

The Culture of the Kingdom The Patriarchal Order

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Sam Soleyn
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The story of the gospel is how God created a man and God - in creating him - created him to be a son of God, how God foreknew that this son would sin and that He would have to redeem him and restore him to a status of sonship so that the purpose for which He created sons could be complete. The purpose for which He created sons was that they be in His image and likeness, just like He said. That in the earth, God would be represented by His sons who were not only in His image - meaning that they were the reflections of God, of the creative abilities of God - but that they would also be in His likeness, which would mean quite literally they would be like Him. That was the full story.

So the cross is perhaps the midpoint of the story; it's not the beginning of the story and it isn't the end of the story, it is the pivotal point of the story. And going to heaven then, is not the point of the cross; going to heaven is a result of the cross. The point, the reason for the cross is the reconciliation of man to God and by that reconciliation to the purposes for which God originally conceived and created, the purposes for which He not only conceived man but the purposes subsequently, for which He created man.

Now that being so, it shouldn't surprise us at all that before the cross, the order that would result after the cross when man was reconciled to God, that that order was presented in type and shadow and the order itself would represent a perfect choreography of the gospel even though it was veiled and man couldn't see it. With the fall of man, the vision – the light if you prefer - in man was the vision of the soul, was the light that his soul could give him for he no longer could speak to God Spirit to spirit, which is how God spoke to man, how God designed man so that He could speak to him. The reason God gave man a spirit in the first place was so that, as Romans would say, Romans 8, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirits that we are the sons of God.”

God always intended to talk to man. God always intended to communicate with His sons, so He set it up in anticipation of being able to accomplish just that fact. He gave man a spirit which came out of God himself, for God is a Spirit. So the competence of man to hear God was designed by God himself, so that God as a Spirit could speak to the spirit

of man and the communion would be between Spirit and spirit. Now one may even further ask, "Why did God make it that way?" I mean, apart from the inevitable and obvious that since God is a Spirit and since the point to which man would be restored is Spirit to spirit, that's the obvious reason. But as is often the case of Scripture, the obvious reason from the point of view of God is also a complete reason; it isn't just a one dimensional undertaking, it contemplates and designs for every contingency and one of those contingencies was that man would have an enemy and that enemy would attempt to break the flow of communication between God and man.

Now if the enemy could do that, if the enemy could come in between Spirit and spirit, then there would really be no hope for man because it wouldn't be just a matter of God's competence, it would be also equally a matter of man's competence to reciprocate. In other words, "Could man respond to God?" The issue would not be altogether whether or not God could speak to man, the answer would be as much, could man respond to God. And if the enemy, by his craft, were able to somehow subvert the process entirely through which God spoke to man, then the issue would be whether or not man had any hope. So God inaugurated a complete solution by speaking to man Spirit to spirit, that doesn't leave any place for the enemy to come in. Any time the spirit of man is activated toward God, from that point on the enemy cannot interrupt the communication.

In fact, as in the case of the man in the country of the Gadrenes who was possessed of demons, rarely do you find such description in the Scripture, that, "he was possessed," even in that case where the man was like a lunatic among the tombs of Gederah, he could still cry out to Jesus as Jesus came by. The demons were not able to block the ability of the man to see – to recognize - Jesus as the Son of God. And he cried out to Him and said, "Son of God, have mercy on me!" And the Lord Jesus Christ responded to the man because his spirit was yet able to cry out to God. The thief on the cross could still cry out. Desperate situations do not frustrate the ability of God to reach past the craft of the enemy, reach past his constructs and speak to man because God established in the earth an irrevocable model of communication between God and man, an uninterruptable model of communication; nothing could interfere, not other humans, not demons, nothing, not the soul, can interfere with the person who desires to speak to God. He will hear, as the song says, "Our faintness cry," and He will rise to answer.

So Spirit to spirit is the fashion of the communication of God with man. And the Old Testament model then, speaks of a physical picturing of God's intent to restore man to God, not just to bring him back into fellowship with God, but once again to function in his life as his Father and to have that man respond to God as a son responds to the father. Or to have a woman respond to God as a son responds to a father. Because in Christ you see, God is the Father of our spirits, that is why it doesn't matter whether we are male or female. Now this is not a comment on how the Body of Christ functions; identity and function are different things. In terms of our identity, we are not male and female; it

terms of our identity we are not Jew or Greek; in terms of our identity we are not bond or free; in terms of our identity He's the Father of our spirits. So all of the incidences of our humanity are not relevant to that inquiry. But visa vie each other of course, it's important whether we be male or female and there may be some relevance to being bond or free and some relevance to whether or not we're Jew or Greek.

