

## 45-317 ROM 5:12-21

### THE FOUR MONARCHS

As Paul is writing this Epistle to the church at Rome, he is perhaps thinking of the rise and fall of the Emperors of Rome. AD 69 was a dramatic year for the Roman empire. During that year Nero, who was perhaps the worst of all Rome's wicked rulers had virtually alienated everybody by his behavior, personality and policies and finally he brought his own life to an end when all else seemed but lost.

After his death, there was great tyranny over the throne between the armies, the senate, and the political families of Rome and by the time the year was over, Rome went through four short lived emperors.

As Paul is writing his epistle to Rome, he is perhaps thinking of the political upheaval as a backdrop for the spiritual analogy that he is drawing upon here in these verses. I say that, because there are four times that the word "reign" appears.

#### **1. THE REIGN OF SIN**

Have you ever been to a place that is so serene, and beautiful and magnificent that it seems as though it has never been touched by human presence? Somewhere where nature is at its high point of beauty and unspoiled paradise? Most of us have grown up in the city or around at least a rather busy form of life where people are everywhere and the evidence of human presence is at every turn, but to perhaps go off to a place like Yosemite and hike back into the mountains or look at the Yosemite Valley from a distance while you can just sit and admire

the breathtaking magnificence of creation for a while. It is so good to be able to do that now and then. Otherwise, it is impossible to even imagine something as wonderful as the garden of Eden. But, there was once such a place.

That was creation before sin entered into the world. Since that awful day, man has lived in a constant condition known as “the fall of man.” With all of the world’s problems, economic, political, social, physical, health, famine, pestilence, are all direct consequences of “sin entering” the world. Most all of the world has forgotten that simple yet central fact and problem. Do whatever you want politically, socially, economically, scientifically, and so forth, and the problem remains. Sin entered (v.12).

In verse 14, sin is called “Adam’s transgression”. In v. 15 “the offense, in v.19 “by one man’s disobedience”. There is no way to minimize this great problem, for out of it, and it alone came all the problems of man’s history. Take away sin, and you turn history into a blessed ecstasy for every creature that has ever been.

How many times to we even as Christians fail to recognize this simple fact. Talk about all the world’s problems, and all the things that need to be done, and all other cures would be as a band aid on a cancerous wound unless the sin that caused it was also cured.

Here Paul tells us “by one man’s offense, many died” and as by one man’s offense, judgment came to all men.” In 1 Cor. 15:22 Paul adds “in Adam all die”.

The Bible makes it quite clear, that this is the fundamental problem with each man individually and all men corporately.

That angers some, saying, “Hay, that isn’t fair. Why do I have to suffer the consequences of someone who lived

thousands of years ago and I wasn't there and had no part in it, yet, I have to suffer the consequences?"

But, that is the simple truth which is far bigger than our ability to evaluate it or analyze the fairness of it. The Bible says that it is just done. PERIOD.

A number of decades ago, a man named Albert Einstein published a theory known as the "theory of relativity." At the time there was said to be only 12 people on the face of the planet that could even understand it. Forty years later, that number took a sharp turn into the 100's of millions when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. At first just one man knew about it, then 12, then hundreds and then millions were affected by it. The same is true of Hitler, Genghis Khan, the Ceasars of Rome.

"No man is an island" When sin entered the world, it too affected a race yet unborn. If someone objects to being introduced to sin by being locked up in Adam's loins, they should also be aware that in Adam they were introduced to everything, for without him as source, they had nothing, if Adam had died, they would not have had life at all.

Notice also the progression of sin. V.12 "sin entered" V. 20, "sin abounded" V.21 "sin reigned".

What a progression --entered--abounded--reigned. After it entered, it grew in comprehension as v20 tells us when the "law" entered. Here the word entered means "came on stage alongside". Sin was always around, but, it came very clear and seemed to abound when the law came alongside it on stage. The law didn't make it any worse, it just made it stick out and become more apparent when the law appeared.

When everything deteriorates all together, the deterioration isn't really noticed so much, but paint half a room in your house

with a fresh coat of white paint, and the old paint looks really bad. Paint half your car and the old paint stands out.

Well, sin entered the world one day, and before long, it abounded, and before long, it reigned supreme over the entire planet.

So too with personal sin, let sin enter, soon it entertains into it abounds and then it abounds until it reigns.

## **2. THE REIGN OF DEATH**

Paul then tells us that the same thing happened to death. V.12 (1)“sin entered and death through sin. Then (2) death spread to all men. Then v.14 “Death reigned”. The same cancerous progression. Death enters, abounds and it then reigns.

