

Current Affairs # 3 – Image of God

Sam Soleyn

September 10, 2018

So, we continue this series on the identity of the people of God. We are recording here in Grand Cayman and we are doing that outdoors, so there are many distractions. People will be passing by behind me or you will hear the sound of the surf—you will hear various noises and the like—so you will have to be very attentive. But, I hope also that you enjoy the scenery while you are listening to this message. The prior two messages have addressed the question of the identity of believers in our day and in our time. Now, the typical gospel has been: how God created man; man sinned; Christ came to die for man on the cross, which He accomplished fully and completely; and if we accept this salvation, we will go to heaven when we die. All these things are true, but they are neither the beginning of the gospel nor the end of the gospel. They are a slice of the gospel. In fact, this gospel, being only a partial gospel, has left untended the entire issue of why God created us in the first place.

In the times in which we are living, there is such an upheaval, such turmoil, because among other things, what is clear and apparent is that far beyond the issue of nations losing their way, the church has lost its way. As I mentioned in the first couple of broadcasts, the evangelical church here in the United States in particular, has become a political arm of the Republican Party. It has been pandered to by the Republicans, but it also has placed its hope in the fortunes of a nation. Now by saying that, I am by no means suggesting that it should have been an arm of the Democratic Party. I am saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is neither. Whereas as citizens, we have the freedom as individuals to vote as we would choose, the leadership of the church should never have committed it to any secular or political party, and it did so.

For more than fifty years, since the 1950s, key and obvious leaders of the church at that time sought the favor of governments and of presidents. It should never have done that. That was a mistake. But I will grant, it was all that they knew. The revelation of the Kingdom of God was not a common revelation in those times, and so men acted on the basis of their reason. Similarly, the rejection of the Holy Spirit across the board left man only to the devices of his own mind, the imaginations of his own mind, and those became rational, logical. Reason prevailed, and the reason was, if the church had the support of governments, then it could be very powerful within society.

By the way, that is not a new idea. That goes back since the days of the Roman Church, when the Roman state offered the church the opportunity to be the church of the empire. So, the Roman state gave the church a franchise but required it to be accountable to the state. Every permutation of this concept, whether it is the state church or independent charismatic churches/independent denominations, whether one or the other, they both sacrificed the power of heaven for the approval of the governments of men. In this long history, it was inevitable that it was going to come about that this alliance would demand of the church loyalty in exchange for the favor of the state. As a consequence, in the present order, half of the people view the church as the enemy, because the half that does not agree with the church's position considers the church the prime reason why the nation is in the state that it is in. This shortsighted view can only be attributed to the work of the enemy, because now, you see, for at least half of the people (and that is being generous), the "Christian message" is synonymous with that which they find objectionable in the political arena. On the other side of the coin, the Roman Church is going through the exposure that reminds us that there is a God who cannot be mocked. The rape and abuse of children systematically over all this time was eventually going to anger the living God to the point where, when all other efforts to correct it had failed, He would step in. This is what He is doing, and now He is using the arm of the state to bring correction to a thing that could not correct itself. This has created a crisis. It is so obvious to everyone, except the religious folks, that there is a crisis of faith now. People who are part of the Roman Church have an absolute crisis of faith. The people who are part of the evangelical church, who have placed their faith in the fortunes of a nation, will have a massive crisis as the nation turns against it with a change of administrations.

From our point of view and for our purposes, what is important is not to point out the problem, so much as to point out what God is doing and how God is using these events to bring about a shaking in the church that will be nothing short of a collapse of the infrastructure of the church, leading to a rebooting of it. The term "rebooting" really is not an accurate term, so much as it is an indication of something coming back. But that thing that God will bring back—He is actually bringing it up out of obscurity—that thing is already being formed. That thing is called the Body of Christ. Now, it will not be identified with the politics of nations or with the world's economy or the global economy. It will be identified with the Kingdom of God, with the economy of the Kingdom of God, and it will revisit its purpose. Its purpose is not just to survive. Its purpose is not just to go to heaven. Its purpose is connected inextricably to the very reason God created man.

