

Sin, II

We have some tasks before us. The first task should be grading the quiz.

The answers are from Hoekema, pages 133 to 167. These answers are true or false according to the writer, not according to you or me. I promise to tell you when I disagree with him and I do here and there on this quiz, but that is the second step. The first step is to answer the questions according to his ideas—that establishes a measure of objectivity.

1. After the Fall, God passed sentence upon all three parties directly involved in the Fall: the serpent, woman, and man. True according to Hoekema, found on page 134.

You may wonder from a careful reading of Hoekema if this question is tricky in light of Hoekema's distinction between sentence and curse, reserving curse for serpent and the creation, but not using it of Adam and Eve. I think this is true, but would not the curse be a sentence in itself? Would not sentence be the bigger category of which curse is a subset? Is it not the point to make our first parents immune from the word, "curse," but not to make the rest immune from the word, "sentence"?

2. Already in Genesis 3 we see the promise of the coming redeemer. True, found on page 135. How indicative of the grace of God. No sooner had our first parents sinned than God is on the scene in holiness, judgment, and confrontation, but shortly thereafter He is present in mercy and grace and in making the promise of the Redeemer of the world. Already in the Garden of Eden surely God is loving and kind.

3. Adam and Eve had not worked before the Fall. Work was a consequence of the Fall. False, found on page 137. There was work in the beginning. There will be work, not in the sense of bothersome toil, but in the sense of meaningful activity, in the new earth underneath the new Heaven. As we think of the goals of our lives, the goal should not be retirement in the sense of totally occupying ourselves with leisure and not serving in the church anymore. One can change one's work and I have known people who retired to do full-time church work or part-time church work, depending on their energy. Work was not a curse. The nature of work changed after the Fall, but God made us to be involved meaningfully for His glory.

4. Although only thorns and thistles are specifically mentioned, we are to understand them as standing for natural disasters, disease germs and disease-spreading insects. True according to Hoekema, found on page 137. I agree. Let us be realistic: the whole thing is set within the Garden and in that context, we cannot expect encyclopedic comprehensiveness, so in this way they are representative of greater disasters and so forth that are visited upon humankind and the world.

5. Adam and Eve would have died even if the Fall had never occurred. False, found on page 138. Human death was a consequence of the Fall, according to Romans 5:12, which we will look at shortly, Lord willing.

6. If fallen human beings had continued to eat of the Tree of Life, they would have lived forever in sin-torn bodies. True, found on page 140. In that respect, it is good of God to exclude them from the Garden after the Fall. The Tree of Life, of course, reappears in Revelation 22, in the last chapter of the Bible. The last two chapters of the Bible are the mirror image of the first three in that the curse is removed, again we have the Tree of Life, and so forth. This time not in a garden but in a city, as indicative of the population growth and even the redeeming work of God.

7. All religions recognize that there is something wrong with the moral nature of humanity. True, found on page 141. I guess one could, if one pressed it, find some cults that think we are not sinful whatsoever, but the major religions of the world, though defining sin in different ways, all recognize something is wrong with us.

8. Although Barth and Brunner rejected the doctrine of original sin, Rudolf Bultmann accepted it. False, found on pages 143-144. Bultmann was much more radical than Barth and Brunner. He hardly accepted any basic doctrine of the Christian faith. He rather reinterpreted them in terms of expedient encounter. I have said before if you have Calvin in one of these questions and are unsure, err on the side of making him look good. If you have Bultmann, you can go the other way and you are probably going to get it right. He did not believe a whole lot. In fact the secular existentialists of this day in Germany said to him, "Rudy, demythologize one more element and we are on the same camp." He refused to demythologize God—to say that the basic concept of God was a myth as well—so I will give him credit for that. One of his disciples did this, which seemed to be a consistent outworking of his own philosophy/theology.

