

Theology 2 – Word made flesh

A. JESUS – WHO IS HE: this is the biggest question for any to entertain, and the answer has eternal consequences.

- Who did Jesus say He was?
- Who did others say He was?
- Who was He in terms of redemptive history?
- Who is He to me?

1. What is the Gospel of Jesus – displayed simply in 1 Cor 13:

- a. Faith – is trust, based on a miraculous personal relationship with a risen Savior.**
- b. Hope – is the element of a secure future, focusing over time for it to play out.**
- c. Love – is our rightful response, to an awesome and wonderful Lord who has shouldered a burden I could never carry.**
- d. The Gospel is the Center of Jesus & Apostolic message and ministry – it should be ours as well.**

2. Who does a believer in Jesus Christ actually follow? There are OT allusions that are rich in meaning and significance to ponder:

- a. He is Prophet, Priest, and King.**
 - i. Some have suggested we follow Him because we owe an extreme debt to Him for the work of atonement paid for in His flesh and blood... but while true it is not enough.**
 - ii. We follow Him because we love Him. We love Him because He first loved us.**
 - iii. We believe in Him because we have experienced Him personally and relationally, and we have our own evidence of His transforming nature playing out in our life as we mature as disciples.**
- b. He is also True Israel, the new Adam, and the New Tabernacle/Temple.**
 - i. Rev 21:23 – there is no need for a temple in heaven, because we live in Gods dwelling place... we no longer need to go someplace to meet, we're in God's immediate proximity. There were great men in OT Scripture who were caught up in the Spirit and afforded a vision of God in Heaven... but they could not remain there. Now we can reside there permanently.**
 - ii. God created man for relationship with Him and with one other... this is the substance of God's decree 'it is not good for man to be alone.' Being made in the image of God and having His breath [Spirit] in us, we enjoy relational intimacy that was formerly impossible. The 1st Adam messed things up, and the 2nd Adam has set things right.**
 - iii. Creation – God created a place [garden] where He and man could be together. The 1st Adam was purposed to rule over creation but he forfeited that right which was**

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- usurped by Satan. Jesus as the 2nd Adam demonstrated His rule over creation through His many miracles.
- iv. **Fall** – placed a barrier between humanity and God that we could not overcome... but Messiah alone could and did. The barrier separating us from God is now permanently removed symbolized by the torn curtain in the Temple at Jesus' death... torn from the top, which only God could do.
 - v. **Law** – under the Law the Tabernacle and the Temple where the appointed meeting places for humanity and God. Jesus is the ultimate Tabernacle who lived among humanity and the human heart now is the ultimate Temple where God resides as Spirit in all of His people/believers.
 - vi. **Incarnation** – Jesus was God actively dwelling [tabernacle] with humanity in Person... the closest possible proximity prior to Pentecost.
 - vii. **Gospel** – proclaims God as Trinity – Father, Son and Spirit – all are each actively involved with humanity, and all personally committed to the redemption of humanity.
- c. **Angel of the Lord** – there are many theologians who believe that the “Angel of the Lord” and the one appearing as a “Son of Man” in OT verses are pre-incarnation visitations of Jesus.
- i. Some want to discredit these as “OT Legend” verses – thereby effectively writing off these verses and their potential theological implication and application to developing redemptive history.
 - ii. Something supernatural is certainly going on here... if these verses don't refer to the pre-incarnate Jesus they are at least Angelic visitations on God's behalf... the “Lord” and “God” references may be telling of a greater agent involved than an Angelic being. This is a mystery we just don't know as yet, but it will be revealed in heaven.
 - iii. **Gen 32:22-33** – who was it that Jacob wrestled with?
 1. He is identified as God.
 2. He has the authority of renaming and thus redefining Jacob's identity.
 3. Such authority is more in keeping with the Son of God, but could be an Angel fulfilling God's directions.
 4. Some believe that Deity would not stoop to coming to earth from their Heavenly abode, so a messenger was sent – this is not in keeping with the Son of God who not only came to earth, but came as man/Deity as the Suffering-Servant/King... the Messiah.
 - iv. **Gen 33:1-17** – displays the progressive brokenness of Jacob.