When God established the order of the Old Testament, He did so to present ahead of time, to present in the form of a type and a shadow, the relationship between a father and his son; between God the Father and ourselves as His sons. That is why the order is patriarchal. You see, earthly things are designed to represent heavenly things even if their representation is as a shadow represents a man; indistinct, insufficient, incomplete. Yet no one ever looks down and sees his shadow and wishes the shadow were not there or thinks the shadow is irrelevant or superfluous. In fact, shadows play a great importance in many aspects in life and they play a particularly significant role in presenting before 'time' the thing that is to come. What is to come is God will restore man to a relationship of sonship. The shadow that presents that thing to come is the patriarchal order of the Old Testament and the very thing to which Paul alludes in I Corinthians chapter 4, when he says to the Corinthians, "I became your father."

Now isn't it curious that after Adam sinned and for nearly a thousand years, God kept Adam alive and kept him in creation. Under his hand, all the generations of mankind for nearly a thousand years, passed, whether directly or indirectly because his physical presence and who he was was the imprint that was stamped upon human society for a long enough period to establish a foundational culture; the culture of the father. Again, this should not be considered as a matter of biology and if one doesn't believe in God and if one doesn't understand the purposes for which God made man, then of course one would object to a patriarchal order as being that which was presented as the core culture of mankind. And the sociologists would say, "Well, it's a patriarchal order because men went to war and conquered and women were the victims and those male dominated societies became the model because men at arms created those societies."

You see, we could look at history either as an assemblage of facts or we could see a design to it. The things I say have no relevance to the unbeliever because the unbeliever doesn't believe and the sociologist who chooses not to retain God in his or her knowledge, will find what I say to be objectionable because I am presenting human history as essentially how God designed the order of man so that man would be familiar with the intention of God when, and at that point, wherein God would save man and rescue him, bring him back and reconcile him to his Father. I contend that the incontrovertible evidence that sin abounds in the earth is the resulting fatherlessness and the proliferation on the earth of orphans, creating more than a sociological problem for nations of the earth; creating problems in every sphere of life, whether we're speaking of health care, economics, the issues of warfare, social order and unrest. You go and look at

the contribution of fatherlessness to these critical inquiries and we'll be astonished at the cost to us of fatherlessness and by extension, of sin.

God intends to do something about it and setup the doing of the something about it from the beginning. In anticipation of that truth dominating the end of the age, that truth being fatherlessness abounding in the earth - together with all of its attendant consequences and the response of God to that phenomenon that threatens the very existence of mankind - this prophetic utterance closes the Old Testament. The Old Testament ends this way, Malachi chapter 4 verse 5, "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes, he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

You see, we tend to consider Scripture apart from context. It is the popular thing today to quote verses to justify anything that anyone wants to do, that is why it is common for people to say, "You can prove anything by the Scriptures," and it is also why the Scriptures say that the Scriptures are not for private interpretation. Well what does 'private interpretation' mean? Well those who practice religious orthodoxy will say, "Well, private interpretation certainly means that you cannot just say what you think the Scriptures mean." Well let's run that back a little bit: Who then can say what the Scriptures mean? They will say, "Well our denomination can because it's been around for a hundred years." Well is the fact that a denomination exists and there are several million people in it and that it has been around for a few hundred years or even for a few thousand years, is that what makes it not private interpretation? That's nonsense because then, you see, the largest majority of people constituted on any basis would be that which is sufficiently not private.

So the unbelievers are the majority and they can say anything they want to or whoever speaks the language of the majority of unbelievers is in fact then properly interpreting Scripture, if we say that mere numbers and longevity removes the interpretation from private to something else. No, that's not at all what the Scriptures mean when it speaks of 'Scriptures are not for private interpretation', it means the Scriptures interpret themselves. That is why one Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, could say to an entire nation, "You search the Scriptures because in them you think you have life and they testify of Me and you would not come to Me." What arrogance, what private interpretation. But if you say, "But He was the Son of God so He could do that," well what if somebody today says, "I am sent by God to interpret," then is that person not claiming the same basis of authority? The question again would be: What credibility does he have? Well when Jesus was speaking to the Jews, they didn't think He had any credibility at all, in fact crucified Him, pretty conclusively stating that to them, He had no credibility.