9. It is unimportant whether one holds to a doctrine of original sin as long as one acknowledges actual sin. False, found on page 146. It is a problem even in evangelical Christianity that there is hardly a mention of original sin. Actual sin is important—I will say something about that in a moment. In Paul's unfolding of Romans, trying to put the Romans 5 passage in its context he treats actual sin first and then original sin. If you ask me what place original sin should have in the life of the church, I would show in the context of Romans it pertains to Christian discipleship and not to evangelism per se. That is the way Romans uses it, but both are important. I am thankful that a couple of world wars and other major skirmishes have taught modern people that we are sinners and that there is such a thing as actual sin. I think of the liberal theologian Langdon Gilkey who went and spent time at a concentration camp for prisoners. He went in with a very optimistic, rosy view of humanity. He came out totally disillusioned, and because of his experience he changed his view of human beings. He said, "Surely if ever there were a place where people would work together," with his original view of human beings, "this is it." He said, "They turned on each other like dogs." It was incredible. It brought out the worst in them and he rejected his philosophy. I wish in the beginning he had believed the Bible and affirmed that we were sinners, but at least through the school of hard knocks he ended up saying that we are deficient. But he does not believe in original sin and regards Genesis 3 as mythological as so many modern theologians do. It is important to hold to both original and actual sin.

10. Original sin includes both guilt and pollution. True, found on page 148.

11. Pollution is a judicial or legal concept describing one's relationship to the law. False, found on page 148—that is a definition of guilt. Pollution is a moral concept describing the ruinous effects of sin on our lives. Guilt is the legal concept.

12. Original guilt means that we deserve condemnation because Adam, our head and representative, broke God's law. True, found on page 148.

13. We should distinguish between two aspects of original pollution: pervasive depravity and spiritual inability. True, according to Hoekema page 150. I agree.

14. Pervasive depravity means that by nature fallen human beings do not love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. It is true, found on page 150. Depravity pervades their beings and lives and keeps

them from loving God as they ought, which is His due; He deserves the total love of His creatures because of who He is.

15. Pervasive depravity means that unregenerate people are unable to do anything good or helpful to others. False, found on page 150. If the sentence had stopped after good you might have been perplexed to know whether I mean civic good or a kind of a common notion of good, like “she is a good woman” or “he is a good man,” as we use those expressions. But when it says, “or helpful to others,” of course it makes the question false. Unsaved people are unable to do anything good in terms of meriting God’s favor. They cannot do moral good, but they can do civic good indeed.

16. Spiritual inability means that unregenerate people are unable on their own to turn to God in repentance and faith. True, found on page 152. It is easy to define it, but much more difficult to work carefully with the Bible to see what it teaches on this matter. It is an important thing to ask what an unsaved person is able to do to save him or herself. I hope to tackle that later this evening or maybe the beginning of our next class.

17. Pelagius accounted for the universality of sin by pointing to the bad example Adam set for his descendants. True, found on page 155. It is a rather remarkable coincidence that we follow Adam’s bad example. Pelagius denied, in effect, original sin and collapsed it into actual sin. Adam is a bad example, but he is much more than that.

18. According to Pelagius, grace was in the inward working influence of the Holy Spirit inclining our wills to the good. False, found on page 155. That is at least a partial biblical definition of saving grace, in my estimation. But for Pelagius, grace was purely external, our minds were grace. Free will is part of grace, law and Christ’s example, which is another subset of law; these are grace according to Pelagius. These are not grace according to the Bible. Grace is something supernatural and external that comes and liberates us from our sins.

19. According to mediate imputation, the guilt of Adam’s sin is imputed to us directly. False, found on pages 156-157. I will say this right away. If you find it confusing to try to sort out mediate and immediate imputation, do not feel bad. It simply means you have a logical mind. My conclusion, after thinking about this for some years now, is that mediate imputation is illogical. It puts things out of order and it does not make sense. So do not feel bad. You are smarter than you thought you were. To distinguish between immediate, which means direct, and mediate, which means indirect, imputation, the key is the guilt of Adam’s sin. Is the guilt of Adam’s sin directly imputed or indirectly? If it is directly imputed, it is immediate imputation. If it is indirectly, it is mediate imputation. If you keep a hold on that you can kind of work it out. So mediate imputation holds that the corruption or pollution of Adam’s sin is directly imputed and the guilt is only indirectly imputed and immediate imputation holds the other way: the guilt is directly imputed and the corruption is indirectly imputed. I will define the things and work with the views as we go through this lesson.

