

Theology-The Science of Simplicity

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Last week we began a new sermon series. Its Theology-the Science of Simplicity, where we see that theologians are to take what is most complex, God and simplify God, His plan of salvation for us, the simple, the created.

One of the things they use for doing that is the Creeds. And they go back to the early centuries of the church. They were written because there was no mass production of the Bible. Therefore, people couldn't just open their Bible and read and study and compare what some teachers would say to what God has said. And as a result, heresy began to sneak its way into the Church. Heretical teachings that lead away from salvation in Jesus.

The first of these was Gnosticism-an idea a philosophy that says there is esoteric knowledge for the limited few, the educated elite. And those who possess this knowledge, can work their way to heaven. It refers to God as the demiurge, a lesser, not almighty God; and Jesus his emissary who was sent to reveal the logos, the word, the ultimate knowledge of truth to them. And its why John wrote his gospel, it appears because he adopted that language and the very first verse is using that term; logos, the ultimate answer, the final answer, the ultimate truth. It did a pretty good job, but yet Satan just keeps on working, doesn't he? And that concept that Jesus was not God continued to hang in there.

And as we get to the late 3rd and 4th Century, well it began to grow. Where did it grow? In the church. You might ask, how can that be? Well, meet Arias. He was presbyter or head elder, pastor in Alexandria Egypt. What do we know about Alexandria Egypt? It was, at that time, the center of knowledge for the world. It had the world largest library. We would compare it to, you know, a major university town today. But I want you to just think for a moment; if it is a major university town, a knowledge center, and if you have a church there; what kind of a pastor do you think you want? You want a well-educated one.

This is where Matthew, the apostle, went. And it's very obvious he was dealing with the mindset of the educated elite because his gospel is written in a way that takes what happened in Jesus's ministry and consistently points back to the prophecies saying thus, He fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah said; or thus He fulfilled

with the prophet said. Matthew took the Old Testament prophecies and he applied them to Jesus so that the educated people could look at that and see- Jesus did this. Yes, this was said hundreds maybe even 1000 years in advance. He must be the Messiah.

Arias was the one who came to serve in Alexandria. He was highly educated. He was educated at the school of Eusebius which was found in Antioch. Eusebius is known to this day as the father of church history. And he had three great literary works. The first was preparation for the gospel. The second was demonstration of the gospel, which is like the Gospel of Matthew; taking the prophecies and showing how Jesus fulfilled all of them. The third is still used to this day, Ecclesiastical History, a history of the church from the apostles to the time of Constantine the emperor and the early 4th century. This is where Arias went however Eusebius wasn't the headmaster anymore. He wasn't the lead teacher. A guy by the name of Lucian was, and he had been taught rationalism from the school of Aristotle. Rationalism is to take anything that requires faith, and rationalize it so you don't need faith anymore, you have sheer knowledge. Strip the mystery away from faith.

Well, the minute we start talking about faith, it brings up the concept of Trinity. It doesn't fit our logic and the school of rationalization that we would have understood; would say that everything must be able to be explained by science, by human logic, and then explained with vocabulary that people can understand. And so, Arias was taught that God could not have a son. It's not rational. Because if God is God, for him to have a son there has to be a second God, a Goddess. These two would have to come together so that they could bear a son. They apply human logic to God. Therefore, Jesus can't be the son of God.

Ironically, it appears it's a teaching of Arias who also influenced Mohammed, the great prophet of Islam. In the Quran he writes 112, God neither begets nor is he begotten. God doesn't have children and he wasn't born. But Arias, Lucia, those coming out of the school of Eusebius, created a whole new system of beliefs with a whole new vocabulary. God alone is without beginning; therefore he was called, I quote, "the UN originate." Christ was the originate. In other words, he had an origin. He had once, not existed. God the UN originate, was also the first cause. What was the first cause? Well, every first cause has an effect; the effect was the son, Jesus. So, God's first action was to make Jesus, and then call him son, though he was not son, he was inferior. And then the unoriginated, the first cause, God together with the originate, his created son; who's not really a son, worked together and made the universe as we know it. You could look at it as if it were father and son working together on the world's first science project. Now you might say that's crazy pastor, but come on nobody believes that kind of stuff today anyways.

And you know I'm going to say, 'I disagree with that' because there are people who still believe that kind of stuff. But I want to focus on the vocabulary part. Because words really *do* matter. We're seeing a lot of that today, I mean in schools and in you know, athletics. In the schools there's questions about should we have grades? Should we have honor roll? Should we have a championship? Because those words are so degrading. We're all equal after all, so everybody needs to be treated the same. Words have an impact! Well, understand, words *do* have an impact and the minute that we say God is the UN originate. He is the first cause, that Jesus is the originate, and we adopt any sort of language like that, other than what we find in scripture; understand we are making Jesus, we are making God a liar.

Why do I say that? Well, let's ask that question, who is God? And basically, Moses did that when God told him to go down to Pharaoh, who are you? I can't go, I don't know your name. God's answer, "Yahweh, I Am." I Am God, not all those things of the Egyptians, no Me. "I Am God." And that is a profound name, and it is one that we need to store in our memory banks, up here and not forget. Because we now go to the introduction, we had this morning. It is the name that Jesus used for Himself.

