

Theology 2.8 – Word made flesh

A. DIACHRONIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE FALL-REDEMPTION SPIRITUAL REALITY [Diachronic means how God’s redemptive plan play out throughout redemptive history].

1. The Influence of Evil and demons

- a. Adam & Eve and the Fall introduce evil into the Scriptural OT spotlight.**
 - i. Throughout Genesis chapter’s 1-11 human depravity continues to descend to new lows. Finally in Chapter 12 God initiates a new approach of Grace – a people of His own choosing to lead and guide humanity with the calling of Abraham.**
 - ii. Satan’s influence was indirect rather than direct – he influenced humanity through subterfuge not coercion.**
 - iii. Satan’s action was committed knowingly in direct rebellious conflict with the will of God.**
 - iv. Humanity’s decision to believe Satan and act on his prompting was a grave mistake – and deceit led to the loss of innocence and to death.**
- b. Israel’s OT struggle was with Idolatry.**
 - i. False gods confuse faith... it is another level of deception.**
 - ii. General revelation makes apparent that God does exist. Humanity knew better, but still believed the lie. The conflict escalates when humanity chooses darkness instead of the light. Rejecting the reality of God, humanity instead chooses the false sense of control and security that idols are intended to provide.**
 - iii. Demons are the power and false gods behind idolatry. There is a power there and a human need they deceitfully seem to fill.**
 - iv. Idolatry is the norm with Israel’s neighbor nations. Only Israel is provided with the knowledge of God’s Self disclosure in Scripture.**
- c. Job is the most overt OT conflict between humanity and Satan.**
 - i. This is a direct conflict of indirectly inflicted suffering that is initiated and permitted by God. This is a troubling aspect of the spiritual battle that is ongoing between light and darkness.**
 - ii. God restrains evil’s action – can’t take Job’s life... but evil is otherwise free to engage him with harm and hurt.**
 - iii. Then more troubling, a second time God challenges Satan with Job’s faith and a second time evil is restrained but permitted to act on him.**
 - iv. God never explains His rationale, but the faithful must satisfy themselves with the reality that God is God, and His will must prevail though we don’t understand it. The conclusion of Job justifies this but doesn’t resolve why it happened.**
- d. During Jesus days on earth there is an active evil that is released.**
 - i. Satan tries to kill Jesus as an infant.**

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- ii. Satan then tries to mislead and deceive Jesus from His mission through the temptation in the wilderness. Jesus recognizes the lie and employs Scripture as a primary defense against Satan – an obvious affirmation to the power of Scripture over evil, and the prototypical model of defense for believers.
 - iii. Demon possession and oppression are rampant during Jesus ministry. The demons know who Jesus is. They also realize that the future reign of Jesus will occur, and they are not looking forward to that reality.
 - iv. Jesus teaches on the importance of “binding the strongman” – the spiritual conflict is the real battle, and eternity the real world and hope.
 - v. Jesus demonstrates repeatedly in miracles His power and authority over creation and the spiritual realm.
 - vi. Satan tries to discourage Jesus – to make His mission so painful that it might discourage Jesus and stop Him from dying and setting free the captives to sin.
 - vii. Satan enters Judas – and initiates betrayal, torment, extreme pain and a brutal death through the most wholesome and intimate of acknowledgements, that is a kiss of affection and recognition.
 - viii. Jesus fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy [chap 53] – suffering in silence, being broken and killed.
 - ix. Jesus’ resurrection proclaims His victory – over Satan, evil, and death. Jesus’ victory seals Satan’s and evil’s doom.
- e. Jesus never challenges Satan’s authority to test and tempt.
- i. **Amplified Bible** ^{Lk 22:31} Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has asked excessively [demanding] that [of all] you be given up to him [out of the power and protective keeping of God], that he might sift [all of] you like grain, [Job 1:6-12; Amos 9:9] ^{Lk 22:32} But I have prayed especially for you [Peter], that your [own] faith may not fail; and when you yourself have turned again, strengthen *and* establish your brethren.
 - ii. The siftings recorded in Scripture [Job, Peter, Apostles] are people at the top of their game – the sifting will make things extremely difficult... the best solution is prayer.
 - iii. Prayer focuses faith – it allows us to see the spiritual nature of the struggle... the spiritual dimension is key. We cannot fight this battle in our own strength – prayer engages and allows the indwelling Spirit to fight it for us.
 - iv. Satan has the authority to harm believers – but Jesus has the greater authority and can transform what is meant for evil into good.
- f. Jesus’ victory seals Satan’s defeat and the conflict goes another direction:

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- i. Satan then shifts his action to that of spoiler – he works to destroy faith through persecution of the faithful, making it painful for them to persist in faithful obedience.
 - ii. Satan employs a new wave of idolatry – false faith, spiritual confusion, materialism, confusing the Christian message with heresies and birthing new false faiths from true faith, and revitalizing false spiritualism and idolatry.
 - iii. The message of the church is being subverted and confused, true spirituality is constantly being diluted – it is a deliberate and much more subtle approach not calling attention to the true conflict.
- g. **Overcoming evil and the world order through obedience and love 1 John 5:1-13**

^{1Jn 5:1} EVERYONE WHO **believes** (adheres to, trusts, and relies on the fact) that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah) is a born-again child of God; and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him (His offspring).

^{1Jn 5:2} By this we come to know (recognize and understand) that we **love** the children of God: when we love God and **obey** His commands (orders, charges)—[when we keep His ordinances and are mindful of His precepts and His teaching].

^{1Jn 5:3} For the [true] love of God is this: that we do **[obey]** His commands [keep His ordinances and are mindful of His precepts and teaching]. And these orders of His are not irksome (burdensome, oppressive, or grievous).

^{1Jn 5:4} For whatever is born of God is **victorious** over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even our faith.

^{1Jn 5:5} Who is it that is **victorious** over [that conquers] the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God [who adheres to, trusts in, and relies on that fact]?

^{1Jn 5:6} This is He Who came by (with) water and blood [His baptism and His death], Jesus Christ (the Messiah)—not by (in) the water only, but by (in) the water and the blood. And it is the [Holy] **Spirit Who bears witness**, because the [Holy] Spirit is the Truth.

^{1Jn 5:7} So there are **three witnesses in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit**, and these *three are One*;

^{1Jn 5:8} and there are **three witnesses on the earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood**; and these three agree [are in unison; their testimony coincides].

^{1Jn 5:9} If we accept [as we do] the testimony of men [if we are willing to take human authority], the **testimony of God is greater** (of stronger authority), for this is the testimony of God, even the witness which He has borne regarding His Son.

^{1Jn 5:10} He who believes in the Son of God [who adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him] has the testimony [possesses this divine attestation] within himself. He who does not believe God [in this way] has made Him out to be *and* represented Him as a liar, because he has not believed (put his faith in, adhered to, and relied on) the evidence (the testimony) that God has borne regarding His Son.

^{1Jn 5:11} And this is that **testimony** (that evidence): **God gave us eternal life**, and this life is in His Son.

^{1Jn 5:12} He who possesses the Son has that life; he who does not possess the Son of God does not have that life. ^{1Jn 5:13} I write this to you who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) the name of the Son of God [in the peculiar services and blessings conferred by Him on men], so that you may know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that you [already] have life, yes, eternal life.

- i) **There is a reason for our belief – it is God’s redemptive truth continually being born out in our life experience. This is our witness – not merely the words we speak, but the life we live.**
- ii) **There is often suffering that accompanies the Way – spiritual confrontation is to be expected because we are at odds with the world’s standard of practice.**

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- iii) **There is a Hope that sustains us – it is eternity that is our spiritual birthright. Thus the difficulties we may experience in this life need to be set against the joy of the next. This is more than “pie in the sky by and by” – it is real.**
- iv) **Centrality of the Gospel is based on who Jesus is – who He said He is, and the mission He came to achieve – bring peace between humanity and God. He is the reason we hope and believe.**

Outline of Discussion – Who is Jesus – this is the supreme question everybody will need to answer, and every disciple needs to have worked out personally.