20. Realism holds that although we were not present in the Garden of Eden, we are guilty of Adam’s sin because Adam, our representative, fell. False, found on page 158. That would be the representative view, the federal headship view, or representationalism, which are all synonyms. Realism holds we were present in the Garden. Perhaps the key to remembering this is that realism holds we were really there. We were actually there in one sense or other. We will define that in a few moments more carefully. Remember: the purpose of the reading is to give you the theological and historical background that I need to work with the biblical passages and allow you to sift the views. If you have never heard of the

views before, we would not get very far. So I do not expect you to have mastered all this yet, but I hope at least the word “realism” does not sound totally foreign to you.

21. Hoekema rejects realism in favor of immediate imputation. False, found on page 160. I wish he did because he mixes the two. It is not tricky; he mixes them. He says that he tries to hold them both together. Now the concepts are difficult, I understand, but he makes a mongrel that does not help us a bit.

22. According to immediate imputation, Adam was a representative head of the human race but not the natural head. False, found on page 161. He is both. Everybody acknowledges, or should, that he is the natural head. What the representative view does is say that that natural headship is not the way to explain original sin. It does not deny that he was in fact the natural head.

23. According to immediate imputation, there is a direct imputation of Adam’s guilt and an indirect transmission of corruption. True, found on page 162.

24. When Paul says in Romans 5:12, “Because all sinned,” he refers to actual sin not original sin. That is false, found on page 163. False; “Because all sinned” refers to original sin and not actual sin.

Last time we thought about this a little bit. We set Romans 5:12-21, the most important original sin passage in the Bible, in the bigger context of Romans in this way. Let me bring to your attention one fact and mention one other thing. First, in its context in Romans, Romans 5:12-21 is primarily about justification. It is not chiefly about original sin. It has a positive purpose of showing that the basis of justification, which was given in Romans 3:24-26 as Christ’s work understood as a redemption and propitiation of God’s wrath, is also conceived here in His work as “one act of righteousness,” as Paul calls it. This is the basis of justification viewed positively. If propitiation views the basis of justification negatively, the turning away of God’s wrath, then here in chapter 5 he portrays the basis of justification positively, as Christ procuring righteousness for us in His one act of righteousness in dying on the cross. I am going to say it again: the passage is about justification primarily and it is about original sin secondarily.

Second, this outline demonstrates the place that original sin occupies in Paul’s thought. Paul does not begin with original sin. He begins with actual sin. So in answer to the question, “Should I talk about the Garden of Eden in evangelism? Should I fight over what the serpent was?” No, avoid that. Do not make problems for yourself. Do not lie; if somebody asks you whether you believe Adam was an historical person, say, “Yes.” The Lord Jesus Christ believed he was a historical person as well as the apostles. He is presented that way in Genesis, but original sin, in its context in Romans, has to do with discipleship and not with the Gospel per se. The Gospel points to the fact that we have sinned against God’s law, that God is a holy God and we have offended Him in our actual lives with transgressions in thought, word, and deed as we said last time. Original sin is a more ultimate question. It is like this: somebody comes to the Lord saying, “I am guilty because of my sins but is that the Bible’s ultimate answer to that question? Why am I sinner in the first place? Did God make us as sinners?” Of course that is not acceptable, so the discussion of original sin is more of an ultimate one concerning how we became sinners in the first place. The Bible works like that in a number of areas. When it deals with salvation, you have a series of legitimate answers to the question, “Why am I saved?” I am saved because I believe the Gospel. That is a valid biblical answer. I am saved because in God’s grace He sent somebody to present the Gospel to me. Good answer. Is that the ultimate reason why we are saved? No. Even on that one we can go further back. In terms of logic and priority we would give the glory to God, unlike Pelagius, and see the Holy Spirit working in us even that we might believe. But we can go further back than that and say that

ultimately we are saved not because we believed, but because the Son of God did something for us in the first century. His work is the basis of our salvation, as our Romans outline indicates, and not our faith. Our faith does save because it is faith in the work of Christ. Having a more ultimate answer does not make illegitimate the less ultimate answer. It is an important point because we think ultimate things somehow cancel out less-than-ultimate realities. Because they do not, faith is important. Is that the ultimate biblical answer as to why people are saved—because of what Jesus did? The answer is no, for we go back into the mysterious realm of the biblical teaching concerning the time before the creation of the world and the mysterious eternal election of God. There the Bible says that ultimately we are saved because of God's will and His grace granted to us in Christ Jesus before creation. Does that cancel out those other more immediate responses? It does not. They all fit together in God's plan. So the fact that what Adam did in the Garden of Eden is the ultimate reason why we are sinners does not make illegitimate the Bible's answer that our actual sins are condemnable. Another way to test this would be to study the judgment passages. If you study them, you will notice original sin is never said to be why people are condemned. Neither is never hearing the Gospel. It is true that the only remedy is the Gospel because they do not believe in Christ. That is the only remedy, but that is not what is mentioned in those passages. In the judgment passages people get what they want—they want justice and they get justice. They are condemned for their thoughts, words, and deeds that are contrary to the will of God and God justly condemns them for what they have done. Thank God that through His Son we do not get justice in terms of what our sins deserve; we do get justice because Christ's saving work is propitiation, as we said last time.

