin. **Today the same questions are asked as those in the 16th century, or the 1st century or among the communities of ancient times.** Calvin rightly presents the biblical view of an unfolding alienation from God along with a gradual breaking down of one’s health and life.

The second text is Genesis 3: 1-7. As the serpent converses with Eve, we discover that she is right on at least one thing: God said that the consequence of eating the fruit of the one tree would be death. The serpent sharply disagrees: *“You shall not surely die.”* The serpent insists that God is unwilling to share with humanity knowledge. Indeed, as Adam and Eve ingest the fruit, they gain increased knowledge. They notice for the first time that they are naked, and they decide to clothe themselves. Why did their vital function not cease on the spot? God said, *“In the day you eat of it you shall surely die?”* But Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves, endured an intervention with God, survived expulsion from the garden and lived to a ripe old age – Adam finally dying at 930 years old. The answer is this: Adam and Eve died the day they sinned as the Bible has defined death.

Our third text is Romans 5: 12-14. Paul teaches us that death came into the world through sin. This death not only came to Adam and Eve but also *“spread to all humanity because all sinned.”* In these words Paul presents “original sin” and all actual human sin flowing from “original sin.” Death is a result of this sin. What does Paul mean by “death”? 20th century theologian, John Murray, carefully studies Paul’s meaning of “death” then writes, “On the question as to whether the moral and spiritual aspects of

death and their eternal consequences are comprised in the word “death”, one thing must be appreciated that in the usage of Scripture and in the conception of Paul the dissolution which consists in the separation of body and spirit and the return to dust of the former had far more significance as the epitome of the wages of sin than we are disposed to attach to it.” In other words, Paul has physical death in mind when he says, “death” as well as moral corruption and spiritual separation from God. When Paul says “death” in this text, he refers to the comprehensive biblical view of death – physical death, moral corruption and separation from God.

Not all Christians agree that all three of these elements of death are present in every text. But what we all agree on is that **the biblical definition of death most profoundly is a relational description; it is a covenantal term describing our separation from God.** C. John Collins in his book, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?* writes, “the ‘death threat’ of Genesis 2:17 should be taken to refer to what we can call ‘spiritual’ death...Adam and Eve are alienated from God and from each other: something inside them has died, the bliss they had known is gone.” Some of us here today may be spiritually dead – separated from God and estranged from one another. Whatever our views are of the origins of death, we know that we are in need of reconciliation. The reason the Bible speaks of death has everything to do with the gospel. All of us are in desperate need of Jesus reconciling us to God and to one another. Our sins have produced death separating us from God and from one another. Jesus has vanquished death towards our reconciliation.

Critics of Christianity have said that we are obsessed with death. At the center of our faith is the death of Jesus. We believe that God’s wrath for our sin was satisfied in the death of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is not only eternal life replacing the cessation of his vital functions, but also his reunion with his heavenly Father, who turned away from his Son bearing our sin. Jesus’ death is the end of our moral corruption separating us from a Holy God. Jesus’ resurrection blazes the trail for us into the heart of our heavenly Father, ending our estrangement from him, renewing God’s covenantal love toward us. The Christian faith does not resign itself to death but proclaims the gospel of death vanquished: “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” Amen.

“The Difficulty of Making the Human Race

– It’s Not Just a Natural Process”

Genesis 1:1,3; 2:7; John 1:1; Colossians 1;15-20



“You shall not surely die” the serpent

There is much that we still do not know about this world, about life, and humanity. Natural science continually considers unanswered questions just as do social scientists, theologians and anthropologists. The complexity of the human being is amazing persuading a significant number of us to consider intelligent design. In his documentary, “Expelled,” Ben Stein asks Richard Dawkins, “What do you think is the possibility that Intelligent Design might turn out to be the answer to some issues in genetics or in evolution?” Richard Dawkins says, “Well, it could come about in the following way. It could be that at some earlier time, somewhere in the universe, a civilization evolved, probably by some kind of Darwinian means, probably to a very high level of technology, and designed a form of life that they seeded onto perhaps this planet. Now, um, now that is a possibility, and an intriguing possibility. And I suppose it's possible that you might find evidence for that if you look at the details of biochemistry, molecular biology, you might find a signature of some sort of designer.” The apparent difficulty of making the human race has given rise to a variety of ideas including Dawkins’s idea that extraterrestrial life engineered the human race.

