

The answer appears to be that, just as human beings did not incur the penalty of death for their own personal acts of sin, so they did not incur guilt for their individual acts of sin alone. Rather, they were born guilty and born dead!

In this segment of the passage, then, Paul attempts to disabuse his readers of the interpretation of verse 12 that would say that just as Adam sinned (transgressed the Law of God) and incurred death, so all human beings individually sin (transgress the Law of God) and incur death. He does this by pointing out that men from Adam to Moses died, but not because they broke a Law of God that prescribed death as its penalty. Rather, in some sense they sinned when Adam sinned, and died when Adam died; and thus guilt and death passed over to Adam's descendants. In the next few verses Paul attempts to make this connection clearer and more explicit.

Adam is called the type or figure of the coming one. Does this mean that Adam is in some sense like the coming one? And in what sense? Is he like the coming one in his character, his actions, his significance (in terms of who or what he represents), or the results of his actions? And who is the "coming one"?

15 -- "but not as the transgression, so also the gift. For if by the transgression of one the many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, that of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflowed to the many.'

Up to this point we have been reading about Adam, sin, death, and Law; now a radical shift is made. Now we read of gift, grace, and Christ. Perhaps Christ is the "coming one", to whom Adam has some likeness in terms of type or figure.

There appears to be both comparison and contrast, similarity and dissimilarity, likeness and unlikeness between the transgression and the gift. The likeness may lie in the fact that in both cases (Adam's and Christ's) a works covenant was involved; the unlikeness may lie in the fact that, in Adam's case the outcome was transgression and death, whereas in Christ's case the outcome was obedience and life.

On the other hand the likeness may lie in the involvement of human beings in Adam's transgression through imputation of guilt, and the involvement of human beings in Christ's obedience through imputation of righteousness; the unlikeness may lie in the fact that the imputation of guilt is, by representation, earned and deserved, whereas the imputation of righteousness is a gift and undeserved.

It appears from this verse that the many died as a result of the transgression of the one; i.e., that human beings died as a result of Adam's sin, not as a result of their own individual sins.

It also appears that the representative principle -- Adam and those he represents, Christ and those He represents -- is at least preliminarily established from this verse.