So I've said two things: first, Romans 5:12-19 is primarily about justification and secondarily about original sin. Second, the original sin passage follows his longer discussion of actual sin. Both must be held together. I deplore the modern attempt to deny original sin. I am thankful they do talk about actual sin now—that is definitely progress from the early decades of this century in which the optimistic liberalism denied that we were sinners. History has pretty much cured that view although the New Agers sound like that again; it is ridiculously inconsistent with life. I deplore the modern tendency to affirm actual sin and deny original sin and I lament evangelical pastors who very rarely talk about original sin. They are doing less than a complete job of teaching the whole counsel of God.

Let us work now with Romans 5:12-19. Verse 12 poses the problem for us. It says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned." The syntax is incomplete; Paul does not complete his thought. NIV indicates this with a dash. The Greek New Testament does something like that as well. I guess I would say it this way: God in his providence led Paul to not complete his thought. He started to go in a particular line of reasoning, but he broke it off in the middle, I would say in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I am surely not going to criticize holy writ. Paul picks it up again later on for the sake of our understanding—of course you do understand "the one man" is Adam. I will just fill it in for fun. I am not trying to teach any radical theology here, but if Paul had completed the thought, it would go something like this based on verses 18 and 19 below: Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin and in this way death came to all men because all sinned, *so also*—that is how he does it later on—through one man, Jesus Christ, and His obedience or righteousness, there came eternal life to all men. The meaning is to all who believe in Him. Paul would finish it by speaking on the other side of the ledger of Christ over against Adam, of Christ's righteousness over against Adam's sin and of life over against death. Verse 12 says: "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned." The problem of the doctrine of original sin is this: how do we relate the sin of the one man, Adam, to the sin of all at the end of verse 12? One man sinned, all sinned. How do we relate these two things? How is Adam's sin the sin of all? Verses 13 and 14 then explain, in some sense, verse 12. These verses are difficult. In fact, I do not understand every aspect of

them as I would like to. I will not fool you, but I understand the basic thrust and one very important part of them that becomes a test later on for original sin.