In his 2006 bestselling book, “The God Delusion,” Dawkins writes about the complexity of the human being: “Darwinian evolution by natural selection offers the greatest, most powerful explanatory scope so far discovered in the biological sciences. Darwin and his successors have shown how living creatures, with their spectacular statistical improbability and appearance of design, have evolved by slow, gradual degrees from simple beginnings. We can now safely say that the illusion of design in living creatures is just that -- an illusion.” Nevertheless, we are left with the amazing complexity of humanity, which must have evolved over a significantly long period of time through gradual degrees from simple beginnings. In other words, it’s difficult to make a human being.

The biblical narratives presenting the making of the human race focus upon a main actor, the Creator God, and so we believe the making of

the human race is supernatural. Anyone who removes God from the picture is left with merely a natural process, searching for an answer for the complex make-up of the human being. Critics of intelligent design views accuse Judaism and Christianity of inventing God inserting him into the gap to erase the difficulty in making the human race. Those of us who believe the Bible to be the words of God believe that God has revealed himself and his acts to us.

Listen to the first words of the Bible: *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* Most authors would not start with their presupposition, their fanciful invention of “God” to fill the gap. They would bury such an idea in the text. But the author of Genesis presupposes God in the first sentence of his text! This topic sentence is followed by an amazing statement of God speaking light into existence: *“And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”* The author’s purpose is primarily to introduce us to a personal God who speaks. This Creator is present exercising authority toward perfect control. The creation of light was supernatural. At one time it did not exist. Then God spoke, expressing his will that light would exist, and instantly, light existed. It’s supernatural. This statement, *“And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light,”* is the primary source for the doctrine of *ex nihilo*, God creating out of nothing.

This *ex nihilo* statement is followed by a statement of the Creator using material elements to make a complex human being: *“Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* In the making of the human race, God engaged in materials and in a process. He used carbon and he took some time. He also instilled into the human being a spiritual faculty. God, a Spirit, without a body like men, *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”* This breath of life must be spiritual not heavy, moist air inserting something material into the human body. **Not only is the breathing of the breath of life supernatural but so also is God taking carbon from the ground to form the body of the human being.** It is supernatural because God did it.

How long it took for God to complete this process is non-essential to the author’s primary message. Students of the narrative have attempted to answer the question of time by discovering what the word “day” means in

the text. A number of views are held by serious students who submit to the divine authority of the text. But the essential word in the text is “God.” Who is this God and what has he done? This would be the essential question answered in this narrative. We should never extract any word from the biblical text and we should never add our own words to it. But some words are more important than others – God being the more important in this text.

Science correspondent for the Guardian, Alak Jha, wrote in 2004, “The sophistication of the human brain is not simply the result of steady evolution, according to new research. Instead, humans are truly privileged animals with brains that have developed in a type of extraordinarily fast evolution that is unique to the species.” He cites the research of Geneticist, Bruce Lahn at the University of Chicago who said, “Simply put, evolution has been working very hard to produce us a humans... Our study offers the first genetic evidence that humans occupy a unique position in the tree of life.” Dr. Lahn's team examined the DNA of 214 genes involved in brain development in humans, macaques, rats and mice. In their research they held to the widely accepted conclusion that mutations in genes from one generation to the next sometimes give rise to new adaptations to a creature's environment. The team discovered that the human brain's genes had gone through an intense amount of evolution in a short amount of time - a process that far outstripped the evolution of the genes of other animals. “Human evolution is, in fact, a privileged process because it involves a large number of mutations in a large number of genes.” This is a step in the right direction for those who have largely used evolutionary dogma to erase distinctions between the human race and the rest of animals. Though the process is difficult requiring large spans of time and though the results are complex, we are discovering that the time required is much less than we previously thought. Also we are discovering the amazing and vast details of the complexity of the human brain not to mention the development of language, emotion and volitional capacities of the human race.