One has obviously led to the other. As terrible as a thing is to be born with sin, is the direct result of sin and that sin is the cause of death. That according to the Word of God, it the single reason for death. Sin causes death.

The Lord told Adam in the garden, “The day in which you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, dying thou shalt surely die.”

Since that day, every child of Adam was born a sinner, and thus in a sense born to die. It is as if we were all born on death row. Sounds quite terrible, and it should, for nothing has worse ramifications if left undealt with. We are all so uptight about how long life is or is not, what is fair or unfair, right or wrong. We tend to measure the fairness of life as 70 years and we are fortunate if we live longer and unfortunate if we live less, but, the real tragedy is that man dies at all. Right now all of us over 30-40 years old

are dying as I speak. Our bodies are on the decline and some of us have diseases in us right now that will kill us. Happily, we probably don't know it yet, though we feel something trying to get at us.

All of that is because sin entered, abounded and reigned. With it came death that entered, is abounding all over the world throughout history and has reigned greater than any earthly king imagines his authority to cover the earth.

### **3. THE REIGN OF GRACE**

At the same time as Albert Einstein was working on his theory, that would release the atom to the world, there was another man walking around by the name of Alexander Fleming. This man ended up to be a would famous micro-biologist whose discovery of Penicillin would also revolutionize the world. One man came into the world and an abuse of his theory has the world still living in fear with the atomic and nuclear capacities, and another man has perhaps preserved the lives of more through his offering to the world penicillin.

Well, Adam brought sin and death into the world and they went on to abound and the reign, but Jesus came along and offered something with which to inoculate oneself that outweighs the effects of Adam's fall. It is the intervention of "Grace"

In verse 14, Paul calls Adam, a type of "Him that was to come" That is, as if to say, there are two people which have different effects. Both are inniatators of events of catastrophic size. One brought death, the other brought grace. One invented sin, and the other invented salvation. They are similar in that they are the two heads and leaders of history. One into sin and death,

and the other the head of grace and life.

One headed up the sin department. Offense, Death, Disobedience, and through him, many are made sinners. The other heads up the righteousness department. He deals in “free gift, justification, righteousness,

As terrible as is sin and death, all is not hopeless, nor is it even bleak, for grace is even more than equally real and more than equally powerful.

For every sin that robs, attacks, destroys and mames, there is grace to restore and build. For every grave that sin and death opens, there is a door to heaven opened by grace.

That is the glorious message now introduced. When Jesus came into the world, grace entered the world. For 33 years grace was entering and being revealed. When Jesus went to the cross, sin abounded even over sin and death. When sin was abounding and the world was crying “Crucify Him” Grace was crying “Father forgive them” When the two thieves were dying and attacking all the way to the very gates of hell, grace reached out and saved one at the last moment of his sin and death entering, abounding and reigning life and grace entered and abounded and then as Paul writes in verse 21, “grace reigned”

That’s how Paul felt about his own life. To Timothy he wrote “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.” Paul called himself on one occasion an “ektroma” which means an abortion or a miscarriage.

**1Co 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.**

**10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God**

**which was with me.**

**Paul about himself**

**1 Tim 1:13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**

**14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**

The reign of grace is a greater reign than the reign of either sin or death, for, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, or super abound or hyper abound. As great as was the reigning clutches of sin and death, they must give up their prey when somebody cries out for the grace of God.

#### **4. REIGN OF LIFE v.17**

This is a most wonderful reign here. One commentator remarks that this reign is different from the reign of sin and death for “Death reign, it is a tyrant, but life does not reign, it has no subjects; it makes kings”

That is the wonderful result of “grace reigning” it brings life and makes life reign.

There is a most interesting story in Judges 1. After Joshuas leadership ended, there was confusion as to who should deal with the Canaanites, and the Lord chose Judah. So Judah took Simeon along and beat the people of Bezek and captured the king, Adoni-Bezek and cut off his thumbs and big toes. He himself commented by saying “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes have picked up scraps under my table, now God has paid me back for what I did to them. Judges 1:7

Big toes give balance and thumbs provide grip. Without either a king cannot walk or grasp his sword--he thus wobbles about unarmed and unrespected, and if he must beg for scraps under a table he is king in name only.

How sad that that seems to be the condition of so many in the kingdom of heaven and grace. Sin and death once reigned, and now grace reigns as they have come to Christ, but, they have yet to really have life reign. The wobble around begging blessings, begging for hope, peace, joy.

Instead of living triumphantly feeding on the table that is prepared for them, they eat scraps of blessing and they can't hold a sword not attack the enemy that keeps them down