God did not just create man to save him. Saving him was the price God chose to pay associated with the risk of man falling away from God. But eventually, God would bring man back to God and fulfill the purpose for which He created him. When Adam sinned, there was a degeneration—a falling away from God—that continued to the point where, by the time of the flood, man had no clear understanding of who God is and why God put man in the earth. So at the time of the flood, God rebooted the earth and used the righteous man and his family as a model. But, God already intended to reboot the earth in a more permanent way, because He knew that that was a stop gap, but that the decline would continue. So in the fullness of time, God brought Jesus into the world. Jesus was the incarnation in human flesh of the person of God Himself, so that one could look again upon the last Adam, the last Man, and see the model of who God is. That Man could say, “If you have seen Me, you have seen My Father, because the Father and I are one” (cf. John 14:9; John 10:30).

He did not just leave it, however, to our memory and to the memory of the disciples to pass on by oral tradition, this rebooting of human civilization. Instead, He sent the Holy Spirit, who first brought back to the attention of the disciples, who Christ really was—to take of what Jesus said and to reveal it (cf. John 16:12-15). We talked about how there are two levels of revelation. One is a more domestic level. You can read the Bible and figure things out on a human level, on a level of the human soul. But with the Holy Spirit, these same symbols, these same domestic interpretations experience a transition, experience an uplift, to the point where you can actually, in the Spirit, understand the duality of the Scriptures speaking to the human soul, even in a fallen state, and speaking to the human spirit in a restored state. So, the Holy Spirit became the divine instrumentality for the explanation of who Christ is. He not only wrote the Word, but He interprets the Word. In that interpretation, He restores the prime understanding—He restores the understanding that was in the mind of God before He even created man.

So, I want to go to that and explain this identity from the Scripture. His name was called Jesus the Christ, speaking both of His humanity and His divinity. In His humanity, Jesus is Mary’s Son; in His divinity, He is the Son of God. Flesh, you see, begets flesh but Spirit begets spirit (cf. John 3:6). So when He comes into the world as the Son of God, He comes as God’s Son, not merely Mary’s Son. As such, He is a Spirit being. Now, the nature of spirit is it can be assembled, spirit to Spirit. We know that because the Scriptures tell us that the Spirit Himself, the Holy Spirit, bears

witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God (cf. Romans 8:16). In following the same principle of spirit to Spirit, each of us, possessing a spirit from God, when we are saved, the thing that is saved is our spirit. It is saved out of the state of suspension, of inactivity. It is made alive by the Holy Spirit (this is Romans 8), and it is connected to and assembled to the person of Christ. It is connected and assembled, not in a haphazard fashion, but in a foreordained fashion. In other words, God made every person capable of fitting, in spirit, into the Body of Christ to be an exact representation of who God is, with respect to a particular set of purposes. We will come to that in a moment.

Now when we are born again, the spirit of the man is elevated and assembled by the Holy Spirit into the *Corpus Christi*, the Body of Christ—not the body of Jesus; that is finite; that is a human form; that is not available today to be joined to anybody. But, the Spirit of Christ is available and can be joined when the Holy Spirit assembles your spirit to the Spirit of Christ. When that happens, you are reconnected to a preexistent divine order. That is what God intended, and this now becomes your new identity. If you prefer, the Scriptures say,

*¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; old things [the identity of the soul associated with the activities of the flesh] have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 NKJV*

So, the entire order of the Kingdom of God—its economy, its purpose, its focus, its power—all of that is related to how you, as a believer, can engage the purposes of God. It is related to your identity, it is related to your purpose, and all of that. I might add, this is vastly different from any political identity, or even national identity. In substituting this identity as a member of the Body of Christ—born from above, born from heaven, living in the earth to display the glory of God, to show the invisible God through a visible Body of Christ, in that the spirit Man is housed in a natural form—this identity, when you forsake it to go back to national identities and to national purposes, all you have then is the uncertainty of how global economies work, how your own national economy works, and whether or not you are given a good chance, for the viewpoint of those who desire this, hopefully a better than average chance of participating in that economy. You

may have that on one hand, but it ought never be your goal, it ought never be the purpose for your life, and it surely ought not be your identity.