We are living in amazing times of increased knowledge and we can see steps in the right direction. For those who delete God from the text or more popularly from the natural process, it is now acknowledged that less time is required. And so it should not be difficult to concede that were a

supernatural being involved in the process how even less time would be necessary. The difficulty of making a human being need not take more time.

Four medical doctors at the Center for Aging and Developmental Biology, the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Rochester Medical Center have published in 2006 the first findings of their research of Astrocytic complexity, which they assert distinguishes the human brain from other animals, even those most closely related to the homo sapiens. Evelyn Fox Keller, Professor of the Philosophy of Science at MIT, through her research of human reproduction has regularly cautioned the communities of natural science to check their methods and language. She argues that the concept of competitive individualism on which so much evolutionary theory depends is not drawn from nature. Rather, it is a projection of human social, political, and psychological values. Focusing on assumptions within the fields of population genetics and mathematical ecology, Keller questions whether individualism necessarily means competition. Her research points to interacting organisms cooperating rather than competing. Yet, so deeply is the notion of competition embedded in these fields that Keller wonders whether such linguistic usage is symptomatic of a larger cultural problem, ideology passing as science, which makes evolutionary theory as much a prescriptive as a descriptive enterprise.” In our lifetime the integration of the sciences have forced some schools, which have operated on their own for a long time, unquestioned, like Paleontology pushing its fossil record, to interact with sociology, anthropology, theology, and psychology. One of the results is that the biblical text looks more and more relevant and accurate. Of course, there is one looming problem in the biblical text, namely the controlling presence of God, that supernatural component.

In our New Testament texts we encounter some amazing information that makes the controlling presence of God an even greater stretch for agnostics. In the opening of John’s Gospel we read: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* John uses these words to introduce Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, referring to him at first as “the Word,” connecting Jesus Christ to the God who speaks in Genesis 1.

John claims that the Word, that is, the pre-incarnate Son of God was the supernatural verbal actor in Creation. Taking all the texts together we discover that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit acted together in creation. For the skeptic, God in the text is difficult enough without mentioning the doctrine of the Trinity.

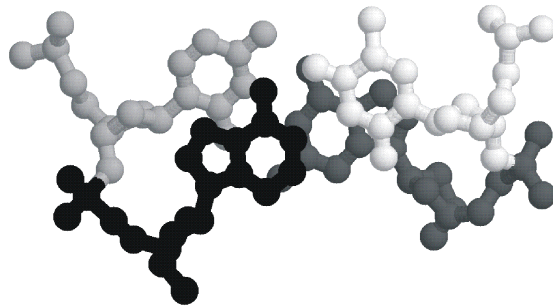
In Paul’s Epistle to the Church at Colossae, he repeats John’s words about the Son of God as Creator and Sustainer adding Jesus Christ the Son of God as the head of the church and the Reconciler of all creation. *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

As I preached this past Sunday, the gospel is at the heart of the entire biblical narrative. The gospel makes Adam, Eve and Jesus a big deal. Paul links the invisible God to creation declaring Jesus Christ to be the Creator. He claims Jesus as the Sustainer of creation, *“in him all things hold together.”*

He is the head of the church, a description of his supreme authority among the covenant people of God, who has risen from the dead so that he might be *“preeminent,”* that is, standing out among all others as superior. Not only does his resurrection make him so, but also he is superior in that he is very God of very God, the fullness of God dwelling in him. What does Jesus do with his preeminence? He reconciles to himself all creation. He has reconciled us to God and God to us. He has reconciled all things *“making peace by the blood of his cross.”*

