

JEHOVAH'S DECLARATION, BEHOLD THE MAN IS BECOME AS ONE OF US, CONSIDERED

Ge 3:22 And the Lord God said, Be/told the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

In the three first chapters of Genesis, we have an account of the rise and ruin of the world, and of all human nature. The first chapter gives us a compendious narration of the creation of the universe, in that gradual procedure, which the Former of all things was pleased to take therein; and particularly of the formation of man, the chief of all God's works in this lower world. The second chapter informs us of that happiness which man enjoyed, during his continuance in a state of innocence; namely, that he was the favourite of heaven; lord of this lower world; had all creatures in subjection to him; was blessed with the enjoyment of all the conveniences and delights of nature, being placed in the most pleasant and fruitful spot in all the globe: where he had a large knowledge of God, and much communion with him. Nevertheless, man, being in honour, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish: for in this third chapter we hear of his defection from God, and we are told who was the principal instrument of it; by what artful methods he effected it; as also the dreadful consequences which followed the arraignment, conviction, and condemnation of the several parties concerned in this grand rebellion; and the sentence passed on each of them by God, the Judge of all. The account of which is continued almost to the words which I have read; which were spoken by God himself, and respect his fallen creature, man; in which may be observed these two things;

I. A declaration, either of man's present, or of his past condition.

II. A prevention of his eating of the tree of life.

I. Here is a declaration made by Jehovah himself, either of man's present, or of his past condition. And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us. In which may be considered, 1. The person speaking, the Lord God. 2. The persons spoken to, to whom the man is said to be like; or, who are the Us, here mentioned. 3. The persons spoken of, the man or the Adam. 4. The matter contained herein, and the manner in which it was delivered.

1. It may be proper to consider, who it is that speaks these words; and we are told that it is Jehovah Eloim, the Lord God. And the Lord God said. By whom

I understand, the second Person in the Trinity, the promised Messiah; who continues speaking from verse 8. This was the sense of the ancient Jewish church; as is manifest from their Targums, or paraphrases on this book. Verse 8, is thus paraphrased by Onkelos. And they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God, &c. as it is also by Jonathan ben Uzziel. Verse 9th by the Jerusalem Targum, thus, And the Word of the Lord God called unto Adam, &c. As is verse 10th, both by Onkelos and Jonathan, after this manner: And he said, I heard the voice of thy Word in the garden, &c. Now this was no other than the same person whom the Evangelist John, in the beginning of his gospel calls the Word; of whom he says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And thus the Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words of our text: And the Word of the Lord God said, Behold the man which thou hast created, &c. Besides, the person here speaking, appears in such character, and performs such offices, as manifestly discovers him to be the Messiah; who here gives a specimen of all his three offices of King, Prophet, and Priest. He acted the part of a Judge, in arraiging his creature man at his bar; proceeding in a legal way against him; convicting him of his treason, and then passing sentence upon him: which is one branch of Christ's Kingly office: For the Father Judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He acted the part of a Prophet, in the discovery he made of life and salvation to fallen man, through the promised seed: and who so proper a person to do this, as the Son of God; who was privy to all God's counsels and resolutions concerning it? by whom it was to be effected, and who was to be the great Prophet in Israel, by whom Grace and Truth were to come. He also acted the part of a Priest, in making coats of skins and clothing Adam and his wife with them. These were the skins of slain beasts, which, very probably, were slain in sacrifice, and were typical of Christ, the great sacrifice; who, as the great High Priest, made reconciliation for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; in which robe of his he enwraps all his people.

