

What is the Doctrine of Imputed Sin?

The Doctrine of Imputed Sin is not explicitly stated in the Bible. The doctrine is born out of careful study of the biblical text, and, in this case, a careful study of the Greek language. It is often confused with Original Sin and is a subject of much controversy. The doctrine is based principally on Romans 5:12-19, which has been arranged so that each unit of Paul's logic and thought can be more easily understood.

Romans 5:12-19

12) Therefore,

Therefore makes an inference to what has gone on before. After his introduction to Romans, Paul speaks about the depth and depravity of sin committed by both Gentile and Jew. Even with the Law, the Jews have failed to be holy and are under God's judgment; all of humanity is helpless to sin (Rom 1:18-3:20). But God provided a means for righteousness for humanity: justification through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul uses Old Testament examples, Abraham and David, to illustrate how God declares people righteous on the principle of faith instead of works (Rom 3:21-4:25). Jewish allegory had always held to the concept of two Adams: one with good inclinations and the other with bad. The significance of using Abraham and David is apparent; God had made covenants with them. Now Adam can be introduced; the bridge has been set, with the focus on the two Old Testament covenant figures, to connect the second Adam (Christ) to the first Adam. How sin, introduced by the first Adam, can be resolved with the second Adam Jesus Christ.

just as

Paul begins his illustration of justification through a parallel comparison between Jesus, and his work of justification and reconciliation, with Adam, and his work of sin and death. Yet the comparison that Paul initiates here (*just as*) is not completed in verse 12. It is completed in verse 18 (*So then as...*). Thus the context and content of the comparison must be considered in light of the pertinent verses. Before Paul makes any comparisons, he first establishes that all men is condemned on the account of Adam's sin. He states a causal relation: One man Adam was the cause of sin. And, as we see later, this statement facilitates the parallel to Christ who was the cause of righteousness.

through one man

In review of Adam's sin in Genesis 3:17-19, we see that death was the penalty for the sin of breaking God's command. ["Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it.' Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you. And you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.' Gen 3:17-19]

sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned

Sin was personified with *through*, *entered*, and *spread*, which emphasized its ominous invasion and evil dispersal. The Greek use for the word sin here encompasses the following range of definitions: 1) the guilt of Adam's sin [imputed sin], 2) man's sinful nature [inherited sin], and 3) transgressions that come from the sinful nature [personal sins]. Most significant is the Greek use of the past tense of entered and spread. In the plain and simple meaning of the Text, humanity sinned when Adam sinned; all suffer the penalty of sin and have the propensity to disobey God's word. Because this is difficult to understand, this verse has generated much discussion and differences of interpretation. In a world where there is an emphasis on human effort towards good works to achieve salvation, the very idea of man being regarded and treated, not according to their own merit, but the merit of another, is contrary to contemporary cultural values.

Death here refers to both spiritual and physical death with both immediate and an eventual sense of time. In reviewing Gen 2:17 [...but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die], we see that Adam and Eve did not physically die immediately when they ate the fruit; however spiritually, they died immediately when God removed them that same day from His presence and banished them from the Garden. The term *in the day* in Gen 2:17 conveys a sense of certainty, but not necessarily the immediacy of 24 hours. A word study of the same term in 1 Kings 2:37-42 supports this view. In 1 Kings 2:42 [So the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, 'Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, You will know for certain that *on the day* you depart and go anywhere, you shall surely die?' And you said to me, 'The word which I have heard is good.'], Shimei died physically, then but his death occurred some days after he committed his sin some 25 miles away (a 50-60 mile round trip). Thus Adam's sin caused both spiritual and physical death with both immediate and an eventual sense of time.

13) for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Verse 13 is an explanation for verse 12. Based on his earlier statement in Rom 4:15 [*.., but where there is no law, neither is there violation*], many understood Paul to mean that sin was charged when one violates the law: there is no sin when there is no law against the action. Paul clarifies that sin existed before the Mosaic Law and that *personal* sins were not charged on one's account.

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.

Verse 14 is further proof for verse 12. Only Adam is recognized for disobeying God's command [*From any tree of the garden you may eat freely. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.* Gen 2:16-17]. Yet death existed for all even though mankind did not break this law.

Who signals when Paul begins to contrast Adam with Jesus: comparing the first Adam with the second Adam.

