

# Original Sin Cheat Sheet

## CORE POSITION (ONE SENTENCE)

The Bible explicitly teaches individual moral accountability — "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20) — and the Augustinian doctrine of

inherited guilt depends on a Latin mistranslation of Romans 5:12 that the Greek-speaking Eastern church never accepted.

## KEY FACTS

- Augustine's inherited-guilt reading of Romans 5:12 was based on the Latin *in quo* ("in whom"), but the Greek *eph' ho* means "because" — "death spread to all because all have sinned"
- The Eastern Orthodox Church has never taught inherited *guilt* — only inherited mortality and a weakened nature

- Ezekiel 18:2-4, 20 explicitly rejects inherited guilt: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father"
- Jesus held up children as the model of kingdom worthiness (Matthew 18:3; 19:14)
- Infant baptism was not universal in the early church — Tertullian (c. 200 AD) explicitly argued against it
- Article of Faith 2: "Men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression"

## THEIR PROOF-TEXTS — AND RESPONSES

Verse	Their Claim	Our Response
<b>Rom. 5:12</b>	"All have sinned" = sinned <i>in Adam</i> , inherited guilt	Greek <i>eph' ho</i> = "because," not "in whom." Augustine's reading came from a Latin mistranslation. Eastern church never accepted it.
<b>Ps. 51:5</b>	"Shapen in iniquity" = born guilty	Hebrew penitential poetry using hyperbole. Ps. 58:3 says newborns "speak lies" — not literal. Genre is poetic exaggeration.
<b>Eph. 2:3</b>	"By nature children of wrath" = born under wrath	Context is pre-conversion <i>lifestyle</i> , not birth. "By nature" = by habitual practice. "Children of wrath" = deserving of wrath (Hebraism), not biologically condemned.
<b>Rom. 5:18-19</b>	Adam's offense = condemnation for all	Paul's own logic: as condemnation came through Adam, justification comes through Christ — universally. 1 Cor. 15:22 — "In Christ shall all be made alive." The Atonement covers the Fall's effects for all.

## OUR BEST SCRIPTURES

- **Ezekiel 18:2-4, 20** — "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" — the definitive text
- **Deuteronomy 24:16** — "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin"
- **Jeremiah 31:29-30** — "Every one shall die for his own iniquity"
- **Matthew 18:3** — "Become as little children" — children as the model, not the condemned

- **Matthew 19:14** — "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"
- **1 Corinthians 15:22** — "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"
- **Psalms 139:13-14** — "Fearfully and wonderfully made"
- **Moroni 8:8-12** — Little children are whole, alive in Christ
- **2 Nephi 2:22-25** — "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy"
- **D&C 93:38** — "Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning"
- **Article of Faith 2** — Punished for own sins, not Adam's transgression

## EARLY CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

Source	Position	Significance
<b>Eastern Church (broadly)</b>	Inherited mortality, not guilt	Greek-reading theologians never derived Augustinian original sin from Romans 5:12
<b>Clement of Alexandria (c. 200)</b>	Newborn children have not sinned	Explicitly rejected infant guilt
<b>Tertullian (c. 200)</b>	Argued against infant baptism ( <i>De Baptismo</i> , 18)	Practice not universal in early church
<b>Irenaeus (c. 180)</b>	Fall brought death and corruption, not inherited personal guilt	Pre-Augustinian position compatible with LDS
<b>Augustine (354-430)</b>	Developed inherited guilt doctrine against Pelagius	Relied on Latin mistranslation; contested in his own time
<b>The Didache (c. 70-100)</b>	Baptism presupposes instruction and fasting — adult converts	Earliest church manual has no infant baptism

## QUICK-FIRE OBJECTION RESPONSES

### "Romans 5:12 clearly says all sinned in Adam."

The Greek does not say "in whom" — it says "because." Augustine read the Latin, not the Greek. The entire Eastern church reads this differently. Paul's point: death came through Adam; all die because all eventually sin personally.

### "Psalm 51:5 — sinful from conception."

Hebrew penitential poetry. Same psalm genre that says newborns "speak lies" (Ps. 58:3). Hyperbolic expression of lifelong sinfulness, not a doctrinal statement about metaphysical guilt transmission.

### "Without original sin, why do all people sin?"

All accountable humans sin (Rom. 3:23) because mortality involves temptation and weakness. The universality of sin does not require the mechanism of inherited guilt. There is a difference between "all sin" and "all are born guilty."

### "Your view is Pelagianism."

Pelagius denied the need for grace. LDS theology emphatically affirms grace (2 Nephi 25:23). The LDS position: children are born innocent AND grace is absolutely necessary for salvation. These are not contradictory.

### "Infant baptism proves the early church believed in original sin."

Infant baptism was not universal early on. The Didache presupposes adult baptism. Tertullian argued against infant baptism (c. 200 AD). The practice spread alongside Augustine's theology in the 4th-5th centuries.

### "If no original sin, why did Christ need to die?"

Christ's Atonement overcomes the universal effects of the Fall (death, separation from God) AND provides forgiveness for personal sins. 1 Cor. 15:22 — all die in Adam, all made alive in Christ. The Atonement is vast — it does not need inherited guilt to be necessary.

### STRONGEST ARGUMENT IN ONE PARAGRAPH

God declares in Ezekiel 18:20: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." This is not ambiguous. The Augustinian doctrine of inherited guilt — which holds that every infant bears Adam's guilt from conception — directly contradicts this divine declaration. The doctrine was built on Augustine's reading of the Latin

Vulgate of Romans 5:12, which mistranslated the Greek *eph' ho* ("because") as *in quo* ("in whom"). The Greek-speaking Eastern church, reading Paul in the original, never adopted inherited guilt. Jesus held children up as the model of kingdom worthiness: "of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). The Latter-day Saint position — that "men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Article of Faith 2) — aligns with Ezekiel 18, Deuteronomy 24:16, the Eastern Christian tradition, and the words of Jesus about children.

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#### Resources:

- [FairLatterdaySaints — Original Sin](#)

- [ChurchofJesusChrist.org — Fall of Adam and Eve](#)