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Shadows and Substance

make diagram ~ (diagram is simply a cross dividing two halves of a white board, with a small red square on one side representing the shadows or "stoicheion", and a large blue square on the other, representing substance)

For the past couple weeks I have been teaching about something called the "stoicheion" on Friday nights. That's just a Greek word that is generally translated in your Bible as "elements of the earth" or "basic principles of the world". It's a word that is used in the New Testament 7 times. Twice in Colossians. Twice in Galatians. Twice in 2nd Peter. And once in Hebrews. Its been really fun and exciting to me, and I trust to others, and I want to talk a little about that this morning.

And looking at this, this morning, will be sort of picking up where we left off a few weeks ago when we were talking about how the soul of man is entangled with the old creation. And even though the old creation had nothing of life or spirit, our souls...which were created for life and spirit, still seek all things there. And we ended by talking about the old creation must be circumcised from our soul...or crucified to us, even as Paul said "may it be that I would never boast except in the cross of Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world"

And today I want to look at a couple lengthy portions of Paul's epistles that establish this reality. One is in Colossians, the other in Galatians. We'll work our way to them.

And what I'm aiming at this morning is the reality of our salvation. I'm wanting to escape shadows and come into a seeing and an experiencing of reality. I'm aiming at trying to take Christianity out of the realm of concepts, theologies, truisms, doctrines...and into the realm of substance. Into the realm of reality. I can't seem to get away from this right now. I thought about teaching on something different, and I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I just want to challenge you to let the Lord take you deeper with this this week.

Remember last week I gave that analogy about the red and the blue. I'm going to modify that analogy to try to make this point. Lets say that you were born in red land. Everything you see EVERYWHERE is red. You simply have never seen anything in any other color than a shade of red. Well along comes Jesus and he tells you about the reality of the blue. In fact he tells you that he is going to die on a cross and be resurrected and then you will partake of the blue. Spiritual reality. Spiritual life.

Well, that sounds great and you believe. The only problem is, you are still seeing only red. And you pull out your bible and begin to read about blue realities. Blue substance. A whole blue new creation. A blue nature. But, seeing that you have only ever known red, as you read about the blue realities, you start imagining them as variations of red things you've known. Of course you cannot help it, you've only known red.

And so you read verses like, "abide in the blue, or you'll only ever do red". And, thinking that blue must be one of your shades of red, you assume you know what that means. And you read "fix your eyes on the blue, and not on the things of the red". And again, you assume that this reality is something that you can understand in red land. And then you read "walk in the blue, and you will not carry out the desires of the red", and "you have been raised up out of the red with Christ and seated in the blue".

And all of this sounds good and exciting, and you have red Sunday schools that teach these concepts, and you tell your red neighbor about the blue, and you stop doing the really bad red things, because you know that's not blue.

And as far as you're concerned, this is what it means to be a born-again blue believer...until, when you finally begin to humble yourself – you see a shaft of blue light. And suddenly everything changes. Oh my Lord....everything that is red, is not blue at all. And something like that happened to me a couple years ago.

Friends, please let the Lord deal with your heart about this. Please...if you never listen to anything else I say, please ask the Lord the extent to which you are really seeing blue and the extent to which you are confusing true red concepts with blue realities.

I was so absolutely sure that I knew the reality of the blue. I was an on-fire, Jesus loving, Bible reading, prayer and fasting, give-it-all-ya-got-for-the-kingdom, lay down your life, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, kind of guy. I was for years, before I asked the Lord if I knew what blue really was.

And do you know how the Lord dealt with me? "Son, you can go on pretending that you know blue realities, or you can humble yourself like a little child and ask me to teach you." "Lord, I already did that when I got saved". "Son, that's not a one time thing, that is a daily heart condition if you want to grow up in me".

And the Lord started to bring me face to face with Bible verses. Rivers of living water bubbling out from the inside. (I suppose I had some notion of what I thought that was) Fullness of life. Walking in the spirit. Abiding in Christ. Rooted and grounded in love. Freedom from fear. The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Christ formed in you. "Son, are you sure that you know these things as realities? Or are you just in agreement with true concepts".

"Lord, I think I do. I mean...I know the verses. And I love to read them. And I believe them to be true".

Brothers and sisters, at some point, and I hope before our body falls in the grave, salvation (being in Christ) must enter into the realm of reality.

Ok....lets get going...but that's where I hope this series works toward. I'd like to teach for maybe a few weeks on shadows verses substance.

We know that the Bible starts by talking about God creating the heavens and the earth. But you see, everything He created in the natural realm was only ever a shadow, a hint, a type, a whisper of the spiritual substance that He was beholding in His Son.

I like to picture the Father staring face to face into His Son – beholding everything of glory, everything of righteousness, everything of eternity, substance, life, joy, wisdom, perfection, goodness, love. Not a shadow of it, but the actual substance of it. Not an earthly imitation of it, but the spiritual reality itself. Not red shadows, blue reality.

