

The Last Adam

*For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,
so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19*

In 1964 the then Prime Minister, George Borg Olivier, obtained the independence of my country, Malta, from British colonial rule. The action of this man affected the entire nation; he also had an influence on people like me who were not yet born at that time. Because of him, I am a citizen of an independent nation.

We can all think of historical people, whom we never met or knew, that have left some sort of impact, whether good or bad, on our present state.

More than any other, there were two men who had a profound impact on all the human race. They are Adam, the first man, and Jesus Christ, whom the Bible calls 'the last Adam' (1 Corinthians 15:45).

Adam stands in a representative position as the head of humanity, as the Bible teaches in Romans 5:12-31. All humanity is bound up with Adam's sin. In Adam all sinned; all stand condemned, all die. 'One trespass led to condemnation for all men ... by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners' (Rom 5:18, 19). When Adam fell, all humanity fell with him.

Some people find this concept strange and unacceptable. Why should we carry the blame for someone else's sin?

Perhaps the objection reflects the individualist mentality of our modern Western culture. Yet we too have our representatives in government. It is true that politicians often do not reflect the will of the people who elect them. Nonetheless, our representative head, Adam, has made a choice for us with which we all agree. We have chosen to disobey God not once but countless times during our lives.

Moreover if we fail to see the disastrous consequences of Adam's sin on all of humanity, we will not neither appreciate the work of Jesus Christ for his people.

For just as 'in Adam' all die, so 'in Christ' all will be made alive. As 'in Adam' all sinned, so 'in Christ', all are righteous. 'Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous' (Romans 5:18,19).

Humanity is thus divided into two groups – the first, headed by Adam, stands guilty and condemned; the second, the new humanity led by Jesus Christ, stands righteous, justified and alive in him.

All of us belong to the first group by natural descent. Not all, however, are 'in Christ'. Only those who by grace have believed in Christ are set free from the present evil world and given the gift of righteousness and life which Christ has earned for us by his perfect obedience and death on the cross.