- 1) **People who are raised with a church background have one set of problems, while those outside the church have another.**
- 2) **The Biblical basis of faith cannot be overemphasized... it is the objective standard we all must weigh in on for faith and practice.**
- 3) **You can't really understand Jesus or His mission without an understanding of the Old Testament.**
 - a) **OT offices filled by Jesus:**
 - i) **Prophet**
 - ii) **Priest**
 - iii) **King**
 - b) **OT Themes & Jesus**
 - i) **New Adam**
 - ii) **New Israel**
 - iii) **New Tabernacle/Temple**
 - iv) **New worship – sacrifice, Passover & atonement**
 - c) **OT Laws & Jesus**
 - i) **New ethics and morality**
 - ii) **Priority of internal vs. external**
 - d) **God revealed in a new light**
 - i) **Trinity**
 - ii) **Character – priority of heart and intent**
- 4) **Jesus & Prophet**
 - a) **Moses was the OT lawgiver & prophetic deliverer who introduced a limited atonement and hope of blessing in the land secured by God.**
 - i) **There are other OT prophets who were used to identify and anoint the king, to call the king back to faithful rule, and to call the nation's leaders and people back to God.**
 - ii) **In the inter-testament period [between Malachi and Mathew] there were no prophets.**
 - b) **Jesus as God also fulfilled a prophetic function where He:**
 - i) **Was the new and better law giver.**

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- ii) Was the new and greater deliverer.
 - iii) Initiated the new and better atonement.
 - iv) Revealed a new and better Hope – promise of blessings of eternity in Heaven with God, far surpass the blessings on earth in the land of promise.
 - v) The Jews claimed Jesus was a prophet, but Jesus never made that claim for Himself – His claim was to divinity.
- c) Jesus revealed a whole new order that was based out of the OT but was infinitely better.
- d) Modern spirituality humanizes Jesus – it focuses on His ethics and humanity rather than divinity. He is the good teacher rather than the supreme Lord.
- i) OT civil Law [not the sacrificial or cultic law] has many ties to other near Eastern civil law such as the code of Hammurabi and other pagan laws – this is the result of ‘common grace’.
 - ii) What makes Christianity unique is ‘specific grace’. As Christians, we should not try to minimize common grace, it is the means that allows us as humans to have a spiritual dialogue to begin with. However, it is the identity of Jesus as God that is transformational not merely His ethic.
 - iii) Atonement is impossible unless Jesus is God.
 - (1) Mat 16:13-20 – asks “who do people say the Son of Man is?” This is a critical passage – it is identifying Jesus as God. It is a deal-breaker to say otherwise. Peter’s admission is of Jesus Deity, not merely humanity. This understanding of Jesus as God, and Peter’s admission of it is the beginning of the church. The divine initiative of God revealed who Jesus is.
 - (2) Ezekiel employs the “Son of Man” phrase that courses throughout his book. It is an acknowledgment of who Ezekiel is as a prophet representative of humanity. This title has additional connotations in Daniel as One who was definitely more than angelic or human as a foreshadowing of Jesus.
 - (3) Mat 26:63-68 – Jesus says He is the Messiah... the Son of God, as well as the Son of Man. He is everlasting King – Ruler of earth and Heaven. This is the usage Jesus approved of. Jesus isn’t just a prophet... He is the Heavenly King.
 - (4) Rom 8:14 – we who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God – we are not divinity, but we are rightly related to Divinity.
 - (5) It is not clear how free will and God’s revelation initiative allows one to know who Jesus really is... it is a spiritual mystery and a matter of faith.
 - (6) The disciples and the descendents of the disciples have the keys of Heaven, and the responsibility of loosing and binding.
- e) Gospel message has had many usages:
- i) Rauschenbusch – gospel to him is social ethics... it is the relieving of oppression and suffering that one demonstrates being like Jesus... this is too small a view of Jesus.