Moreover, I make no doubt, but this glorious person, appeared in a human form, to our first parents in Eden; and there brought them the messages of grace: for, not to insist upon the audible voice they heard, and the interlocutory discourse which passed between them; why may it not be supposed that he appeared in a human form, to our first parents in the garden, as a prelude of his future incarnation; and for the confirmation of their faith in it, as well as he did to Abraham in the plains of Mamre; and to Jacob, when as a man, he wrestled with him, until break of day; and as well as to many others? And, perhaps, it may be a rule which will admit but of few, if

any, exceptions, that wherever, in the Old Testament, we read of God, speaking with an audible and articulate voice, or appearing in any visible form, that the Son of God, the promised Messiah, is there intended; and it may be, our Lord has respect to this, when he says to the Jews, speaking of his Father, Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. {[Joh 5:7](#)} And, indeed, who so proper to speak, or visibly to appear, when there was any necessity for it, as the Word, who was to be made flesh, and dwell among us. From hence may be observed, .

1st. The existence of Christ before his incarnation. The followers of Socinus deny this: and assert, that he did not exist before his taking flesh of the virgin. But this truth appears from many undeniable instances. He existed in the times of Moses, and the Prophets; was before Abraham; as he himself says, Before Abraham was, I am. {[Joh 8:58](#)} He existed in the beginning of all things; for, In the beginning was the Word. Nay, he was before all things: and by him all things consist.

2dly. The true and proper Deity of Christ. That the person here speaking, is truly and properly God, is manifest from that awe and dread of his majesty, which fell upon our first parents: from his perfect knowledge of Adam's case, and of the condition which he had brought himself and his posterity into; the authority which he had exercised in the arraignment and trial of man; the discovery he made of the way of life and salvation, by the seed of the woman, which before was a secret hid in God's heart from everlasting; to all which may be added, that he is expressly called Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God, in the words of our text; which is a name that belongs to none but the most High God. See [Ps 83:18](#).

3dly. That what is said in those words, Behold, the man is become as one of us, whatever is meant by them, (which we shall hereafter enquire into) is certainly true; seeing it is the Lord God who says it: as also, that the prevention of man, from eating of the tree of life, mentioned in the latter part of the verse, was for man's good, and not his hurt: seeing it is the Lord God, who brought the message of grace unto him, and clothed him and his wife with coats of skins, who prevented it.

2. The persons spoken to, are next to be enquired after; or who are intended by the Us, to one of whom the man is said to be like. And,

1st. Some Jewish interpreters, who are also followed by some Christians, say, that these words are spoken Regio more, after the manner of kings, who in all their edicts and proclamations use the plural number. But this aulic way of speaking, did not obtain very early in the eastern nations; and, perhaps, was first introduced by the Romans. Nor can any instance be produced in the sacred writings, of any one man, though ever so great, proud, and arrogant, speaking only of himself in the plural number. And as for those Scriptures, which are commonly insisted on, they are rejected by a learned Jew, [\[i\]](#)as false witnesses. Besides, when princes do issue out their mandates, edicts, and proclamations, it is with the advice of their privy council; which is the reason of their using this way of speaking: so that this subterfuge is like to do but little service to the antitrinitarians.

2dly. Others would have the angels here meant, to whom the Lord God thus speaks. But these are not his associates and companions; much less of equal dignity and authority with him. They were never made his privy council. He did not advise with them; nor were they assisting to him in the formation of man: neither was it after their image and likeness that he was created. They are God's servants, to do his will; are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But,

3dly. By the Us in our text, I apprehend, we are to understand the three Persons in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit: the same Us, who said, Let Us make man in Our image; after Our likeness. This way of speaking is also used by our Lord, [Joh 14:23](#). Jesus answered and said unto him, If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him: where two persons, at least, his Father and Himself, are intended. This being the sense of our text, makes it appear that the doctrine of the Trinity is no novel doctrine. It is not only the doctrine of the New, but also of the Old Testament, It is true, it is more clearly revealed in the New Testament, than it was in the Old; though even there we have abundant testimonies of it. Nothing does more fully and compendiously contain it, than that form of words prescribed and used in baptism, [Mt 28:19](#). Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Nor is there any greater evidence of it, than at our Lord's baptism, recorded in [Mt 3:16-17](#). Hence it was an usual saying of the ancients, Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity. But though it was more manifestly discovered, in the New Testament; yet it was not unknown to Moses and the Prophets: nay, it was revealed to our first parents in Eden's garden.