What an amazing line of thought Paul presents! **Paul talks about creation, providence, supreme authority, resurrection and reconciliation leads to the cross!** Paul did not offer us a treatise on the origins of humanity, on the complexity of the human brain, or the difficulty in making humanity. He discusses all of these to lead us to the cross of Jesus! Not human reason but the shedding of blood makes sense of it all. Peace

has come to us not through the correction of evolutionary theory of competition corrected by a nuanced evolutionary theory of cooperation. Peace has come to us through Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the propitiation for our sins. **Not only have we sprung from a supernatural event, but we have been saved through a supernatural event.** The cross was not merely the cruelty of humanity killing its best, but it is most profoundly a supernatural event – God the Father’s wrath for human sin satisfied in the death of God the Son, our Lord Jesus. The making of the human race is difficult. The redemption of the human race is difficult indeed. But then, nothing is too difficult for God.



The Value of Common Ancestry
Acts 17: 26-28

On June 6, 2011 Christianity Today published two articles: “The Search for the Historical Adam,” and “No Adam, No Eve, No Gospel.” In the first and cover article, writer Richard N. Ostling supplies as his bi-line, “The center of the evolution debate has shifted from asking whether we came from earlier animals to whether we could have come from one man and one woman.” One of the central scientists in this shift is Francis Collins, appointed by President Obama and unanimously confirmed by the US Senate as Director of the National Institutes of Health. Francis Collins is an atheist turned evangelical Christian. His achievements in biomedical research helped him to lead the human genome research completed in 2003, the mapping of the complete sequence of several billion DNA subunits, all of the genes that determine human heredity. This research suggests that the human race did not emerge from pre-human animals as a single pair, as an “Adam” and an “Eve,” but instead the human race, sprung from an original population of approximately 10,000. What is truly amazing about this research in natural science is that there has never been a statement in evolutionary development so narrowing as this theory. Estimates of the original population have never been so small and the estimates of the time, unfolding to produce the human race as we know it, has never been so short.

Related research suggests, in opposition to the long-standing “Out-of-Africa” theories of paleontologists following the fossil record, the human race stemmed from several thousand pairs springing up independently of each other in various geographic locations scattered around the globe. As an evangelical Christian, Francis Collins has made more space for evangelicals to hold to a theistic evolution as he does.

The one biblical text that clearly stands in opposition to the suggestions, theories and conclusions of the recent genome DNA research is Acts 17: 26-28, the words of the apostle Paul: *“And God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...”* Paul spoke these words in Athens at the Acropolis, in the Areopagus, the highest court of appeals for criminal and civil cases from the Golden Age of Greece still operating under the Roman Empire. This court served as a long-standing symbol and guard of Hellenistic democracy assuring its city-states civil liberties. To this day, though in ruins, the Areopagus

symbolically stands as one of the greatest centers of civil liberties for all humanity.

At the Areopagus Paul addressed some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who were skeptical of his preaching of Jesus and the resurrection. Paul first mentions his discovery of the altar in Athens erected to “the unknown god,” and claims that he knows the identity of this god – indeed he is the Creator of everything and is the one God who exists independently of humanity. Paul then says, “*And God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 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.’*” Paul begins with the claim that humanity has sprung from one man and he concludes with the claim that humanity has sprung from the one God.

F.F. Bruce writes, “The Athenians prided themselves in having sprung from the soil of their native Attica.... So the Greeks considered themselves superior to non-Greeks, whom they called barbarians. Against such claims of racial superiority Paul asserts the unity of all men. The unity of the human race as descended from Adam is fundamental to Paul’s theology. This primal unity, impaired by sin, is restored by redemption.” The philosophers listen to Paul make this point. They even listen to him present God as the judge of humanity. But as soon as Paul mentions the resurrection, they begin to mock him.