15) But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

With the assertion of verse 12 proven, verse 15 begins the first illustration to establish a greater truth. The term *but* starts the comparison to highlight the differences between Adam and Jesus. Through one man, judgment, a deserved penalty, was brought to all. In contrast, through Jesus, unmerited grace was made available to all. The comparison highlights the magnitude of Divine grace juxtaposed against Divine judgment.

Transgression, used in verses 15-18, comes from other Greek terms for sin *parabasis* and *paraptoma*. These were stronger terms for sin than *amartia*, which was used in verse 12. This characterization indicated that Adam's sin was not simply the natural consequences of a sinful nature, it was a volitional act that occurred before a sinful nature existed.

16) The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.

Verse 16 is the second illustration to establish a greater truth. As in verse 15, verse 16 is another contrasting comparison. Divine judgment was the consequence of one man's sin, and divine justification was the consequence of those who accepted the gift of divine grace, which was in response to man's propensity to sin! This highlighted the depth of God's love.

17) For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Verse 17 is the third illustration to establish the greater truth. Through Adam, man, the victim burden with sin, is oppressed by death, which in contrast, through Christ, man, the believer victorious over death, is ruler in life!

18) So then

So Paul begins complete his illustration of justification that he initiated in verse 12, and his conclusion sums up the preceding contrasting comparisons of verses 15-17.

as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

19) For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Just as one sin condemned all, one atoning sacrifice made justification available to all. The parallel comparison is complete. Imputed righteousness remedies the eternal consequences of imputed sin.

Disobedience is the translation of another Greek term for sin *parakoh*. This, like transgression, is a stronger term for sin than *amartia*. Paul's characterization of Adam's sin is clear: Adam did not naively sin, he intentionally sinned.

The confusion between Original Sin and Imputed Sin

There is some confusion with the term Original Sin. The confusion originated with Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo Regius of North Africa, who vigorously defended the doctrine of imputed sin; thus, in the West, Original Sin refers to: 1) the sin of Adam, 2) the introduction of the sinful nature of man, and 3) man's legal standing before God: the charge of Adam's sin.

In the East, where Eastern Orthodox prevails, the term Original Sin, also known as Ancestral Sin, only refers to: 1) the sin of Adam, and 2) the introduction of the sinful nature of man. Augustine's work was not known in the East; it was not until the 14th century that his writings were translated from Latin into Greek and not until the 17th and 18th century was his work discussed in the East.

What is Original Sin?

Original Sin refers to the sinful nature of man. It is the same as Inherited Sin but with one distinction, it is the first sin that actually led to and resulted in the sinful nature for the rest of mankind. Adam eats the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:16-17). It describes the **moral** state of man and his evil tendencies and desires to place his self-interests above God and all others. Thus, as RC Sproul notes, "We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners."

What is Imputed Sin?

Imputed Sin refers to man's legal standing before God. As a representative of humanity, Adam's singular action affected man's **legal** standing before God. For example, when a leader of a country declares war, the whole country is at war whether or not its citizens agree or bear arms. Thus Imputed Sin is not from man's sinful nature or personal sins; it is only from Adam.

What is Personal Sin?

Personal Sin is the **actual** commission of sin and the manifestation of man's sinful nature (Inherited Sin).

Summary of the types of sin

Type of Sin	Distinction
Original / Inherited	Describes the moral state of man: man has a sinful nature.
Imputed	Describes man's legal standing before God: guilty of sin because of Adam's Original Sin.
Personal	Describes the actual manifestation of an individual's sinful nature: disobedience of God's will.

The confusion with the term Death

The term death is often misunderstood and confused with the non-religious understanding of death, the cessation of life. According to the Bible, this is true of all living organisms with one exception: man. In the Bible, death is the consequence of sin and portrayed as a separation with three different aspects, each describing three types of relationships. 1) Physical death: the separation of the soul from the body, 2) Spiritual death: the separation of man from God, and 3) Eternal death: the eternal separation of the soul from God.

Physical death: the body separated from the soul

Genesis 2:7 and 3:19

- 7) Then the LORD GOD formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
- 19) By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

- 7) then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

James 2:26

- 26) For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

When separated from the spirit (soul), the body ceases to biologically function. With the implication that physical death precludes any opportunity for one to receive salvation, physical death can be a form of judgment for sin. Furthermore, physical death appears to be an unnatural consequence of our original created intention as humans, because Adam, having access to the tree of life, is driven out of Eden (Gen 3:22).