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- ii) Francis Schaeffer in How Should We Then Live seems to suggest that social ethics is an important defining focus... however it is wrong to think that it is as important as Jesus Deity – this is wrong.
- iii) Tim Keller says the true gospel is the Deity of Christ... everything flows out of that. Compassion ministry is an important aspect, but not primal.
- iv) Modern missions and urban ministry needs to maintain the Gospel central focus of Heaven and hell – and of the nature of transformational conversion in becoming something new.
- v) The church today is guilty of watering down the reality of sin and the atonement of Christ... they preach too small and narrow of a proclamation of the gospel.
- vi) Church needs to focus on Gospel centrality as a Spiritual reality, and to resist the prevailing church drift toward legalism, behavioral modification, the social gospel, etc.
- f) Eschatology – the end in many ways does justify the means in terms of theology... be clear about your own thinking and how it moves people toward eternity.
 - i) Jesus prophetic ministry is primarily foretelling about eschatology – it’s all about Heaven and hell.
 - ii) Jesus changes dramatically the Mosaic code of ethics... and especially the price of error and blessing.
 - iii) The code of Hammurabi is actually more liberal than the Mosaic code... it was a blueprint for governing human society not their spiritual reality.
 - iv) Mosaic code was strong about restitution... it was important to restore and redeem whenever possible. This looked forward to fulfillment in Jesus Gospel.
 - v) While restitution was important to Jesus as a demonstration of a person’s changed nature [Zacchaeus] – the intent of the heart was more important than the action alone.
- g) Jesus as Priest
 - i) The office of priest was as the mediator of the covenant sacrificial system. It was the go-between for sinful man before a Holy God.
 - ii) Jesus is not just priest... He is the High Priest. Now in heaven He is the most effective go-between humanity could ever have... being both human and divine.
 - iii) Christians now have both roles in the church age:
 - (1) As prophets we proclaim the gospel and have the keys.
 - (2) As priests we are reigning now with Christ and will reign with Him in eternity... we are learning how to reign as we cooperate with the Spirit to further the Kingdom of God.
 - (3) Jesus Kingdom is not of this world – however He has the complete authority and rules in righteousness now.
 - (4) We experience God’s supernatural life as Jesus reigns at the Right Hand of the Father – He is ruling in our life and through our life... as imperfect as we are.
 - iv) Ps 110 is the most quoted in the NT.

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- (1) It conveys a triumphant vision of ministry.
- (2) It is also a triumphant vision of human destiny.
- v) Jesus is not just the mediator – He is also the sacrifice and the donor who voluntarily lays down His life... though this it is done at the Father's initiative, but Jesus fully accepts and embraces the fulfilling of the role.
- vi) Atonement was the fulfillment and complete satisfaction of God's righteousness, holy anger, wrath, love, compassion, etc. All the characteristics of God are perfectly balanced and perfectly expressed in the atonement.
 - (1) Christian's life as "living sacrifices" is a type of how we reflect and express the atonement.
 - (2) Compassion ministry and social ethics alone is totally insufficient.
 - (3) The Post-modern thinking of atonement of Jesus as "divine child abuse" is a great slogan, but totally misses the point.
 - (4) Atonement is necessary because of the depth of the problem of sin. Our problem is fundamentally a spiritual one.
- vii) Gospel Positions - Lev 6:4-5 – discusses the guilt offering that requires restitution. A healthy understanding of the magnitude of the sin problem totally affects our view of sin, and requires repentance [a meaningful and contrite heart-felt change of mind and attitude] ... not just restitution. Intention precedes action, and both need to be in balance.
 - (1) A position of free grace would say that you can keep what you swindled, as long as you repent and accept grace.
 - (2) A position of pure law says that you are justified by your action – the OT Temple priest saw only the sacrifice, not the intent of the heart.
 - (3) A position of true repentance gratefully accepts the grace offered, and then also realizing and doing what is right and honorable... because we know how great our need is.
 - (a) Anything else is cheap grace... the understanding of what sin does to God and our total need and complete helplessness to improve our condition to be satisfactory before a Pure and Holy God requires a significant personal response – Luke 7:36-50... the sinful woman nailed it!
 - (b) Most people are merely sorry they got caught – that is not true repentance.
 - (4) The so called "Lordship Gospel" position [MacArthur and others] is vitally linked with doing – it is a works focused view that emphasizes:
 - (a) Pick up your own cross and follow Me.
 - (b) Lay down your right to yourself – some theologians think that being a living sacrifice may be better if it makes you miserable or unhappy, but this is not