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1. He now walks with a limp... probably for the rest of his life. His physical strength has thus been compromised... he can no longer rely on his personal physical power to solve his problems.
2. He has always displayed himself as one who was crafty and deceptive... he relied heavily on his shrewd thinking and planning. What does the staging of his meeting with his brother Esau, who Jacob expected to be his adversary, say about the change in Jacob?
 - a. Jacob sends everyone else ahead with specific instructions of what to say to Esau and Jacob is alone and last in the procession – this is obviously strategic, but what does it say about Jacob?
 - b. This clearly shows that Jacob's pride was broken... or he would have gone first with his warriors prepared for battle.
 - c. Going last has several implications:
 - i. Possibly, by placing his family and possessions up in front, he may have expected that if Esau meant ill toward him that he would have taken them by force and giving Jacob time to escape – but that would be cowardice.
 - ii. Possibly, by going last and having his family and possessions up front and reminding Esau that Jacob was in the rear may be understood that if Esau meant ill toward Jacob, he would have pressed forward and perhaps this would have given his family time to escape – that would be bravery.
 - iii. Most likely, by facing Esau last and alone and limping obviously meant that he was no threat to Esau, the expected rage of Esau may have been removed from Esau's heart... replaced by pity.
 - iv. If this last approach is true and we won't know for sure until we learn it in heaven, a Spiritual principle may be on display – that through our own brokenness, pride is removed and healing can occur. This 'sounds' like something God in His grace would approve of.
- v. Gen 16:7-14 – the “Angel of the Lord” and Hagar
 1. In this story, this Spiritual being is alternatively called an Angel and God.
 2. He makes a prophecy regarding Ishmael and advises Hagar to return to her mistress and submit to her.
 3. As this story continues to develop, it becomes clear that Hagar didn't continue in her submission to Sarah. Instead she boasted of her ability of being Abraham children thus demonstrating her desire to supplant Sarah.

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This disobedience along with the prophecy of what sort of man Ishmael would become led to the fracturing of Abraham's family and the schism of his descendents.

- vi. Zech 3:1-10 – Angel of the Lord and Joshua the High Priest and Satan
 - 1. He rebukes Satan's condemnation of Joshua in the Name of the Lord.
 - 2. He removes Joshua's sin... symbolic in the removal his dirty clothes and the clean apparel provided.
 - 3. He is reveals prophecy regarding the Branch [Messiah] and the future of Israel.
 - vii. Deut 6:4-5 – The Shema revealed – the Lord God is One.
 - 1. You will have no other gods before Me – exclusive devotion.
 - 2. There is only One God who you will love and serve – exclusive service.
 - 3. One = sameness – He is the same One who has had His hand on Israel throughout redemptive history – exclusivity as there is no other God.
 - 4. History is recounted in Deut to remind Israel of what God has done on their behalf – they are to remember and remind each other to keep the experience fresh. God knows how forgetful humanity has become and how easily distracted we are.
 - 5. Sanctification – is demonstrated in God's active presence working in the life of His people and through time.
 - viii. Dan 3:25 – One looking like a "Son of the Gods" standing with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
 - 1. This Presence was there to protect those called for God's purpose.
 - 2. This Presence was equally for the benefit of those observing that God was involved in the life of these men. The miraculous event surely convicted and chastened those aligned against them.
3. Jesus being born of a virgin says Jesus is Divine – it is physically impossible for a woman to conceive and give birth without a father... the only way a virgin could conceive is Spiritually. This heralded that Jesus is Messiah – the God/man prophesized in Scripture.
- a. The virgin birth demonstrates God initiated and completed redemptive history... it was not human intent that brought it about... it is a miraculous evidence of God's love.
 - b. It demonstrates the uniting of humanity and divinity – this shows not just the willingness of God to act in creation, but the depth of His love to actually enter into time and space, then to suffer and die.
 - i. Being fully man gives Messiah full fellowship with humanity – this is not arm-distance abstraction, but nitty-gritty up close and personal fellowship.
 - ii. Thus, Jesus is the perfect mediator of the New Covenant between God and humanity.