Spiritual death: man personally separated from God

Isaiah 59:1-2

- 1) Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. 2) But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Romans 6:23

- 23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Death used here is in reference to spiritual death; it is a very personal and moral separation. Within the context of the Bible, this concept of spiritual death is a term used only for the living. For additional study, see Luke 15:24, 32; Matthew 8:2; John 5:24; 6:58; 10:28; 11:25; Romans 6:2, 11; 7:4, 8, 9-11; 8:35; Galatians 2:19; 2 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 2:1, 5, 12-13; Philippians 1:21-23; Colossians 2:13; and 1 Timothy 5:6.

Second death: the eternal separation of the soul from God.

2 Thessalonians 1:9

9) These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,...

Revelation 20:14-15

14) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8; 22:14-15

8) "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."...

14) "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 15) Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.."

These representative verses indicate that the "second death" is an eternal separation from God; it is an eternal confirmation of spiritual death. What is not clear is whether the soul ever ceases – does the lake of fire mean eternal torment or the cessation of a soul?

Other evidence to substantiate that the biblical term "death" means separation.

The Christian and sin

Romans 6:2-11

1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2) May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3) Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4) Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5) For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6) knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7) for he who has died is freed from sin. 8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9) knowing that

Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10) For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11) Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In this context, "dead to sin" means separated from sin.

The Christian and the Law

Romans 7:4

4) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

In this context, "dead to the law" means separated from the Law.

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Biblical Context

Is the idea of imputed sin, the guilt of one's sin(s) being charged to another, consistent within the context of the Bible? Consider the following evidence found in the Bible:

1. In revealing the Ten Commandments to Moses, God says, "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me." (Ex 20:5, 34:6-7, and Num 14:18)
2. In His instructions to the Israelites on how they are to live in order that they have fellowship with Him, God also reveals punishments if they fail in their responsibilities of the covenant, "I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted." (Lev 26:22)
3. The sin of Achan led the deaths of his sons and daughters and the destruction of all of his livestock and property (Josh 7:1-26).
4. Amalek's treatment of Israel brought death and destruction on all his people and livestock (1 Sam 15.1-5).
5. For his apostasy, the Lord condemned and destroyed King Jeroboam and his house (1 Kings 14:7-11).
6. For his sin of greed and lying, the leprosy of Naaman was given to Gehazi and his descendants forever (2 Kings 5:20-27).
7. With complete assurance in God, King David declares, "Their offspring You will destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men." (Ps 21:10)
8. "The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish." (Prov 14:11)
9. The prophet Jeremiah understood that God's judgment could be based on imputed sin, "who shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. The LORD of hosts is His name." (Jer 32:18)
10. The Pharisees recognized that sin could be imputed when they questioned Jesus about the blind man from birth, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John 9:1-3)

With the principle of imputed sin, God deals with men, not only as individuals but also, as a community. Yet despite the biblical evidence, there are many who still deny the existence of the principle of imputed sin. Listed are the most commonly used biblical evidence and why they fail as proof texts.

1. "Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin." (Deut 24:16)

In this section of various miscellaneous laws here in Deuteronomy, there is little context to understand fully the meaning of the passage. However, there are 2 apparent problems if one were to use this passage to refute the principle of imputed sin:

- a) It is not consistent with God's revelation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:5, 34:6-7, and Numbers 14:18, and

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b) the doctrine of imputed sin referred to descendants bearing the guilt (and subsequent penalty) of their parent's sins, not parents bearing the penalty of their children's sins.

In matters of moral and legal dispute, ancient Near East and Middle Eastern cultures sought solutions that emphasized corporate responsibility (i.e. Code of Hammurabi, Law 230). Thus a family member may suffer the consequences of another member's sin. Some aspects of this judicial approach still exist today in the Middle East. Many scholars believe that Moses was referring to this.

2. "In those days they will not say again, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge." (Jer 31:29-30)

"Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore.'" (Ezek 18: 1-3)

These two passages refer to a proverbial saying that was common at the time, namely children were suffering for their parents sinful behavior. Suffering from the consequences of a history of rebellion against God, people blamed their ancestors rather than take responsibility for their sins. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were telling the people that they might suffer for the sins of their parents but that they will be held accountable and judged for their own sins.