The point is, private interpretation means the Scriptures interpreting themselves. That's

what it means, it's the only thing it can mean. And so what you see instead of quoting Scripture to support a point of view, one ought to be called to understand what the Scriptures that were written before, mean now, in this day. You see when there was a patriarchal order established, this was not as we said earlier, some sociologist claiming that a patriarchal order naturally resulted from a militaristic culture. You may make that association but that's not the explanation, the explanation is: God kept Adam alive for nearly a thousand years after the fall because God was initiating in society a reminder to mankind that He, as their Father, had not forgotten them. And a patriarchal order was designed around Adam who was the man who spoke to God. The fact that Adam sinned does not mean that Adam forgot everything that God ever told him and surely Adam was the one who did speak with God. God spoke to him morning by morning; every day God showed up. He was the one to whom the initial endowment of wisdom and revelation about the creation was given; he was the original person created in the image of God, his understanding did not evaporate when he fell. And so he could continue to instruct his generations in the ways of God. The patriarchal order was designed to preserve the hope that God would continue to view us as His children and that God in the fullness of time would implement that plan designed to restore us to sonship.

So Jesus comes in the fullness of time as the Son of God, as the Last Adam. And indeed tells us that God then has only two sons and everyone is either in one son or the other Son; we're either in Adam, in which case we all die, or we're in Christ in which case He brings us back to the Father. One son departed from his Father, the other one obeyed His Father and restored all. The one who departed from his Father took with him all those who are in him; the one who returned to the Father, took back to the Father all those who are in Him, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me," Jesus said. And John echoing that very sentiment says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we might be called sons of God. And if we are sons then are we heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Paul," concludes in his letters to the Romans and to the Corinthians. So that's the mystery of the gospel.

Now let's wrap this thing together and see what we have. Paul says to the Corinthians, II Corinthians 4, "I am your father," but to the same Corinthians he says, "Do not say, 'I am of Paul'," and to the same Corinthians in the same book he says, "There's only one Body though it has many members," and that statement in chapter 12 was preceded by his teachings on the communion - the Lords supper - in chapter 11 where he says, "When we fail to discern the Body we're weak and sick and some die prematurely." What is the full intent then? How could he be their father on the one hand and yet on the other hand say, "Do not say, 'I am of Paul,'"? He's saying that the arrangement of the house of God is by fathers and sons and it is under the tutelage of a father that one is disciplined to the truth that there is only one Body and to the truth of the headship of Christ and to the truth of the union of the Body of Christ. So he'd say to the Corinthians, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You don't learn that truth from going to

church because all the churches want to make you 'of them'; “I am 'of' the methodist”, “I am 'of' the baptist”, “I am 'of' the Roman catholics”, “I am 'of' the church of Christ”, “I am 'of' the congregation of this person or that preacher.” No, there is only one household and it has one Head, the Christ. And the one who disciples you to that truth - and more than membership in the Body, how to function in the Body - that one is your father in the Lord.

Now that immediately tells us that the Body of Christ is not institutional, it couldn't be; it is organic, it is relational. What we have called 'pastor' is in fact meant to be a function – one of the many functions – of a father. Now that leaves unanswered a number of questions. Why then would Jesus say in His sermon on the mount, “Call no man upon the earth your Father, for you have one who is your Father who is in heaven,” and yet Paul could say, “I became your father,”? Well that will be the subject of the next discussion. Sufficient to say, I will leave you with this thought: there are nine different definitions of the word father in Scriptures, one of which means, “I am your progenitor, I am the one from whom you are born.” That is not the reference that defines what Paul says when he said to the Corinthians, “I became your father,” that reference defines your relationship to God the Father because after all, this is the gospel of the Father and His sons.

But we'll pick up there in the next broadcast. I hope you'll join me as we continue to explore spiritual fatherhood in the next broadcast and how the household of God is arranged by spiritual families. God bless you, I'll see then, bye bye.