The reason I say verses 13 and 14 explain verse 12 is because of the word “for.” Verse 13a says, “For before the law was given”—surely the law of Moses, because of verse 14—“sin was in the world.” Sure, because of the sin of Adam. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. I want to retract my comment in verse 13 about sin being in the world because of Adam. Paul may be speaking of something different there. Sin is not taken into account where there is no law. This is a difficult expression indeed. We cannot press it literally and define law in the same way we just did in the beginning of verse 13—as the law of Moses—otherwise you would say the sins of the people in between the time of Adam and Moses were not taken into account. That does not agree with the early chapters of Genesis, especially 6 through 9, which talk about the flood—God’s response to terrible human sinfulness. That does not agree with the early chapters of Romans that point to people’s actual sins without the law, from 1:18 through the middle of chapter 2. My own understanding, which I am not positive of, is this: it is an unstated comparison that works like this: sin is not taken into account when there is no law as it is taken into account when there is a law. That is, the law makes sin visible as the well-defined and terrible thing that it really is. In any case, verse 14 tells us, “Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those”—now very literally it reads—“even over the ones who did not sin in the likeness of the transgression of Adam who is a type of the coming one.” The NIV has explained it, and I think correctly, when it says, “even over those who did not sin by breaking a command as did Adam.” What is the similarity between the time of Adam and the time of Moses? In both cases we have a direct, divinely revealed prohibition, mainly the prohibition in the Garden of Eden not to eat from the forbidden fruit and certainly the prohibition written with the finger of God on tablets of stone, the ten holy words of God, the Commandments. In between we do not have quite the same thing. We have the preaching of Noah; it is not absolutely different. But I believe the sense is that these two times, the edenic situation and the mosaic situation, are alike in having expressed prohibitions from the mouth of God in the former case and from the hand of God in the latter case. In between times we do not have quite the same thing. We could account for sin in between, but apparently the thought of 14 is that we could not account for death reigning and ruling. There is personification of the law and of sin already beginning in verse 12—they sneak into the world; they are intruders. And as soon as they get in, in verse 13, they are also usurpers. They not only push their way into God’s good world, but they become tyrants lording over mankind, which is a terrible derangement of the original creation situation. So my suggestion is that the sins of the people in between the time of Adam and Moses are sufficient to account for even their own judgment at the hands of God, but not sufficient in Paul’s reasoning to account for death reigning and ruling—and lording it over them. I do want you to notice the important expression at the end of 14, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command as did Adam. We will return to that one. So my thought is that 13 and 14 explain verse 12 further in that they appeal to Adam’s sin as the reason for the rule—the dominion of sin in the time between Adam and the time of Moses. I understand the verses are difficult, especially the last clause in verse 13, but that is the best I can do. I am sure that 13 and 14 are designed to explain verse 12; I am sure of that, and I am sure we understand the end of 14, which speaks of people who did not sin in the same way that Adam did. That becomes very important because it is contrary to some of those views of original sin. Realism, for example, says that if we were really in Adam’s loins, then how is it possible that we did not sin in exactly the way that he did? We would have sinned exactly the way he did. There is no possibility of a different way of us sinning—if we were really in him.

I cited the flood and the sinners at the time of the flood as an example of God’s judgment of sin in between the time of Adam and Moses, and rightly so. How were their sins shown? How were they taken into account if they did not sin by breaking an expressed command? Romans 1-2 answer the question for

us: in chapter 1 there is revelation of God in creation; they sinned against it—they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. I am not saying those chapters only pertain to the time of Noah. I am saying the data in those chapters, which speak of human beings sinning apart from the written law, which begins in the middle of Romans 2, pertain to that time, but I am not limiting them to that time. It especially pertains to that time in this discussion, that is, God revealed Himself in the things that He had made, in His handiwork and people. Instead of acknowledging Him as God and being thankful, they suppressed that truth and engaged in idolatry and homosexuality. Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of terrible idolatry. In Genesis 6 it says, “Every thought and intention of man’s heart was only evil continually.” “The law of God was written on the heart” according to Romans 2:14-15. People sinned against this internal barometer of right and wrong, so Romans itself accounts for people sinning apart from the written law and for people being condemnable because of it. But the written law makes sin all the worse and that is why the order of Romans 2, the second half of that chapter, when Paul brings the Jews to their knees before God as culpable, he has got the world by the tail. Everybody is a sinner. If the covenant people are condemned, then certainly the pagans are condemned. The covenant people are thrice condemned by the law in creation, by the law on the heart, and by the law written on the tablets of stone.

If the first Adam’s, according to some of the Calvinistic views of original sin, action was imputed to the whole human race by God so that all of us are born sinners, then why did it not work like that for the second Adam? In fact, why is His righteousness not imputed automatically to everyone? Instead, why is there the necessity of persons believing unto salvation? The answer lies in the nature of the correlation between the two Adams and their races. I am going to argue for a fundamental underlying similarity but also acknowledge that it is not an equation in every detail. I want to argue for similarity when the passage gives it and allow for dissimilarity when it does not. It is a very good question and that very thing has led some to conclude that everybody is saved based upon Romans 5:18-19.

The end of verse 14 introduces a very important concept: Adam was a type of Christ. Here he introduces the concept of typology. The Old Testament is predictive in at least a couple of senses. The Old Testament predicts in word—in terms of predictive prophecy. It also predicts in terms of action—individuals, institutions, and events are predictive of the coming Messiah. The Exodus is an event that predicts Christ. The offices of prophet, priest, and king predict ultimately the one who would hold all three offices in His person. Here Paul explicitly labels Adam as a type of the one who was to come. So maybe now we are going to get the completion of that fracture syntax from verse 12. Maybe now Paul is going to tell us how Adam and Christ are alike. As a matter of fact, for three verses he tells us how they are not alike and we will look at these in the next lesson.