Cultural Context

Up until this time, Paul had not visited Rome nor had any other apostle; Peter had not yet arrived. Paul's letter to the Christians (both Jewish and Gentile) in Rome represent the longest and most systematic presentation of the doctrine of salvation and justification through faith in Christ. In addressing the unspoken conflict between Judaizers and Gentiles, Paul clearly states that while God's wrath is towards all sin in both Gentile and Jew alike, there is a universal message that God saves through the justifying action in Christ.

The cultural-theological context during this time was very diverse; pre-70 AD Judaism was a complex of Jewish sects among them:

1. Qumran: Associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls, this group considered itself the true remnant of Israel and more pure than the Pharisees.
2. Pharisees: Committed to uphold the laws of tithing and ritual purity, the Pharisees were a religious and political party. Made up of faithful Jews called Hasidim, they were noted for their strict observance of the Mosaic Law as interpreted and applied by the scribes.
3. Diaspora/Hellenistic: Throughout their history, the Jews experienced dispersions from the land of Israel. After the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Greek language and culture was widely spread and lingered even after the Roman conquests.
4. Early Christianity: In its infancy, Christianity was considered a Jewish sect!

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During this time, most discussions regarding the Torah were in the oral tradition; it was much later (200 AD) that the oral tradition was collected into Rabbinic Texts. However, available to the Jews were a variety of writings used for religious and social purposes among them:

1. Apocrypha / Pseudoepigrapha: These Jewish writings are expansions and embellishments of the biblical texts, stories, histories, hymns, letters, etc but are not part of the Jewish or Protestant canons. Some writings of the Apocrypha however are included in the Catholic canon.
2. Dead Sea Scrolls: Found in Qumran, these scrolls contained portions of the Old Testament, commentaries on the Torah, hymns, prayers, and apocalyptic writings.
3. Philo of Alexandria: Considered the best witness of Diaspora Hellenistic Judaism, he wrote commentaries and philosophy. However, because his work reflected Greek philosophy rather than Hebrew tradition, Jews considered it suspect.
4. Josephus: Largely a historian and reporter of Jewish life, Josephus was an apologist for Judaism.
5. The Apostle Paul: Paul's work is considered the only voice of a Pharisee thus far recovered from this period.
6. Targums: These Aramaic texts were paraphrases of the Bible.

The Jews' hermeneutic approach to the Old Testament was not unlike the approaches that exist today among Christianity:

1. Literal (peshat): Rabbinic literature was not all midrashic. There were many examples of a literal, grammatical, and historical interpretation especially in the reading of the Mosaic Law.
2. Midrash: Using hermeneutic rules established by highly regarded Rabbis (ie. Rabbi Hillel's seven Middoth, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha's set of thirteen, or Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose ha-Galili's thirty-two), midrashic interpretation attempts to find the contemporary meaning of the Torah. This form of exegesis usually did not consider the historical or grammatical context of the biblical passage. During the first century, the Pharisees mixed literal and midrashic hermeneutic approaches and made no conscious effort to differentiate the methods until the third or fourth century.
3. Peshet: This form of hermeneutic approach applies principally to the Qumran sect. They felt that they were living in the final days and prepared for the coming of the Messiah. Instead of elucidating the Torah, peshet was focused on the application of eschatological (end times) prophecy as it pertained to their situation. Much of their interpretive views were characterized as imminent and catastrophic.
4. Allegorical: The writing of Philo of Alexandria is regarded as a prominent example of an allegorical approach toward the Torah during the first century. Instead of considering the literal and historical context, his Greek texts focused on the figurative symbolism in striving to understand the spiritual meaning of the passage. Some Rabbis and the Qumran sect also practice this form of exegesis; however, it was not a dominant form in Palestine.

Because of these various approaches to the Torah, there was no normative Jewish theology. With regard to the concept of sin during the time of Christ, there were three competing views: 1) sin was the result of a sin nature genetically passed down, 2) sin was the result of one's own personal action, and 3) sin was connected to Adam, in an undefined manner, and for which posterity is liable for.