This morning we must focus on Paul’s statement, “*God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth....*” This statement is a summary of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. In these first chapters of the Bible, we learn that Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, and that their offspring were born with the image of God. In his book “Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?” C. John Collins writes, “These features of human life that make up the image of God, being uniquely human and universally human and transmitted by procreation, strongly favor the idea that all human beings descend from the same source. The conventional alternative, some form of polygenesis...holds that God performed the special bestowal of his image in separate places of the

world.” As we share Genesis with Judaism, we also share these two doctrines in tandem with Judaism: the image of God in humanity and the common ancestry of humanity. The Mishnah, the first and abiding collection of rabbinic tradition, includes these words: “But as a single man was created...for the sake of peace among mankind, that **none should say to his fellow, ‘My father was greater than your father.’**” Again, a single man was created to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One, blessed is he; for a man stamps many coins with the one seal and they are all like one another; but the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is he, has stamped every man with the seal of the first man, yet not one of them is like his fellow.”

When the church and nations with sufficient Christian influence have historically forgotten to embrace this statement of humanity’s common source endowed with the image of God, along with its biblical conclusions, the result has been disastrous. One chilling example close to home is the atrocity of American Slavery. The distinguished Presbyterian minister, Dr. Palmer of New Orleans preached these words in the 1840’s: “It is the especial mission of the Southern churches to preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it.” Sadly, this statement was the majority view preached in Presbyterian pulpits in the 19th century. One of the Genesis texts often used to support American slavery is Genesis 9, the story of Noah getting drunk, his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth discovering their father naked and drunk in his tent. Shem and Japheth treated their father with dignity but Ham looked upon his father’s nakedness. Ham’s son was Canaan of whom Noah said as he awoke from his stupor, “Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.” Sadly, Christian ministers in favor of slavery, preached that Canaan was the father of the African tribes and so southern Americans, descendants of Japheth had the right to enslave the sons of Canaan.

This Christian travesty occurred as Ministers of the Gospel ignored Genesis 1-3 and the entirety of Paul’s commentary on Genesis – namely the image of God in all human beings, springing from Adam and Eve. In opposition to this foundational teaching of the Bible these ministers taught that some people groups are superior to others.

Another chilling example occurred in the 20th century, the century

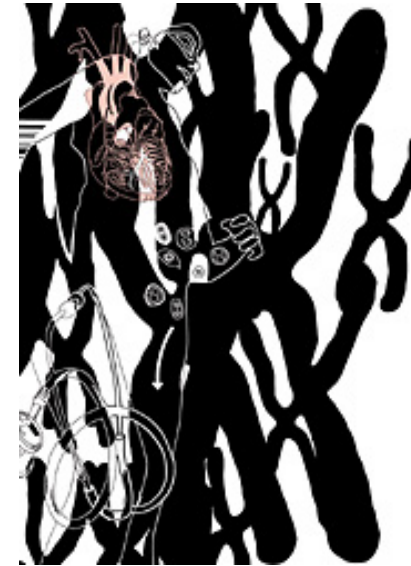
proclaimed to be the era of liberty and enlightenment. Adolf Hitler in his *Mein Kampf* wrote these words, selective of many more at greater length: “Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.... the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew..... There is only one holiest human right, and this right is at the same time the holiest obligation, to wit: to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of these beings... We, as Aryans, can conceive of the state only as the living organism of a nationality, which not only assures the preservation of its nationality, but by the development of its spiritual and ideal abilities leads it to the highest freedom.” One of the reasons Hitler was able to promote the scientific and social engineering of a superior race of humanity was that the Christian nation of Germany had forgotten that the human race stemmed from the same couple, Adam and Eve. Too many Christians had ignored the image of God in the people groups they loathed.