So, in John chapter 6, the day after He fed the 5000, and walked across the sea and got in the boat with the disciples, gone on to Capernaum, the crowds gather around Him; and like a good teacher He picks up on what happened the day before the feeding of the 5000. And He says, "I am the bread of life." He invokes the very name of God, "Yahweh" the bread of life. And He went on from there and He said something that only God could say or do. He says, "whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal life." Well, we understand that now, it's called communion. But the people back then were thinking "how in the world could a man have somebody feed on him or drink his blood?" This is sick, this is bizarre this is he's claiming to be God! In fact when you go and you read John chapter 6, you see that because of these teachings, many of His disciples left Him. At that time, He was claiming to be God and that He could do what only God could do.

We go two more chapters ahead to John chapter eight; one of my favorites because it's a discourse between Jesus and the Pharisees. How does He begin the discourse? He begins by saying, "I am the light of the world." And then He goes on to define it. That He is the light of life, He shines the way on the path to heaven. Now as He is saying these things to these Pharisees, you can imagine, and if you read John chapter 8; you'll see they got a little testy about it. They argued with Him. In fact, it got to the point where Jesus said to them; and I quote, "You are of your father the devil." And when he speaks, he lies because it's his native language. In other words, when you guys speak, you're lying. Did they pick up stones to stone

Him? Did they try to beat Him when He says, 'you're of your father the devil'? No, they continue to argue with Him; until Jesus says this. "Truly, truly, Amen, Amen, I say to you before Abraham was born, I am." He says, "I am God." Did He really say that pastor? You know, it could be that He was saying, 'I am God like,' 'I am a pastor, or I am a pillar, or I...' No, we know He was saying He was God because we read; they picked up stones to throw at Him. They were going to stone Him for blasphemy, which the Romans would let them do. In John chapter ten, and seven, and nine, He says, "I am the door of the sheep." He's the door to the sheep pen where we will be safe eternally. "He's the door to heaven." Later He says, "I am the Good Shepherd." He's God. He's the Good Shepherd, and He, God, will lay down His life for His sheep." That's why the atonement is so important. If Jesus were just a man on the cross, how could He pay the price of everyone's sin? But if He is God on the cross, He's the creator of us all. He certainly can pay the price of all our sins.

In John, Chapter 11, He comes to the tomb of Lazarus. He's been dead four days, Mary says to Him a profound statement of faith Lord if you had been here our brother wouldn't have died, but even now I know that whatever you ask of God he'll give you. And he comes back and says, "Mary, I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me though he die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? She came back right away with "yes, Lord I believe. You are the Christ of God who is coming to the world." And then He went and He lived up to His statement; He rose Lazarus from the dead.

And in the very next chapter we see Caiaphas saying, He raised Lazarus from the dead! If we don't stop Him, everybody is going to follow Him. That's going to be bad for our pension plans, we've got to kill this Jesus. In John chapter 14, after the Passover meal with His disciples out in the Kidron Valley speaking to His disciples, He says, 'I'm going to leave.' "In my father's house are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you. But I'm going there to prepare a place for you that you may be where I am. You know the way to where I'm going." And Thomas comes back and says, "Lord we don't know where you're going, so how could we know the way?" Jesus comes back with, "I am Yahweh, I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." And then a little bit later that evening in John chapter 15, He tells them, "I am the true vine." Why would He say true vine? Because there are false vines, like Arias, Mohammed, and a host of others.

But He told His disciples abide in me, be grafted into me, and let me be in you and you will bear much fruit. You see, this is the vine of John's gospel. Again, He took the language of the Gnostics, of the those who came from the school of Aristotle; the logos, the final word, the ultimate answer, and he applied it to Jesus. In the beginning was the logos, the word. He was always there. The Word was with God.

He personifies it. This is an individual with God. The word was God! Not a God, not a lesser God, not the originate. He is God. He was in the beginning with God. He was before anything that we have nowadays, and all things were made through Him; and without Him was nothing made that was made. In Him is life! And the Logos, the Word, the great I am, Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Why did John write it that way? Well, let's go to his gospel to see exactly why he wrote it that way. John 20, verse 30 "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Well, maybe John was a little confused you know he was on that island of Patmos. So, let's go to our epistle today or to our New Testament reading today. Acts, chapter 3. Peter and John have just given a lame man the ability to walk in the name of Jesus, and people are amazed by this. And that what does Peter say, and he says it with great conviction; "You denied the holy One." Now he is in the temple in Jerusalem. Who is the holy One? God. You denied the holy and righteous One. Who's the righteous One? God. "And asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the author of life." Who is the holy One, the righteous One, the Author of life? God! "And who died on that cross?" Jesus, The son of God who is God. We don't need to rationalize it. We just need to understand God is a lot bigger than us. And if He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit because He says so, that is good enough. He said so, and He did the greatest miracle. His disciples struggled with it. Think of Thomas, 'unless I see the nail holes in His hand, holes in His feet, the hole in the side, I'm not going to believe this.' This is preposterous. He wanted to rationalize. But what happened when Thomas saw his risen Savior? He said, 'my Lord and my God.'

And I believe that it is high time that we follow in the footsteps of Thomas, of Peter, of John and that we hold up Jesus for who He really is. He is the almighty Son of God, our risen Savior, our Redeemer. To Him be all glory and honor and praise forever and ever. Amen