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- iii. Being fully divine makes Messiah's dependence and submission to the Father all the more startling... Jesus never did His own will, but only the Father's.
- c. Virgin birth demonstrated Jesus was fully human – He entered creation through the will of a father and the submission of a mother.
 - i. It is consistent with God that He did not force Himself upon Mary... though she was chosen, the Angelic messenger said that the Spirit would 'come upon her' and God's power would 'overshadow her' – Luke 1:35... and she submitted voluntarily to this.
 - ii. Jesus humanity was demonstrated by His being tempted, getting physically tired and hungry, getting angry, troubled, disturbed, and emotionally distraught to the point of crying, etc. These are all common human actions/responses.
 - iii. In the midst of His humanity – Jesus lived, ministered, suffered and preached without sin... this set the stage for humanity's atonement through the cross.
- d. Jesus as the sinless perfect sacrifice
 - i. Luke 4:1-13 – Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 3 times in the relating of the temptation dialogue with Satan before He starts His ministry. Deuteronomy is a summarized re-affirmation of the OT covenant which was repeated prior to Israel entering the land of promise and conquering their adversaries... this is not accidental! This was to make clear that God's redemptive plan played out in history through Scripture.
 - ii. John 15:10 – Jesus links obedience and love as necessary Kingdom of God principles. Jesus did it, now we are expected to do the same.
 - iii. Heb 4:14-16 – Jesus is the sinless high priest who knows what it is to be fully human – thus we can approach His throne in confidence. Jesus succeeded in obedience to God where Israel failed. Jesus demonstrates a perfect example in terms of the OT sacrificial law – He is the template of a living sacrifice in the NT that all His followers would emulate.
 - iv. Malachi was horrified that people were bringing flawed animals to sacrifice, rather than the perfect animals prescribed by the Law. This demonstrated not only their wickedness, but also their lack of understanding of the greatness of God. Essentially, they went through the motions of faith – but their hearts were far from God. This would be the final prophetic book of Scripture before the coming of the Messiah... true to form, the people still had the same mistaken notion of what God required from His people.
 - v. Jesus parable of the talents demonstrated that God expects us to do our best. The servant who buried his talent did not even make the attempt to please God. This does not mean that we are expected to do more than we are able... that is the message of the 1st and 2nd servant – they were of unequal ability and were

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rewarded for their faithfulness. The 3rd was condemned for his faithlessness and his mischaracterization of the nature of God.

e. Atonement and sin offering

- i. Sin offerings were made whenever sins were committed or came to mind. They were the ongoing blood response to bring about forgiveness to a person for the specific wrongs they committed. This was in response to wrong doing and wrong thinking.**
- ii. Atonement was another and greater matter – atonement was linked with the Passover event and exercised in perpetuity. It was the satisfaction for recompense of a life forfeit to God. It reconciled man and God – it restored right standing/relations between the people and their God. This was in response to humanities wrong being.**
- iii. Mat 5:23-24 – OT sin offering was the focus of the sacrificial offering, and the sin offering was always first in the OT until Christ.**
 - 1. In this passage Jesus places reconciliation first before the offering. He demonstrated that intent was more important than the act itself – this is new theology revealed in Jesus.**
 - 2. Jesus taught that you are required to make the time to do things right, not to do them by rote or by ‘mailing it in’. It is important that the sin in you needs to be personally acknowledged and relationally remedied before the sacrificial application is appropriate.**
 - 3. Revelation of my failure and true repentance in response precedes the sacrifice in the adequacy of true worship.**
- f. In the NT process of sanctification how much sin is allowed? How perfect do we need to be, or rather how perfect does God expects us to be?**
 - i. How do we deal with the ‘triumphant’ expectations of many believers? Triumphantism is the theology that in Christ we can overcome the world – instead Christ overcame the world and in Him we work in accordance with His Mission and endure & persevere.**
 - ii. Scripture is alternatively triumphant in Christ, and yet realistic because we are imperfect humanity living in a fallen and broken creation that longs for being made anew... in which we live in a progressive Spiritual transformational process.**
 - iii. We are caught up in the ‘now’ but ‘not yet’ debate – Spiritually we are already perfect in Christ... God sees us as the perfect child He loves as we are hidden in Christ. Yet our bodies will not be perfected until Christ returns... so our bodies continue to be a problem with individual sin as well as fallen creation as a whole.**
 - iv. How grace fleshes out in my life is the process of sanctification.**
 - v. Grace = freedom, while Law = bondage.**

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- vi. We have to correctly understand sin to fully appreciate grace.
- vii. Christ the Person is grace in action.