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- necessarily a Biblically supported position. Jesus attested that He came that we could have life abundantly, joyfully ... not in some lesser form of guilt and misery.
- (c) Don't take provisions with you [reference to the sending of the 70] and live on faith reliance is something Jesus asked these particular followers to do. There are times we are asked to rely completely on faith, but most of the time we are asked to use our brains and strategically prepare and execute.
 - (d) Rich young ruler was asked to sell everything and follow me – that was Jesus message for him alone, and not the model for discipleship in general.
 - (e) Zacchaeus was led to offering restitution – it seems apparent that this was the outward working of an inward event of repentance. The restitution did not precede the faith event... it was external evidence of a change in him.
 - (f) Discipleship is not about coming up with a “super-list” of dos and don'ts... if you are keeping a list you have missed the point. Preachers who guilt you into any course of action ought to be viewed with suspicion... the job of effective preaching is to place one firmly before Jesus where the Spirit will search and convict them – then exonerate then in grace. Whatever action follows thereafter is a work of the Spirit in the faithful disciple.
- (5) Recognize that each believer is on their own journey with Jesus as guided by the Spirit... we all start at the same place – Salvation, and we end at the same place – Glory. How we get there is the journey. Avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach to discipleship. Work instead to 1) sensitizing people to God's Spirit, 2) equipping them with the Truth, and 3) empowering them to walk in faith as God leads them. Emphasize your own role as a co-follower rather than a leading ruler... we all have only One Ruler. Avoid any semblance of spiritual abuse as a leader.
- (6) General Lordship position would hold that there are ups and downs but each must persevere to the end. No gross denials, no gross sin unresolved, or apostasy – but general growth and development.
- (7) Free Grace position holds that all you need to do is believe... you can add nothing more to what God has already done, and our efforts to do so discount the efficacy of grace. All you need to do is believe... how you end your journey is thought to be unimportant; it's all about how you begin.
- (8) Gospel Centered position has sin balanced by grace. The goal is to end well... but acknowledge that some may end badly or not as well as another, and that's ok.
- (a) God will not allow long term sin to go unchallenged in a true believer – at some point, God will convict them or take them home.
 - (b) True understanding of the sin problem requires repentance in the acceptance of grace. One cannot realistically remain unrepentant and be truly regenerated.

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- (c) Discipleship allows people to stumble and even fall... but there needs to be an appropriate response of repentance and change to validate faith.
- (9) Prosperity Gospel position is another major problematic approach as it denies the reality of suffering.
 - (a) Being a believer will not necessitate wealth, health, and abundant blessing in this life.
 - (b) Our promise is eternal – not temporal.
 - (c) The prosperity gospel follows the OT example of ‘blessings in the land’ based upon obedience, and curses for disobedience. While this is a form of grace, it is a lesser form than what Jesus preached – note that the Beatitudes are ALL blessings.
- (10) Self-help Gospel position is equally flawed – preaching that focuses on making people’s lives work better is not what Jesus or His Apostles preached. However, far too many churches promote this as an acceptable means for life change. The only relevant life change is Spiritual Transformational – cleaning us up and feeling or doing better is too small a view of Grace.