In recent years with the encouragement of Christians like Francis Collins, a growing number of evangelical Christians are espousing polygenesis. It is altogether possible that a number of us in this congregation may be entertaining such a view based on the genome DNA research, in attempts to be scientifically accurate. A word of warning: Do not be rash. Carefully and thoroughly integrate the doctrine of the image of God in humanity as you form your conclusions. Before you discard Paul’s statement, “*God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth,*” consider soberly what you may be opening the door of our society to practice. **There is great value in our common ancestry.**

As Christians we must not be anti-natural science. But we must insist that all of the sciences be integrated toward truth and human practice. Natural science must listen to Philosophy. All of the sciences must listen to the science of Theology. Sociology must be consulted. Anthropology must not develop in a vacuum or exclusively sip at the wells of Paleontology

Above all, the Christian must remember the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and seek to live by it. Jesus died on the cross to save some from every tongue, tribe and nation. Jesus rose from the dead to grant eternal

life to slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile. Jesus has ascended into heaven to rule over all the nations. The big deal about Adam, Eve and Jesus is that they have fixed and prominent positions in the history of God redeeming his people. The highest station in redemption belongs to Jesus, humanly a Jew and also the very Son of God. Jesus as a human being was also the promised son of Eve, who was not a Jew, but the mother of all the living. And so, Jesus stands in heaven as the one Mediator between God and humanity. He stands for all of us. We not only enjoy a common ancestry in Adam and Eve but also a common and great salvation in Jesus Christ, friend of sinners.



Genome drawing, Joel Lardner

What Jesus Believed About Adam and Eve
Genesis 1:26-27; 2: 18-25; Matthew 19:3-9

On this fourth Sunday of Advent I conclude our sermon series, “What’s the Big Deal about Adam, Eve and Jesus?” with this sermon titled, “What Jesus Believed about Adam and Eve.” In this series I have intentionally tried to deepen the content toward our applying Scripture to what we are discovering in the fields of natural science. I have also attempted to increase our skills in interpreting the biblical text. In this fourth sermon I must admit that I worked to sharpen my hermeneutical skills and I have relied heavily upon the work of C. John Collins published in Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? published this year by Crossway. Jack Collins earned his PhD in Hebrew Linguistics at the University of Liverpool and he is also a graduate of MIT. 20 years ago he planted a PCA congregation in our presbytery and he is now professor of Old Testament at the PCA’s Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

Without his help, I would have never thought of his argument from Matthew 19, a text I have often used to provide pastoral counsel to people struggling in difficult marriages. His insight is a good example for all of us in how to glean truth from any text, understanding its relationship to other texts, without doing any violence to the main point of the text. Before we dive in to what I consider to be a challenge for any of us, let me answer the question: “What’s the Big Deal about Adam, Eve and Jesus?” The Advent story is about the Son of God taking on human flesh, joining the race of Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, God came to them, cursing the serpent then explaining to Adam and to Eve how their lives would change as the common curse pervaded his creation including their very persons and relationship to each other as a married couple. He clothed their nakedness and he promised a champion who would come through Eve, a man who would crush the serpent’s head. Genesis 3:15 is what we call the “seed of the gospel” preached to Eve and to her family. The gospel makes Adam, Eve and Jesus a big deal.

The burden of proof is upon anyone who claims that the Genesis text or the Gospel text is myth. A responsible reading of Moses and Matthew has led many a competent student to conclude that Adam and Eve were actual individual human beings who were joined together in matrimony. It is credible to take the view that Jesus considered Adam and Eve to be actual persons who lived as fully developed human beings with brains roughly the

same size as our impressive gray matter masses today. By the way it was in the field of fiction that gray matter was first used to describe brain cells. Agatha Christie first quoted the fictional Belgian detective Hercule Poirot in regard to his gray matter: “This affair must be unraveled from within.’ He tapped his forehead. “These little grey cells. It is “up to them“-as you say over here.” So, let us all use our little grey cells to understand Jesus’ view of Adam and Eve.

