

The Servant of the LORD: Adam

Intro:

Adam serves as one of the most important types¹ of Jesus in the Scriptures.

- See especially **Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28**

And thus, if Jesus as the second Adam is *the* Servant of the LORD, we shouldn't be surprised if the Bible teaches that the first Adam, albeit imperfectly, was also a servant.

That Adam was created to be God's servant is important, for it helps us to better understand both who we are (identity) and what we were created for (purpose).

The opening chapters of Genesis provide us with the ultimate origins story. They explain to us who God is, how the world came into existence and who we are as humans being. Genesis 1-3 also reveals what is wrong with the world and introduces the first hints of what God will do to fix what is broken. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that a correct understanding of these chapters is essential for formulating a biblical world view.²

And so, our starting point for understanding humanity's identity as servants of God is a close look at Genesis 1-2. Although nowhere in these chapters is Adam or humanity in general referred to with the title/label servant, the picture that emerges from these chapters is that human beings were created as divine image-bearers who serve God as kings and priests.

- Though the term 'servant' does not occur in the creation accounts, the cognate verb and the concept do (Gen. 2:5, 15). In the Eden story a chief function of humanity is to serve, or work, the ground...In Genesis 1 humanity is created in the image of God and is given the task of having

¹ Emadi and Schrock write, "Typology is the study of patterns (types) in the Bible that escalate over time until they find their intended fulfillment in Christ and His church. Like seeds planted in the soil of the OT, biblical types are persons, places, events, and institutions that develop across redemptive history until they reach full flower in God's climactic revelation in Christ. God designed types as a form of revelation to prepare the way for His Son, and in the fullness of time." See Sam Emadi and David S. Schrock, "Typology" in *Dictionary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 860.

² Matthew Harmon, *The Servant of the Lord and His Servant People* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 2020), 7.

dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:26-28). These tasks entail both royal and servant overtones.³

Genesis 2:5 – “When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet spring up – for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man **to work** the ground.”

- The verb, “to work” (*abad*) can also mean “to serve.”

Genesis 2:15 (NIV) – “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden **to work it** and take care of⁴ it.”

- First, Moses shows that humanity’s work in the garden is framed as a form of service.
- Second, Adam’s commission “to keep” the garden carries with it notions of provision and protection within the context of a relationship with Yahweh.⁵

To summarize, humanity – as an image-bearing servant – is commissioned to **reflect** who God is and what He is like, **represent** His purposes, and **rule** over creation withing the parameters established by God, who is the Great King.

- God intends to fill His creation with image-bearing servants who gladly carry out His great commission for humanity.

In addition to kingly overtones to Adam’s “servanthood” to Yahweh, the Hebrew verbs also show that Adam is a priestly servant⁶ of Yahweh as well.

- Just as later priests were given a *torah* to obey and teach to others,⁷ so too Adam is given a *torah* that he must himself obey and pass on to others.⁸

³ Stephen G. Dempster, “Servant of the LORD” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 135-36.

⁴ ESV = “keep it”

⁵ Cf. Harmon, *Servant*, 21.

⁶ “The servant has combined both regal and sacramental functions in his person.” See Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 170.

⁷ See Harmon’s discussion and explanation in his *Servant*, 17-25.

⁸ Again, this helps us to better understand not only Jesus, but our identity and mission as His new covenant servant-people. See especially **Matthew 5:19**.

Tragically, God's first servant fails his commission.

- The idyllic picture of Genesis 1 -2 does not last long. Although the text does not specify how long it was before the serpent entered the Garden of Eden to tempt humanity, the text gives the impression it happened rather quickly.

At the heart of their failure are intertwined questions of identity and authority. Harmon writes,

- The man and the woman had rejected their identity as servants of Yahweh and asserted their own authority to determine for themselves good and evil.⁹

This is important to note, for we too can trace back our failures as God's servants to these two issues as well.

- We need to constantly remember that in Christ we are simultaneously (and gloriously!) both sons and servants.
 - Our sanctification is to "become who we are."
 - That is, we are to become in practice who we are in position.

However, though sin has marred our identity, it has not eradicated it.¹⁰

- Thus, everyone ever born into this world is also a "son" and a "servant":
 - By nature, we are "sons" of the devil (**John 8:44**) and disobedience (**Ephesians 2:2; 5:6**).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30; cf. 26.

¹⁰ Dempster writes, "When the first human couple defy God's words and seek to live by the word of the serpent rather than by the word of their God, they repudiate their role and task. Their failure to worship and obey leads to disaster. They are banished from Eden to work the ground, but now it is a different type of service – service marked by pain and toil (Gen. 3:17-19). Adam, who was to exercise dominion by working the ground, returns to the ground and is subject to it. The fall frustrates service. Sin now rules Cain and his progeny (Gen. 4:7, 17-24), which implies that they have acquired a new master." In his *Servant*, 137.

- By nature, we are “servants” of sin (**John 8:34; Romans 6:16**) and unrighteousness (**Romans 6:19**).

Thankfully, in God’s sovereign purposes, we will see that what was lost by the first Adam has been recovered and restored by the second Adam, who Himself is the quintessential “Son” and “Servant” of Yahweh. And now, by His wonderful grace, Jesus – through the Spirit – is (re)creating for Himself a holy nation of “servant-sons.”¹¹

This is bound-up in the glorious “protoevangelion”¹² of **Genesis 3:15**, where the LORD God promises to reverse the curse and reconcile the creation back to God¹³ by defeating the serpent and his seed.¹⁴

Harmon provides a fitting close to this study, as well as a necessary transition to the rest of the biblical narrative which traces *how* God will bring about this cosmic victory through an obedient Servant-Son:

Instead of living as servants of God, humanity plunged deeper and deeper into rebellion and idolatry. Yet God remains committed to His original purpose of humanity serving Him as royal priests who reflect who He is, represent His purposes and rule over creation under His authority, all in the context of a close relationship. As a result, God begins to raise up individual servants to play key roles in advancing God’s purpose and plan in this world.¹⁵

In our next study, we will look briefly at Noah and Abraham before taking an in-depth look at the servant Moses.

Soli Deo Gloria!!

¹¹ See especially **Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10-11**.

¹² Literally, this means the “first [giving of the] gospel.”

¹³ **Colossians 1:20**

¹⁴ Dempster writes, “Yet God does not give up on His creation. He promises a human seed that will destroy the serpent (Gen. 3:15). This person will exercise proper dominion over the creation again. He will be God’s Son and therefore represent Him on the earth. This focus on His descendants explains the extraordinary emphasis on genealogy in Genesis.” In his *Servant*, 137.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.