Here is what is said about Christ. It says, *“But when He again brings the firstborn into the world [when God brought Christ into the world], He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him’”* (Hebrews 1:6 NKJV), because the Son is: *“the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power”* (Hebrews 1:3), and it goes on from there. Now, I want to show you something very significant: *“the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person”*—in other words, the way His person is accurately expressed. The word “image” is the word, *charaktér* (Strong’s Greek 5481). That is the Greek term for the word image. The word, *charaktér*, means: a graver, either as a tool or a person engraved; an exact copy; an expressed image; a stamped figure. What does this mean? This means that God, when He made Christ, established an order in the earth by which He would be seen as He actually is.

Here is an insight for you. In the Ten Commandments that God gave from Mount Sinai, He said, *“You shall have no other gods before Me”* (Exodus 20:3)—the first commandment, and *“You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God...”* (Exodus 20:4-5a). Now, you have heard people, you have heard all your life in fact, that God is jealous. When that concept of jealousy is domesticated, it seems to make God a human, because humans are jealous. But it is as far removed from that as the soul is different from the spirit, as the heavens are above the earth. Here is what God was saying. God was saying, “I do not want you to engrave an image of Me in the earth, or the likeness of anything, for the purpose of falling down and worshiping it.” In other words, “In your imagination, you might imagine Me to be like something in the earth, or something in the heavens, or something under the earth. I do not want you to make an image of any of those things for the purpose of worshiping them.” There is no way God is talking about whether or not you can have figures, artwork, in your house. It has nothing to do with that. That is just the silliness of domesticating the gospel. It is about worshiping things; it is about creating things for the purpose of worship.

Why? You must always ask the question: Why? For most people, they are content with simply saying, “Because it is so—because God said that.” But God loves for you to ask Him: Why? Because when you do, He will give you wisdom, He will give you insight. Why did God not want an image of anything created for the purpose of worship—anything in heaven, the earth, or the waters under the earth? Here is why: Because God had already made that image of Himself. He had engraven the image of Himself and put it in the earth. That image of Himself is capable of carrying His likeness. That image is man. The image, the character of God, is man. That is why God said, “Let Us make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness. And let him have dominion over the created earth” (cf. Genesis 1:26). God made an image of Himself and put it in the earth. So when He tells us, “Do not make any other,” He is protecting His brand. He does not want us to be confused about some other thing being able to carry the image of God. Only man has been able to accurately carry the image of God, because man is a spirit like God is a Spirit.

When Christ came into the world, He is the designated image of God. When God brought His Firstborn into the world, He commissioned Him to be the expression of God’s glory. He commissioned Him to be the expression of God’s image, God’s character, God’s nature in the earth. So when you are assembled to Christ, when you are added to the Body of Christ, spirit to Spirit, you become part of that whose charter in the earth is to be the expression of the invisible God. That is a purpose that is unalterable. Whenever people think in terms of how much power they can have, what kind of an identity... Frankly, people are running scared. They are running scared because they do not know what they can trust. Because the church, whether it is the Roman Church or the evangelical church or every derivative in between these two extremes, has fallen to the idea that the only reason we are in the earth is to be saved. I say that is an incomplete gospel. You are saved so that you could be assembled to the Body of Christ, so that you could be the expression of the very person of God in the earth—the image and the likeness of God in the earth. To that end, you have to grow up.

Jesus was not an expression of the Father as an infant in Mary’s arms. God did not say of Him at that time, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:17). He said it when He was thirty. Go back to the first message of this series where we talked about the *huios* (in relation to *huiothesia*), the mature Son who is the practical expression of the Godhead. That Son is Christ. There are many sons in the one Son, and in this complete expression, every part does its

work. It is clothed with the glory of God. It is attended by the economy of heaven. Its purpose does not waver, like the ocean waves here. Its purpose is steadfast. It is secure. And God is shaking everything that can be shaken to make way for the emergence of this Body of Christ. This is the reality that God had in mind from before the foundations of the world. He saw us *in Christ* before the foundations of the world, to the praise of the glory of His grace (cf. Ephesians 1:5-10).

We will continue this message the next time, but unfortunately, not here by the ocean but in my studio. I am Sam Soleyn. God bless you. See you next time.