3. The person who is spoken of, is the man. We read of two Adams in Scripture, the first and the second. The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven: the true Messiah, sent from thence to be the Redeemer of lost sinners. Agreeable to this, some Jewish writers had a notion of two Adams; the one heavenly, the other earthly: the one, as one with God from eternity; the other, as not only another person, but another thing from God, and rejected by him.

Now the question is, which of these two Adams is here meant? The above said Jewish writers understand it of the heavenly Adam; and take the words to be the words of the Lord God, directed to the angels; declaring to them, after the miserable fall of man, the mystery of his redemption, and who was to be the author of it, viz. the Adam that was with God from eternity; who was one with him, and in all things like unto him. The latter part of the text they interpret, of the prevention of this heavenly Adam's immediate entrance upon the work of Redemption; which was deferred to a longer time; and say, that an angel was dispatched, as a messenger, to acquaint the fallen Adam of it, lest he should be pressed down with overmuch sorrow, for being the cause of ruin to himself, and to all his posterity. In which account, though there is something fabulous, yet it shews, that the ancient Jewish church had some notion of man's redemption by Christ, as the second Adam. He, however, is not intended here; but, by the man, we are to understand our first parents, Adam and Eve, who both are called by this name. [Ge 5:2](#). Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. They were both created after God's image and likeness; and both fell in the transgression. But,

4. The matter contained in these words, and the manner in which they are delivered, are next to be considered. The generality of interpreters understand them as an irony, or sarcasm; a flout or jeer at man's deception by Satan; who told our first parents, that they should be as gods, knowing good and evil: by which deceitful bait they were drawn into transgression, and ruined. Now whatever hidden meaning Satan might have in this speech of his to them (which might be like those ambiguous oracles of his, by which he imposed upon the Gentile world), yet it is certain, that our first parents understood it, of an equality with the most High God; which became a snare, and proved their ruin. He might indeed, mean, that they should be as angels, who are called Elohim, Gods, in [Ps 8:5](#); and so Jonathan, in his Targum, paraphrases [Ge 2:5](#). And perhaps, Satan might design such angels as he and his company were; which was verified. For, by their sin, they

came to have the woeful experience of good and evil; even as those apostate spirits had. Yet, I say, it is manifest, that Adam and his wife understood him otherwise. Now the Lord God here is supposed to upbraid man with it, and in an ironical way says, Behold the man is become like one of us. As if he had said, "See how much like a God, like one of us, the man looks; as Satan falsely promised him, and he vainly expected. See how he stands before us, with his coat of skin upon his back; and before he had that, he was obliged to sew fig-leaves together to make aprons, to cover his nakedness. Behold, how he is filled with shame and confusion for his folly. Does this man look like a God? Is this the Divinity that was promised, and which he affected? This is he, who aimed at a more exalted station than that in which he was created: but how is he sunk into the lowest condition of life!" So that the words seem to be much like those which were spoken by Pilate (when Christ was brought, clad with a purple robe and a crown of thorns upon his head, who then said to the Jews, in a sarcastic way, Behold the man!). {[Joh 19:5](#)} Not that we are to imagine, that the Lord God here rejoiced at man's misery, or insulted over him in it; for he had compassion on him; remembered him in his low estate; and, in his love and pity, redeemed him. But he took this method, to bring man to a thorough conviction of his sin, to shame, and true repentance for it: as also, more fully to lay open the devil's treachery; the crafty wiles he uses to deceive mankind; that so our first parents might not be ignorant of his devices. Though I must confess, I can scarce think that the words are to be understood ironically: for it is not very easy to imagine, that our great Messiah, at his first entering on his office of publishing the gospel, should, as one expresses it, "Complete his first sabbath, with a jest on poor man's misery." Seeing, as the same author observes, "We don't read of another, broken on his poor church, in all his ministry." I am, therefore, most inclined to think, that those words are spoken seriously, and express real matter of fact, and may be understood, either,