The Pharisees, a conservative party in Judaism asked Jesus if he believed that it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. By “lawful” they meant according to God’s law written by Moses. Jesus’ answer is striking as he quotes from Genesis 1 and then immediately from Genesis 2 as if these two texts are complementary, as if they are one and the same text. Perhaps you have not thought much about the relationship of Genesis 1 to Genesis 2. Not a few students of the Bible and antagonists of the Bible have given this much thought. It is popular today to consider Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 as separate and opposing accounts of creation. But it is truly quite difficult to divide the two. **The biblical text often repeats itself.** Genesis 1 presents God creating humanity at the culmination of his creation. Genesis 2 focuses upon humanity as the chief of God’s creation placing the human race as God’s stewards of his creation. The author of Genesis did not slap together two different creation myths so that the reader might choose one over the other to suit his particular view of the origins of humanity. There is no textual indication that God in Genesis 1 “made” a lesser human being, which he then, in Genesis 2 enhanced with some evolutionary superiority, like a larger brain. Jesus quotes from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 as if they are one text.

The Pharisees, who had the whole of Genesis, not to mention the whole of the Five Books of Moses memorized, would have agreed with Jesus. Their second question exposes where they were having difficulty in understanding the whole of Moses’ writings hanging together: **(7) They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”** They accept what Jesus says about Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, that God created humanity, male and female, joining together the first man and woman in marriage, with the purpose of unity, not divorce. Their difficulty in keeping the larger text together is that in Deuteronomy 24 toward the end of the Pentateuch, Moses makes provision

for divorce. Jesus' response in a nutshell is this: The text is unified in its message. The problem is not the text, or God but the problem is broken humanity, human sin, the hardness of hearts. The allowance for divorce has everything to do with God's mercy to aid humanity in living in a cursed world fraught with human sin.

The Pharisees were most likely trying to trap Jesus, but that should not cause us to conclude that they were not concerned about real people embroiled in bad marriages. We can be assured that the Pharisees, like Jesus, were concerned about the brokenness of marriage in their day. Roman law allowed the husband and the husband alone to divorce his wife for no reason leaving her destitute. This Roman way of doing things was invading the Jewish community protected by God's laws. In Genesis 1, humanity made in the image of God had everything necessary, including gray matter, to live peaceably in the bonds of holy matrimony. In Genesis 2 God joined Adam and Eve together in marriage declaring that this joining was the very act of God and no one should break it.

C. John Collins writes, "This conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees shows that Jesus viewed the creation account of Genesis 1-2 as setting the ideal for a properly functioning marriage for all human beings; this is how it was intended to be 'from the beginning.' The family legislation of Deuteronomy, on the other hand, does not set the ethical norm but has another function, namely that of preserving civility in Israel: a function that has become necessary by some change of circumstances since 'the beginning.' The obvious candidate for make that change - indeed, the only one - is the sin of Adam and Eve, with its consequence for all human beings." The glaring text between Genesis 1-2 and Deuteronomy is Genesis 3 complete with God's words to Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." These words of God indicate the fallen and ongoing struggle between the woman and the man in the marital relationship.

It is difficult to read these texts together then conclude that Jesus and Moses considered Adam and Eve to be a literary image for humanity rather than the first parents of the human race. One of the more compelling reasons I believe so is that the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees is about a real institution in which actual human beings join together seeking marital bliss though embroiled in the consequence of the

common curse. **When I suffer marital strife I often remember Adam and Eve who also struggled in their marriage** - Eve seeking to master her husband and Adam struggling to rule his wife. Jesus, who never married, seemed to understand this and the apostle Paul, who most likely never married also understood it, moving him to instruct Christian women to submit to their husbands and instructing Christian men to love their wives "as Christ loved the church and gave his life for her." All of this makes Adam, Eve and Jesus a big deal.