Make diagram _ Blue Substance on one side, Red Shadow on the other.

I like to picture the Father looking at Him, the eternal Son, and then devising a plan to create, in the natural realm, a creation that, in various ways, gives testimony to that perfection, to that Son, to that life. And so, as he stares into the eyes of the Son, the spiritual, the eternal, and he begins to make with his hands things that, to varying degrees, display some of the glory of God the Son.

And those natural things, those things in the natural realm that testify of the spiritual, are what Paul calls “the stoicheion” – often translated “the elemental principles of the earth”, or “the basic principles” or just “the elements”. They are the first. Stoicheion is not just the old creation that points to the new. But it is everything of the first that points to the second. It is the old creation pointing to the new creation, the old covenant pointing to the new covenant, and the old man pointing to the one new man. It is all that is natural that was created with the divine purpose of giving testimony, shadowing, something that is much bigger. Something that is far more real, more eternal, spiritual, substantial.

In fact, one of the main purposes of that word “stoicheion” outside of biblical texts in Jesus’ day was the word they used for the shadow on a sundial. It was the shadow that told of something else. Gave witness to something else.

Well, so it is with this old creation, this old covenant, and this old man. They are a shadow, a created stoicheion, that testify to Someone who has been in the view of the Father for all of eternity.

And the purpose for the realm of the stoicheion was not just to have a testimony of the substance that was in Christ, but also to, through the cross of Jesus Christ, to take sons out of the realm of the stoicheion, and deposit them into, and fill them up with the actual substance – the Life of Jesus Christ. In other words (Eph 2, Col. 3, Rom 6), to raise you and seat you in Christ in the heavens, that Christ may fill all and all.

But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. Let’s go back to the creation story. Everything in the Genesis 1 creation story speaks to that end. So God begins to make the earth...always beholding what is eternal, spirit, substance, but making the stoicheion so that in one way or another it would give a “good” testimony of what He was looking at. Sort of like if I was looking at my wife, and working with play-doh making a bunch of things that reminded me of her.

(refer to diagram) He made this and said “it was good”. He made that and said “it is good”. But what was good about it? Was it good in substance? No, he was looking at the good substance. Was it good because it was eternal. No, it is perishing. Its earthly. How was it good? It was good in that it gave testimony of Him who is good.

Let there be light! Yeah, that looks like Him. Not in that it is shiny. But in that in Him, in Light, you can see. You can see truth, what is real. There is no darkness. There are no shadows. Yeah, natural light speaks of Him. And God saw it and said "it was good".

But his light is so other than man's light, man's view, man's perspective...lets separate, lets divide the light from the darkness. And its interesting to see a whole lot of dividing going on in this first chapter of Genesis. Dividing that points to the cross. Dividing the heavens and the earth. Dividing the light from the darkness. Dividing the land from the sea. Dividing the waters from the waters with a firmament. All of which, in my opinion, points to the dividing of the cross, but we wont get into that this morning.

We don't have time to go into all of the ways that the natural stoicheion became a created shadow of the Son. But there is much there in this first chapter. You have seed and harvest, and reproduction according to kind, increase according to kind. And God said it was good. What was good? Was God impressed by chickens? Did he look down and say "far out! No, there was something established here of Christ. We've talked about these topics before.

And then Adam, and a companion that comes forth out of side, out from his very life. Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. And God looks at this and says "its very good". My paraphrase of that would be "that is the best shadow I've seen yet of my Son". Why? People always get funny about this and think that to be made in God's image and likeness has to do with two arms, white beards, walking on two feet, smart brains, etc.

No, that's not it. Its that man was created to be a figure, a shadow, of the new man. A type of Christ. Paul tells us that in Romans 5:14 - "Adam was a shadow of Him who was to come". In fact, if you go look up that Hebrew word for "image"...where it says that man was made in God's image, it is from the root word "shadow" or "shade". There it is again - "stoicheion". Its not that God made man so that man would physically look like God. Friends, God is spirit. Its that God made man so that man would show forth, as a type and shadow, something of Christ.

And God said it was very good because, just as Paul tells us, in this one there is a testimony of Him to come. In far more ways than one. This one seed, Adam, joined to a bride in union, bone of bone flesh of flesh, fills a creation with his kind, dominates and subdues it. All of that pointing to Christ in the new creation.

You see, all of this was created for a purpose. God wasn't bored. God wasn't lonely. God was establishing a created testimony, and then recording in a book called the Old Testament, of what He was staring at. What he always saw. But all that was created was stoicheion - just the elemental things of the earth. The basic principles of the world that pointed to something that was real. A life that was spiritual. A creation that was eternal. A glory that was not veiled. A righteousness that was perfect.

God makes a world to declare the glory of the Lord.