As a declaration of man's present state and condition; who, though fallen from a state of innocence, must now be considered as believers in Christ, and as restored and renewed by grace; so that he may well be said to be, as one of us. For,

1. Adam stood clothed with Christ's righteousness, which was typified by the coats of skins, which the Lord God made for them; on which account he appeared as one of the Trinity, even as the Lord Jesus, whose righteousness was put upon him; for he who hath that imputed to him, is righteous, even as he is righteous. There is so much likeness between Christ and believers, on

that account, that he and his church are called by one and the same name. See [Jer 23:6](#) and [Jer 23:16](#).

2. Adam being now renewed by grace, was conformed to the image of Christ, who is the first-born among many brethren; which is what all the elect of God are predestinated to, and therefore, as one of us. This new creation image is wrought by the Spirit; and is increased by those transforming views he gives us of the glory of Christ's person, and will be completed in the other world; when saints shall be like him, and see him as he is.

3. Adam must now be considered as in union with the Father, Son, and Spirit, as all believers are: which union is so strict and full, that he might well be said to be, as one of us. It is expressed by Christ, in such terms as fully evince it, [Joh 17:21](#). That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. The meaning of which will more fully appear, when we are removed from this state of imperfection.

4. Adam was now in a state of friendship with God. It is true, sin had separated chief friends, and made a breach upon that former amity, which was between God and man: but now man was reconciled to God, through the appointed death of the Son of God; who, to Adam's faith, was now slain both in the promise, and in the type: and he was also under the reconciling work of the Spirit of God, to the way of salvation, by the promised seed. Or,

These words may be considered, as expressive of Adam's condition before the fall; for they may be rendered thus, Behold, the man was as one of us; which, I apprehend, is the truest reading; as well as the genuine sense of the words. This sense I also find is given and approved by a learned Jewish writer; and suits man in his first creation; who was in the image, and after the likeness of God, which consisted,

1st. In the form and constitution of his body. The body of Christ, which was prepared by God for him, is, undoubtedly, the glory of human nature; it being curiously wrought, like a piece of needle-work, in the lowest parts of the earth. That is, in the Virgin's womb, by the power of the blessed Spirit; or in the secret thoughts of God's eternal mind. For, in the book of his eternal purposes, all the members thereof were written, which in continuance (i.e. in the fulness of time) were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them, really and actually existing. Now it seems as though, according to the idea of Christ's human body, in God's mind from everlasting, the body of Adam was formed.

Christ indeed, is said to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh; to partake of the same flesh and blood with the children, and to be made in all things like unto his brethren; but then, they are also said to be, of his flesh and of his bones. But whether it be so or no, that Adam's body was formed according to the idea of Christ's body, that was in God's mind from everlasting; yet this is certain, that the bodies of the saints, at the resurrection, will be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ, according to [Php 3:21](#). And why Adam's body may not be supposed to be formed according to the idea of it, in God's mind, I see no reason to conclude. Wherefore, it might be very well said of him, especially in his state of innocence, before he had sinned, and his body became subject to weakness, diseases, and mortality, that he was as one of us. But this is not all that this likeness and image consisted in: for,

2dly. It also appeared in the rectitude of his mind, for God made him upright, though he afterwards sought out many inventions. Man came out of his Maker's hands a holy creature. God left an impress of holiness upon him; so that he was, in some measure, like him. Hence the work of renovation is called, The new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. [{Eph 4:24}](#)

3dly. This image of God, in which man was created, appeared in that wisdom and knowledge, with which he was endued; of which some instances are on record: as, his giving names to all creatures; his knowing his wife, as soon as brought to him, who she was, and from whence she was taken; as also, his knowledge of good and evil, which is the particular thing instanced in our text, Behold, the man was as one of us, to know good and evil. Though I know this is produced as an objection against the sense of the words; and it is asserted that Adam did not know good and evil before the fall. It is true, he did not know evil in the same sense; as it is said of Christ, that he knew no sin. [{2Co 5:21}](#) That is, he did not know it, so as to commit it; but he knew the nature of it, its contrariety to God's revealed will, its due desert, and wretched consequences; and so did Adam. Nay, I will venture to say, that in this sense Adam had a more exquisite and complete knowledge of good and evil before his fall, than he had afterwards.