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Against this theo-cultural milieu, Paul's letter to the Romans is distinctive for two reasons: 1) his unique focus on the Adam-Christ relationship, and 2) his orientation towards the Old Testament. Both Adam and Jesus Christ were real historical people to Paul, and his approach to both Adam/Christ and the Torah was literal and historical.

The Controversy

In the final clause of Romans 5:12 ("*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...*"), in what sense did Paul mean "all sinned"?

There are three views of whether or not the Doctrine of Imputed Sin exists:

1. Mankind was physically connected to Adam
Augustine (Realistic / Seminal View)
2. Mankind was not physically connected to Adam
Pelagianism (Example View)
Semi-Pelagianism
Arminianism (Mediate Imputation)
3. Mankind was represented by Adam
Federal View (Immediate Imputation)

Augustine (The Realistic or Seminal View)

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is regarded as one of the greatest church Fathers of the Catholic Church. By fusing philosophy with theology, he taught with great clarity, and as a theologian, his theories inspired advances and greater understanding of Church doctrine. In time his writings had great influence on the Western Roman Empire. The "Realistic/Seminal Theory," developed by Tertullian, Augustine, and Anselm, was based on a realistic union between Adam and his descendants. They sought to understand the solidarity and universality of Adam's sin in Romans 5:12. Augustine's view of the Original Sin is largely responsible for the confusion of the definition of Original Sin. Up until Augustine, the term "Original Sin" referred to the sinful nature of man. Augustine introduced the idea that "Original Sin" included the penalty of committing a sin. In Augustine's view, when Adam committed his sin, all of mankind committed it with him.

How Augustine reads Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, **in whom** all sinned."

1. Based on his studies, Augustine felt strongly that the sin of Adam did not only directly affect himself, but also all of mankind. And because the Greek prepositional phrase in Romans 5:12, *eph ho*, was translated as "in whom," Augustine felt that this could only occur if everyone was literally (genetically) "in the loins of Adam." The guilt of Adam was justly charged, because humanity was physically present when Adam committed the sin. In Adam's sin all people actually sinned.

The Greek prepositional phrase, *eph ho*, is made up of a preposition *epi* and a relative pronoun *ho*. Depending on the immediate context and the case of the noun (or pronoun), the preposition *epi* can have several different meanings.

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The relative pronoun *ho* can be either masculine or neuter in gender. Based on the words "one man" as the antecedent in the first clause, Augustine took the relative pronoun *ho* as masculine and gave the preposition *eph* the meaning "in." Thus the prepositional phrase became, *in lumbis Adami*, which is "in the loins of Adam."

2. There was some biblical evidence to support this view in Hebrews 7:9-10.

And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

This passage is where Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek because he was "in the body of his ancestor."

Problems with this interpretation

1. While in the making of the Latin Vulgate Bible, translating from Greek into Latin, Jerome mistranslated Romans 5:12. Instead of saying "because all sinned," he said "in whom all sinned." Thus, in explaining something that was not really found in the Text, Augustine's view generates more questions: a) how is it possible that all of humanity be considered individually participating in the sin while "physically" in Adam? Or b) why aren't the subsequent sins of Adam and our ancestors imputed on us as well?

2. A closer analysis of Hebrews 7:9-10 indicates that this passage does not support the Realistic/Seminal view. The context of this passage is about the greatness of Melchizedek, who is portrayed as one who received tithes from Abraham. The author of the epistle used a figure of speech to acknowledge that Levi, a descendant of Abraham, did not literally pay tithes to Melchizedek.

3. The Realist / Seminal View disrupts the analogy between Adam and Christ. If there was a real physical connection between Adam and humanity, why wasn't one present with Christ and humanity? Humanity was not physically in Christ when He was crucified, yet justification was made available to man.

Pelagianism (Example View)

Pelagius (354-418) was a monk from Britain and a contemporary to Augustine. He was a man of high moral character and disagreed with orthodox theology. His theology said that man was basically good and had control of his own eternal destiny. He denied the doctrine of Original Sin, and denied the necessity for the atoning sacrifice by Christ.

How Pelagius reads Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all **do (or have)** sinned."

1. The charge of the Original Sin was not imputed upon humanity. Man is only responsible for his own personal sins.

2. Introduced by the Original Sin, the corruption of Adam's human nature was not inherited by man. Each person is born with a good and sin free nature with the same ability to choose whether to obey or disobey God as Adam.

