

I read recently of an elderly theology professor at one of the larger campuses in the US, who was ridiculed by his colleagues for suggesting that Adam was a real person. He went even further, asserting that denying the *historicity* of Adam, unravels the entire gospel. I know that it is fashionable, even among some evangelical Christians, to relegate Adam and Eve to the realm of mythology inhabited by the likes of Hercules, Odysseus and Cyclops. But the collapse of the gospel really got my attention, and I started examining the *bona fides* of my own primeval ancestor.

Initially I was confronted with a whole lot of scientific material - *multiregional origins, the human genome, Y chromosome structures and dating of pathogens* - about which I am not qualified to form an opinion. And truth to tell, I understood very little. I did however come across an extensive study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who, using a technique known as *Reverse Mitochondrial Modelling*, concluded that “*a common ancestor of every one alive today very likely lived between 2000 and 5000 years ago*”<sup>1</sup>

But it never mentioned Adam by name, or the Bible as a source of data. Anyhow I couldn't even understand the graphs and diagrams. But I just couldn't drop it - the potential collapse of the Christian gospel was something about which I needed some real solid information.

So I turned to a resource that I should have used in the first place and I started where the Gospel writers started – the birth of Jesus. And I find that the genealogy of Jesus is traced right back to Adam,” *Which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God*” (Luke 3:38, KJV). I know we all get frustrated by all the begats and begets in the Bible, and we sort of skip over them. But this was critical information in ancient times. The Egyptians had king lists, as did the ancient Sumerians. Genealogy was likewise critically important to the Israelites. Family lineage establishes who a person is; what are his entitlements and obligations - and his particular place in the tribal and national scheme of things.

So Luke traces the ancestry of Jesus right back to *Adam the son of God*, identifying Him as both man (Adam) and God. Now if this is just mythology, we have someone with a fabricated pedigree claiming to be the Son of God. His credentials are mere superstition. Some scholars tell us that in their ignorance, the gospel writers embraced mythology as truth and were therefore acting in good faith. But why should the history of significant Israelite figures be dismissed, when that of the ancient Egyptians and Sumerians is accepted at face value? At the very least we must admit that Jesus was sincere. *He* accepted the historical

accuracy of the record that traced His lineage. “*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law (OT).*” (Mat 5:18). That's a pretty solid endorsement of all the old begats. But had Jesus got it wrong?

When I came to the epistles I ran into even greater difficulty. Paul says, “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*” (1Cor 15:22). This comparison uses that little Greek conjunction *GAR* (γάρ,) – (*Indeed, Actually*). The two events are ranked together *in deed not in myth*. Paul here is giving equal weight to Adam's sin and the resurrection of the dead. He says that it is not a fantasy or a fabrication but a *fact – a deed*. So here we have the apostle who was caught up in to Paradise and saw things that “*it is not lawful to utter*” (2 Cor 12:4), and yet with all that revelation, he returned still believing in the historicity of Adam.

So the bottom line is that if all did not die in Adam, then all will not be made alive in Christ. And as Paul has already stated, “*if there is no such thing as the resurrection of the dead, then Christ was never raised. And if Christ was not raised then neither our preaching nor your faith has any meaning at all* (1 Cor 15:19 J B Phillips)”. Paul links the *first Adam* to the *second Adam* (Christ), throughout his soteriology (doctrine of salvation), “*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*” (Rom. 5:19). He sums up his teaching in 1 Cor 15:21 “*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead*”

Paul believed the creation account of human origin, “*For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*” (1 Tim 2:13). So *his* gospel certainly collapses without a literal Adam. If he is just caught up in the mythology of the day, then his soteriology is untrustworthy, and the rest of his teachings are at best, suspect

So when we use the scriptures as our only authority, we find that the elderly professor had a wisdom and insight that had eluded his colleagues. The gospel does indeed collapse without an historical Adam. It's like pulling at a thread in a garment – eventually the whole garment unravels.

Now for something completely different – or is it? “*Biblical orthodoxy is winning converts while churches that have lost their Biblical moorings languish*”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Douglas L T Rohde: *On the Common Ancestors of all Living Humans*

<sup>2</sup> Phillip Jenkins: *The Next Christendom – The Coming of Global Christianity*,