It should come as no surprise to us that in our present community as we have largely denied that Adam and Eve were actual human beings, ignoring God's instructions of them toward holy living, that marriage is no longer valued among the emerging generations. With divorce running rampant in our community as we ignore Jesus' teaching about marriage from the beginning, it should be no surprise that our children would be clueless as to how marriage could be fruitful and blissful, a true institution of unity. With the deletion of Adam and Eve as real human beings from the text has also come the ignoring of everything God said to them joining them together in marriage. What do we expect our children to do? It is quite unfair for the church today to shake its fingers at our children who decide to cohabit and propagate prior to exchanging vows at the altar when we have not taught them the lessons God gave to our first parents. When Mom and Dad divorce telling their children, "We can't live together as husband and wife but we are still friends," a large number of smart children are going to say, "Then, we will forgo the sufferings of marriage and just be friends." But this is not how God set up the human race from the beginning.

From the beginning, God made humanity male and female. He took the first pair and joined them together in marriage. Having done so, God says, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*" In other words, this institution of marriage is an abiding institution for the generations to come. No one must get married to be a fully functioning human being, but if a man desires to join himself to a woman, then he must "hold fast to his wife." In doing so, the two of them become "one flesh," that is a married unit. Marriage means "joined together," it means "union." This marital relationship takes precedence over all other human relationships for the two who enter it.

The gospel makes Adam, Eve and Jesus a big deal and the gospel makes marriage a big deal. The gospel is that message of God reconciling us to each other through Jesus Christ. God allows divorce when a spouse is unable or unwilling to forgive his/her spouse who has broken the marital bond through adultery. The gospel is powerful in that it allows a spouse to forgive his/her spouse who has made a mockery of the marriage. The gospel also is powerful in preserving a marriage, preventing both spouses from falling into adultery. By God's grace, Adam and Eve, expelled from Eden and hurled into a world fraught with every conceivable evil escalating, were able to stay in their marriage. By God's grace Noah and his wife survived their cruise through the deluge. By God's grace Abraham and Sarah survived the fiasco they made of their marriage. The biblical narrative does not include any markers indicating that Abraham and Sarah were actual human beings married to one another but that Noah and his wife or Adam and Eve were fictional characters in an ancient myth. The biblical narrative does not hint that Jesus is a literary invention, the cosmic Christ, the message of love so that we might love each other. Rather, the biblical narrative presents Jesus as an actual and true human being who walked upon the earth. He actually died and he actually rose from the dead. The biblical narrative without interruption unfolds as the story of God redeeming his people, working graciously in the lives of individuals and graciously working to preserve the institution of marriage toward the building of the city of God.

Genesis 1: 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them....**2:18** Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." **19** Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. **20** The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of

the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. **21** So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. **22** And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. **25** And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Matthew 19: 3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" **4** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? **6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." **7** They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" **8** He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. **9** And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."



The Beaverton Religion Forum

No one ever converted to Christianity because they lost the argument.”

Phillip Yancey in “Rumors of Another World”

The Religion Forum is a monthly gathering of atheists, Muslims, and Christians making space for presentations and discussions of differing world views in the spirit of education and kind apologetics. The coordinators are Bernie Dehler of the Westside Science & Religion Discussion Group, Sylvia Benner of the Center for Inquiry Portland, Mohammed Rahman of the Portland Islamic Center, and Nathan Lewis, Pastor of Evergreen Presbyterian Church.

The leaders of these groups are interested in presenting their world views in clear contrast to differing world views all the while extending respect and kindness to each other. The Religion Forum is not so interested in reducing all world views to commonly shared elements as if all religions and ideologies are essentially the same. Participants are encouraged to learn from all presenters and to contribute to the making of space for neighborly interaction.

Recent topics include: Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead? Do You Celebrate Halloween? Must You Believe in God to Celebrate Thanksgiving Day? Did Jesus Have No Biological Father? What is Your View of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict? Is There a Conflict between Modern Science and Religion? Upcoming Topics = Death: The Final Frontier – Is There Life After Death? Was Jesus Perfect? Is There Any Evidence that God Exists?

Check the postings evergreenpca.com for information about the next meeting.

*“You can tell you’ve created God in your own image
when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”*

Anne Lamott in “Grace (Eventually)”