3. Man has the ability and free will to be free of sin; salvation was possible through either the Old Testament Law or New Testament Gospel.

Problems with this interpretation

1. The Greek phrase, εφ ω παντες ημαρτον, found in Romans 5:12 rendered correctly reads "because all sinned." Pelagius' interpretation of "because all **do (or have)** sinned" is an incorrect reading of the Greek text. Specifically it is inconsistent with the aorist tense (form of the verb) of ημαρτον, which, with its object, is simply "all sinned." It is one action in the past tense: all sinned through one man. Because of this, there is no reference to sins subsequent to Adam.
2. Within the context of Romans 5:12, ημαρτον cannot refer to the personal sins of men. Paul's argument and logic was to first establish that Adam's sin, not our own, was the cause of death. Within the context of Romans 5:12-19, it is stated no less than five times that only one sin caused death to all of mankind.
3. Verses 13 and 14 indicate that Adam's sin was very unique. While personal sins were not counted when there was no Law, people still died.
4. If Pelagius believes that Adam's sin is his own without any consequence to humanity, it destroys Paul's analogy between Adam and Christ (see v. 12 "just as" and v. 18 "so then"). Paul's illustration of justification by Christ is lost without the reference to the condemnation of humanity for the sin of Adam.

Although a great moral reformer, Pelagius was declared a heretic, and his views and teachings were condemned; he and his followers were excommunicated.

Semi-Pelagianism

The term Semi-Pelagian first appeared in Melancthon's Formula of Concord (1577). It refers to a doctrine that followed the excommunication of Pelagius. The rejection of Pelagius did not mean the total acceptance of Augustine's views. Augustine's view of Imputed Sin meant that salvation could not be earned, and no one could be saved without the special gift of Divine grace. Semi-Pelagians felt that this was wrong, because it destroyed the freedom of man's will and responsibility; they believed man had some role in salvation, and that his unaided will performed the initial act of faith.

How Semi-Pelagians read Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

1. Imputed Sin does not exist. Man is not legally responsible for Adam's sin.
2. Adam was not completely corrupted with the commission of his sin. Because all things created by God are good, human nature is neither good nor bad, nor dead to sin, but merely sick. He was depraved physically and mentally, but not volitionally. Evil can exist temporarily like a parasitic element inside of man. Thus, Adam did not have a truly sinful human nature but rather, a moral weakness and inclination for evil, and this pollution is passed from father to son.
3. Man has the ability to counteract the effect of this inherited depravity and cooperate with the Spirit of God in regeneration. If some are not born again, it must be due to the failure of the human will to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Problems with this interpretation.

1. The Semi-Pelagians' view of death is only physical; it does not explain the spiritual death seen with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from God's presence.
2. The Greek verb tense of "all sinned," is unmistakably clear: there was one singular event of one sin that took place and was attributed to all. The design of the verb is incompatible with any plural or reference to the personal sins of men.
3. Verses 13 and 14 substantiates the statement of verse 12, and do not prove that all men personally sin but exactly the opposite.
4. In the analogy between Adam and Christ, 1) Adam and Christ are direct causes of sin and redemption, and 2) spiritual death (the separation of man from God) is contrasted with redemption (the reunion of man with God). If the Semi-Pelagian view is accepted, the analogy breaks down since 1) man, not Adam, is emphasized as being responsible for his own sin, and 2) physical death (the separation of body and soul) is emphasized as the contrast to redemption.

The debates about sin and grace were heated. Proponents included John Cassian (360-435), Hilary of Arles, Vincent of Lerins, and Faustus of Riez. Augustine argued against Semi-Pelagianism until his death with his work Grace and Free Will and Rebuke and Grace. The debates continued well after Augustine's death.

While the Eastern Orthodox Church accepted it, the Roman Catholic Church condemned the movement in the Council of Orange and Valence (529). Semi - Pelagianism eventually died out; however, the debate of the human will over the grace of God in the initial work of salvation continues to this day.

Arminianism

Once a strong advocate of Dutch Reformed theology, Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) became disillusioned with certain aspects of Calvinism. Consequently he developed some modification, which after his death, was systematically developed further and published in five articles called Arminian Articles of Remonstrance (1610).