4thly. This image consisted also in his dominion over the creatures. He was made Lord of all, upon his first creation, [Ge 1:26](#). So that there appeared some resemblance of the Divine Majesty in him; which universal subjection of all creatures to him, is very particularly and beautifully described, in [Ps 8:5-8](#). Thus the man was as one of us; in which words there may also be a

comparison of his past with his present state, though one branch of it is not expressed; Behold the man was as one of us. But what is he now? He is strangely altered; he is not the man he was: his body, which was before hale, robust, and free from all diseases, is now become feeble and languid; subject to all manner of distempers, and to death itself. It is now a mere house of clay, which has its foundation in the dust; and must shortly be reduced to its first origin. His soul, which was created upright, is now destitute of its original righteousness, and filled with all unrighteousness. His understanding, which was replete with wisdom and knowledge, is now darkened. The man that was the darling of heaven, and in perfect friendship with his Maker, is now alienated from him; and he that was Lord of this world, and had all creatures in subjection to him, is now a slave to his own lusts, and afraid of those creatures which were made for his use. A strange and sudden alteration indeed! so that man, in his fallen state, appears far from being (See Greek word in book) or possessed of that free-will, which the Jews ascribe unto him, and endeavour to establish from those words, Onkelos, one of their paraphrasts, rendering the words thus, And the Lord God said, Behold the man is the only one in the world of himself, to know good and evil. So much for the first part of the text, which contains a declaration either of man's past or present condition.

II. Here is a prevention of him, from his eating of the tree of life. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever. Which words are elliptic, or defective, and may be supplied, either thus, There's danger lest he put forth his hand; or, we must take care, that he does not; or, the man must be drove out of paradise, lest, &c. as we find in the following verses he was. So that the sense may be this, The man in his primitive state, was as one of us; but now, by his sin, he has brought himself into a deplorable condition. He is quite altered; he is not the man he was before; and seeing he is so much degenerated, what will not his corrupt heart prompt him to, and his wild imagination put him upon? It may be, to put forth his hand, and eat of the tree of life, that he may live for ever: therefore, it is highly expedient to put him out of the garden, lest he should make such an attempt.

Two things are needful to be enquired into. I. What this tree of life was. II. Why Adam was prevented from eating of it, after his fall.

I. It may be proper to consider, what this tree of life was. That it was a real tree, in the garden of Eden, which bore this name, and not merely figurative

and allegorical, I make no question; any more, than that the garden, and all the trees therein, were so. It is highly probable, that it might be useful for the invigorating of Adam's body, the keeping it in a good temperament, and the continuation of the life thereof, during his state of innocence. But what kind of plant it was, what fruit it bore, its just description and proper qualities, I shall not pretend to tell: but that it was symbolical I believe will scarcely be denied. And

1. It was a memorative sign, or symbol, of the dependence of his life upon God. As often as he saw, and eat of it, he was put in mind, that it was God who gave him life, and that it was his visitation, that preserved his spirit. That his life, and the preservation of it, were wholly owing to God, that in him he lived, and moved, and had his being.

2. it was a confirmative sign, or symbol, to him, of the continuance of his life, so long as he was obedient to the divine will. I will not say, that it was a confirmation of his being translated after a time, to a heavenly and supernatural life, had he continued in an entire conformity to the divine will: because I am persuaded that God never designed that man should attain eternal life, merely by his obedience to the law of works. For, says the apostle, [{Ga 3:21}](#) If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But that was never God's intention. He had provided another way in his everlasting councils.