But, like I said, the stoicheion is more than just the old creation, and the old man - Adam. It is also, and perhaps even more so, in the old covenant. A covenant which, with every jot and tittle, gave testimony to that which was eternal, substantial,

spiritual. Everything of the Seed of Abraham showing forth the eternal Seed. The covenant, the law, the tabernacle, the ceremonies, the festivals, the Sabbath, the priesthood, the kings and the kingdom, Joshua and the taking of the Land, David and the conquering of a kingdom, Solomon and the reign of peace, the prophets and the prophetic voice speaking of coming substance.

All of it stoicheion. All of it shadow. All of it coming in Christ. And again, the purpose, the eternal purpose was always to take you out of the elemental things, the first principles, the basic things of the world, i.e. the stoicheion and place you into the actual substance. Into glory.

(refer to diagram) Ephesians 1:4-5

Eph 1:4 according as He chose us in Him before *the* foundation of *the* world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

Eph 1:5 having predestined us to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Paul's point here, in my opinion, has absolutely nothing to do with "who" is predestined. It is dealing exclusively with WHAT is predestined, namely that before the foundation of the stoicheion, Gods plan was to have us in Him. In the reality! Predestining an adoption, whereby we would make an exodus out of the shadows and be placed in the Son. That's the plan. And for a while, your body still lives among the shadowland, but even so you are seated in the eternal Son. You have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into the Son of His love.

Jesus says "a day is coming and NOW is where you must stop worshipping at this mountain or in Jerusalem...etc. but must worship the Father in spirit and truth" You must stop dealing with red shadows, but you must come into blue realities.

It is impossible to describe blue reality to a mind that only knows red concepts. But friends, everything of the stoicheion is only a shadow of Him. EVERYTHING of the old covenant and the old creation. Unfortunately, to far too many of us, the shadow is far more real than the substance.

And though we have a salvation that is true spiritual reality, we live in, and relate to God in shadows. We still relate to God and others in the flesh. We walk in the flesh and not the spirit. We live under the Law and don't know what it means to live in the Vine. We seek to serve God as one separate rather than live as one joined to Him. We have untold thousands of old covenant concepts and thoughts about life, God, purpose, etc. We find our purpose, our identity, our desires in the old creation rather than the new. We walk by sight, and not be a view of the blue realities, i.e. faith.

These things should not be, but we don't understand the words of the New Testament that describe this new covenant. I want to look at some of those words now.

Lets look at some verses. Col: 2:6 – 2:23, Gal 4:1 – 11, 5:1

Col 2:6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

Col 2:7 rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, (which is your view of that which is spiritual, eternal. Your view of reality as it is in Christ) as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Col 2:8 Beware lest anyone rob you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the "elements of the world" (Lit: stoicheion – you've received Christ, so walk in Him. Don't let anyone, through things that have to do with the stoicheion drag you back into the shadows), and not according to Christ.

Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (the body vs. the stoicheion).

Col 2:10 And you are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power,

Col 2:11 in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins (there goes the old man) of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,

Col 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in whom also you were raised through the faith of the working of God, raising Him from the dead.

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has **made alive together with Him**, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Col 2:14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.

Col 2:15 Having stripped rulers and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, triumphing over them in it.

Col 2:16 Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a feast, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths.

Col 2:17 For **these are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.**

Col 2:18 Let no one defraud you, delighting in humility and worship of the angels, intruding into things which he has not seen, without a cause *being* vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Col 2:19 and not holding the Head, from whom all the body, having been supplied through the joints and bands, and having been joined together, will grow with the growth of God.

Col 2:20 If then you died with Christ from the elements of the world (Lit: stoicheion), why, as though living in the world, are you subject to *its* ordinances:

Col 2:21 touch not, taste not, handle not;

Col 2:22 which things are all for corruption in the using, according to the commands and doctrines of men?

Col 2:23 *These* things indeed have a reputation of wisdom in self-imposed worship and humility, and unsparing severity of *the* body, *but are* not of any value for the satisfying of the flesh.

Gal 4:1 But I say, Over so long a time the heir is an infant, he does not differ from a slave, though being lord of all; (The infant does own the inheritance, but does not experience it or enjoy it until he grows up. Until he grows up, until he puts away the child. This is true of those in the literal old covenant coming into the inheritance of the new. And it is true of those, like us, who live in the new covenant but have not put away the old. Still we do not experience the new)

Gal 4:2 but he is under guardians and housemasters until the term appointed before by the father.

Gal 4:3 Even so we, when we were infants, were in bondage under the elements of the world (stoicheion).

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, having come under Law,

Gal 4:5 that He might redeem those under Law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Gal 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Gal 4:7 So that you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.

Gal 4:8 But then, indeed, not knowing God, you served as slaves to those not by nature being gods.

Gal 4:9 But now, knowing God, but rather are known by God, how do you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements (stoicheion) to which you again desire to slave anew?

Gal 4:10 You observe days and months and times and years.

Gal 4:11 I fear *for* you, lest somehow I have labored among you in vain.

Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and do not again be held with the yoke of bondage.

We'll pick up there next week.