He did not agree with Calvinism's view of the total depravity of man's nature and total sovereignty of God where man had no free will. Arminius felt that man has a role in determining his own destiny.

How Arminius reads Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

1. The clause in Romans 5:12, "because all sinned," means that all people suffer the consequences of Adam's sin only when personally consenting to their evil inclinations and committing a sinful act. Man is only liable for sins committed personally, consciously, and volitionally.
2. Arminius did not believe in Imputed Sin. Man inherits the tendency to commit evil, but this corrupt nature is not sin and thus is not charged to one's account.

What is the Doctrine of Imputed Sin? (page 13)

3. Because of his corrupt nature, man does not have the ability to attain righteousness; however, the corruption passed down from Adam is only physical and intellectual and not volitional. Thus man has the will to initiate and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in achieving justification.

Problems with this interpretation.

1. The Greek aorist tense (form of the verb) of ἡμαρτον, with its object, is simply "all sinned." It is one event in the past tense: all sinned through one man. Because of this, there is no reference to sins subsequent to Adam.
2. Within the context of Romans 5:12, ἡμαρτον cannot refer to the personal sins of men. Paul's argument and logic was to first establish that Adam's sin, not our own, was the cause of death. Within the context of Romans 5:12-19, it is stated no less than five times that only one sin caused death to all of mankind.
3. The Arminian view of death is only physical; it does not explain the spiritual death seen with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from God's presence.
4. It is inconsistent with the parallelism drawn between Adam and Christ in the passage for many reasons among them: if we are condemned by inherent corruption, are we justified by inherent righteousness?

At the Synod of Dort in 1619, the five articles of Remonstrance was rejected and condemned. But this theological view did not end and continues perhaps as the most popular view in Christianity today.

Also known as the Theory of Condemnation for Depravity, the Mediate Imputation View was developed by Josua Placeus (1596-1655). Placeus originally denied all imputation of Adam's guilt. But when facing condemnation and censure by the Synod of the French Reformed Church in 1644, he altered his view.

Placeus could not accept the Federal view that man was immediately imputed for Adam's sin at the moment of birth. He held that no one was guilty of Adam's sin; rather, it was the corrupt human nature that was inherited. Therefore, because man is depraved by human nature, exhibits the same disobedient attitude, and commits the same sinful acts as Adam, God is just in punishing man. This became known as the "mediate and subsequent" imputation of sin. Many theologians at the time felt that Placeus' distinction was an over-refinement that was unnecessary and explained nothing; it was Arminianism in disguise.

John Wesley (1703-1791) and later Arminians would further develop this view with the following explanation:

- 1) God creates the soul perfect and not depraved.
- 2) The new physical body is corrupt from the inheritance of Adam's sin.
- 3) When the body and soul is joined, the soul is corrupted.

Federal View (Immediate Imputation)

This theory, also called the Theory of Condemnation by Covenant and the Immediate Imputation Theory, originated with Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), professor at Leyden, and more fully elaborated by Turrentin (1623-1687). This view holds that God made Adam the representative of the human race and because he was our legally constituted representative, his sin was legally imputed to us.

The Federal View is considered immediate imputation, because Adam's sin is immediately the basis for the condemnation of mankind and which results in a corrupt nature that is eventually passed down. In contrast, the Arminian View considers Adam's sin as the basis for a corrupt nature and which results in condemnation; the imputation of sin is mediate.

How the Federal View reads Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

1. This view considers the whole scope of the passage and best reflects Paul's logic and analogy.
2. All are spiritually and physically dead because of **one** sin.
3. All are spiritually and physically dead because **one sinned**.
4. With imputed sin, the analogy of Adam and Jesus is consistent and most easily understood.

Problems with this interpretation

1. There is no biblical evidence that Adam was authorized by mankind to be its representative or to make a covenant agreeing to any conditions. What does this say about God's justice?
2. If God created all things that are good, how can man be created in a depraved state already a sinner? This would mean that God is the author of sin.

The analogy of Adam and Jesus Christ illustrate the biblical principle of imputation. Angels who sin have no such representative in salvation. While the doctrine of Imputed Sin may be hard to reconcile with its implications of being born with sin, one must consider the possibility that it may be a consequence of just judgment.