3. It might also be typical of Christ, or at least, Christ is called so, in allusion to it, both in the Old and New Testament, (See [Pr 3:18](#); [Re 2:7](#) and [Re 22:2,14](#).) because he is the author and donor, both of spiritual and eternal life. As Mediator, he asked it of his Father, in the council and covenant of peace. He procured it by his blood, and it is now secured in his person; for our life is hid with Christ in God. But,

II. Why was Adam, after his fall prevented from eating of this tree? Some have thought, that there was either a natural, or a supernatural virtue, abiding in this tree, after the fall; so that, could Adam have eaten of it, it would have perpetuated his life, either for many hundred years; or else for ever; and that the reason why God prevented access to it was either, 1. Compassion for him, that he might not live a long and tedious life, attended with affliction and sorrows, to which he was now subject: Or, 2. By way of punishment, that he might not be able to elude the sentence of death, which was passed upon him.

But neither of these seems feasible. Not the former; because one would think, that if this tree had possessed such a virtue as to prolong his life, it would also have preserved him from all bodily afflictions and distempers. Not the latter; because it was impossible that the sentence should be eluded in any such way, which was the just desert of sin; and what God's veracity was engaged to make good. Besides, had such a powerful virtue continued in this tree, after the fall of man, every body knows, that God, who put that virtue in it, could have removed it at pleasure so, that if Adam had eaten up the whole tree, it would have been of no significancy to him; nor would it have answered any such end. This is manifest from the daily food we eat: from which, if God withholds a blessing, or takes away the natural virtue, it will not yield any nourishment to our bodies. For, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. {[Mt 4:4](#)} So that there was no reason, on this account, for such a guard about this tree, as that of cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to defend it. The true reason, therefore, of this prevention was,

3. That Adam might have no hope nor expectation of life, from that, or any thing else, but Christ the promised Messiah. Adam might think, as this tree was useful to him, in his state of innocence, to preserve his life, that it would be so now; and thereby be tempted to forget the promised seed, from whom he had reason to expect life and salvation. And now, that he might not lie under this temptation, the Lord God thought it expedient to thrust him out of Paradise, and place a guard about the tree. For there is nothing that man is more prone to, than to seek life any where but in Christ. There seems to be a natural aversion to that. Ye will not come to me, (says Christ) that ye might have life. No, they had rather go to mount Sinai, yea, travel all the globe over, than go to Christ, for life, could they but obtain it any other way. But God has resolved upon this, as the only way of life and salvation; and that man shall not come at it, by his own works of righteousness, be they what they will. And therefore, has so guarded this way, that he who seeks for righteousness and life, by his own doings, runs upon the flaming sword of justice; and whilst he is endeavouring to insure his own salvation, he is pulling ruin upon himself. Upon the whole, I do not consider these words as having respect to the event, or what would have been, if Adam had eaten of this tree; but the vain opinion, and the foolish expectation, that he might have entertained, of securing his life by it. Having thus explained the words, I shall briefly deduce two or three inferences from them.

1. Learn hence, the wretched and vile nature of sin. How soon was man, the chief of God's works in this lower world, ruined by it! Nay, the whole world was laid under a curse for his sake. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. [Ro 5:12](#).

2. See the vanity of seeking life by our own performances. It is not only, what God has not established; but also, what he is resolved against.

3. Observe the grace of God, in providing a Saviour for lost man; and how early the discovery of it was made to him. A Saviour was provided before that sin was committed, which required one; and was revealed, before the man was driven out of the garden, that he might have no reason to despair of life.

4. Let us not, then, lay hold on any vain pretences for life; such as those of our own doings, services, and performances. But let us look to Christ alone; for he is a tree of life, to them that lay hold upon him; and happy is every one that retaineth him. [Pr 3:18](#)

[i] R. Aben Ezra, in [Ge 1:26](#)