

Romans 5:14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-5/romans-514/>

Death and separation reigned on earth even before the law was given to Moses.

In the previous section Paul asserted that the sin of breaking a law is not imputed (or charged) until the law is “passed.” The Law of Moses (upon which his opponents rest) was not given to humanity for many years after Adam fell. Nevertheless, sin brought death into the world, just as God told Adam it would.

Death is separation, and the world is full of many divisions, where there should be harmony (according to God’s good design): *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come* (v 14).

When God creates a cause-effect relationship, it is dependable. Even though there was no Mosaic law after Adam fell, there was still sin in the world, and therefore death. This *death reigned* over the world the entire time *from Adam until Moses* (v 14). Death was the sentence we inherited from Adam, which spread to all men.

Death reigned on the earth all that time, *even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam* (v 14). In other words, even though the sins of all of Adam’s children were not like the sin of Adam, death reigned. Adam had the ability not to sin, but he fell away from this ability when he chose to sin anyway. After Adam, humans were born in sin, so were not like Adam in that respect.

Adam was also a *type of Him who was to come*, the second Adam, which is Jesus. For Jesus, born of a virgin, did not inherit Adam’s fallen nature. Like Adam, Jesus was able not to sin.

And, unlike Adam, Jesus did not sin. Even though Jesus was tempted in all the ways that we are tempted, Jesus did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). The first Adam had the ability not to sin but fell when he sinned. The second Adam, Jesus, had the ability not to sin and did not sin. When we believe on Jesus, we are placed into the same position Jesus has when standing before God; we are baptized into His death (Romans 6:3).

Jesus was the second Adam. He was also the second Moses, fulfilling the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18, that God would raise up a prophet that could speak as God directly to the people. Jesus was also the second David—the Son of David who will occupy the throne of Israel (Matthew 1:1, 22:42). The scripture has a repeating pattern of the second being elevated over the first. A few examples follow:

- Jacob receiving the birthright inheritance over his older brother Esau (Genesis 25:33)
- David being elevated above the first king, Saul (1 Samuel 16:12)
- Joseph as the second-born eldest son (of Jacob’s wife Rachel) being elevated over the first-born eldest (of Jacob’s wife Leah) (Genesis 37:3, 43:26)
- Elisha gaining a double portion of blessing when he succeeded Elijah (2 Kings 2:9)

- Humans being elevated over the angels (Psalm 8; 1 Corinthians 6:3)

Paul will now demonstrate another reason his gospel is superior to that of the competing Jewish “authorities,” in that he explains what happens to all the people who came before Jesus. These arguments will aid Paul’s ministry partners Aquila and Priscilla (based in Rome) in their struggle against the Jewish “authorities” (Romans 16:3; Acts 18:2, 18, 26).

Biblical Text

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.