4. Jesus as fully God

- a. 2 Pet 1:1 – Peter declares that Jesus is God – there is no mistaking his statement.
- b. John 8:58-59 – John ascribes the claim “I AM” as an indirect statement to Jesus’ deity.
- c. Jesus says He is God in round about ways – you read between the lines, He alludes to His deity, He allows it to be inferred by others, He doesn’t discount it when others say so... but then He tells them not to tell anyone. What’s this all about?
- d. Jesus does not do anything miraculous to publically prove His deity... when before the magistrates and officials; He gave no direct proof of His deity. However, this changed after the cross and Pentecost – the disciples are now openly proclaiming Jesus deity.
- e. John 17:1-26 – Jesus deity proclaimed, and His relationship and glorification made known by others... as Jesus refuses to glorify Himself.
 - i. Only the Father can glorify Jesus, and Jesus ministry was to glorify the Father and serve His will.
 - ii. Thus, Jesus is being the obedient servant/son that Israel never was.
 - iii. For purposes of our ministry – we must follow Jesus’ example... we must not glorify ourselves. Our calling is to glorify Jesus and thus glorify God.

5. Belief and Trust

- a. Belief is knowing who God is, who Jesus is, and trusting the witness of Jesus as preached by the Apostles.
 - i. There is ample testimony in Scripture that declares Jesus as Messiah – the God/man.
 - ii. There is ample indirect testimony by the faith and action of the Apostles to declare that they believed Jesus was God incarnate, and went to their death rather than deny it. People don’t willingly die for a lie – they knew the truth and refused to deny it because eternity was in their hearts.
- b. Jesus obedience to God was despite the reality that people would not like Him or honor Him, He was the original Rodney Dangerfield... He got no respect. 😊
 - i. Jesus portrayed perfect obedience in a humble and rejected manner... this is the model for growth and faith... Jesus is our example for life and ministry.
 - ii. In terms of other approaches to preaching:
 - 1. Prosperity gospel – says for every \$10.00 of investment you will receive \$20.00 of blessing. This theology mistakenly promises you will receive exponentially more than you give. This is not the blessing Scripture promises... instead the promise of blessing Jesus gave was in His Kingdom to come and the pouring out of His Spirit.

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2. Normative Christian ministry – you’ll find that every \$10.00 worth of investment will provide \$5.00 worth of blessing if you’re lucky, more likely \$1.00.
 3. We are not to look for our glorification – we are to glorify God.
 4. Triumphant living is even more of a problem – we have today’s gospel heroes making huge amounts of money with celebrity appeal, etc. This is not what Jesus did; this is not what He would be happy about us doing. There is nothing wrong in making money, but honoring God must be our priority... if money comes... great. Then you must use it wisely and generously.
 5. The desire for obedience for Jesus sake is not looked upon as a successful pattern... but this is the Way faith, hope and love endure.
 6. Too much ministry goes into personal empire building rather than furthering the Kingdom of God. We spend a disproportionate investment in the organizations of faith, not in the development of the organism of the Body of believers themselves. It is more about equipping rather than building our own empires in Jesus’ name.
- iii. Jesus obedience to death was all the more compelling because He faced it pretty much alone... without the support of His followers except John, Mary Magdalene, and His mom... everyone else abandoned Him.
6. Insights about McLaren’s fable The Story we find ourselves in.
- a. The “Emergent Movement” was all going one direction 10 years ago with a very loose theology. Now it is splitting up into differing segments heading in different directions... some with very sharp theology, some less so.
 - b. “Post Modern” can be defined by practice, theology, or both. The thing least liked in the movement is narrow thinking... the broader approach is much more compelling to the Post Modern’s.
 - c. The movement on the liberal side removes all the “primitive aspects” of the atonement... sin, wrath, and necessity of the cross which are all not popular. Many argue they see the cross as “divine child abuse” and mock the concept. This is not what we would call normative Christian theology; it is something else... something smaller and less potent.
 - d. Jesus atonement can only be understood in terms of OT theology... stepping around our fundamental sin and need robs the cross of its power.
 - e. If Jesus death on Passover doesn’t cause one to relate to Jesus as the “Lamb of God” you’ve missed the point – this is Passover language, this is Day of Atonement thematic thought.
 - f. All 4 gospels spend 25% of the text on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus – the Gospels are obviously Gospel Centered!

- g. Some comments about the book:**
 - i. McLaren’s effort is to write a new theological narrative – a new story about Christian faith we can enter into without the uncomfortable thoughts and jargon.**
 - ii. He fails because his understanding of the Fall is weak.**
 - iii. There is a misguided joining of secular and theological motifs.**
 - iv. His understanding of sin and the law is weak.**
 - v. His idealization of primitive humanity is naive.**
- h. The cross is ugly... it is a stumbling block... there is no other way to excuse the offense of the cross – and it was absolutely necessary. That fact that God would endure it makes Grace all the more wondrous.**