

House of Cards Theology-Two

Cleaning out the Castle Keep

Faith is a tough thing to hang onto. When the greatest Apostle that has ever lived penned his own epitaph the thing he offered up as a significant accomplishment of an extraordinary life was that he had “*kept his faith*”. ^{2nd} **Timothy 4:7** That statement of the Apostle Paul speaks to how tough it is to get through this life with your faith intact. Last week we introduced a construct of the Christian faith that is easy to hang onto, which actually endures all of the assaults that come against it. We shared with you the thought that most Christian faith is a house of cards construct that is incredibly fragile, and all it takes is for someone or something to call into question one element of scripture that you cannot adequately explain or wrap your head around and the entire edifice of your faith begins to collapse.

The Bible gives us a much more concrete, defensible, construct of faith. We talked about building Christian faith as a medieval castle keep.

- You had the fields – theology. You don’t defend them to death.
- You had the first wall you fell behind – church doctrine. Be passionate about it but be aware we have been fighting each other over it every since Jesus ascended.
- Then there is the moat and second wall – scripture. I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. If you receive it, it will save your soul. It is powerful It is the third most powerful force in the universe. That does not mean our understanding and interpretation of it is always 100% accurate. And more importantly, as we learned last week from the words of Jesus, not every scripture carries the same weight as every other scripture. We love Scripture, not because our understanding of it is perfect, but because it is the story of our great love, Jesus Christ.
- **But at the center of our house of faith is the most important part. It is the keep, the tower.** That is what we cling to, that is where all our treasure is housed. That is what we die for. That is the heart of all that we are.

The heart of the Christian faith is Jesus Christ. If you are killing yourself defending something else, you have missed the point. If your castle keep houses anything other than Jesus Christ you have the wrong thing there and while it may be worth defending it is not worth your life.

A cursory examination of scripture reveals what ought to be in the castle keep of your faith. Jesus Christ!

He is the central focus of scripture to an obsessive point. Everything in scripture links to, speaks of, and is seen in Jesus Christ. Even if you read the Genesis creation account Christ is in all of it... Paul wrote about Jesus Christ in **Colossians...**

Colossians 1:¹⁵*Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,** whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: **all things were created by him, and for him:** ¹⁷*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. ¹⁹For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;**

Look at the seven days of Creation through the lens of the New Testament and you will discover Christ in all of them.

He is light. **John 8:12**

He is water. **John 4:10 / 7:38**

Christ is life that emerged on the third day, just as life emerged on this planet on the third day of creation. **I Corinthians 15:4**

Christ is the true vine. **John 15:1**

Christ is wheat and the bread of life. **John 12:24 / 6:35**

Christ is the sun, the moon, the morning star. **Colossians 2:16-17 / II Peter 1:19**

Christ is the true lamb. **John 1:29**

Christ is the model man. **Romans 5:14**

Christ is the real Sabbath. **Colossians 2:16-17**

The Lord Jesus is written into the bloodstream of the universe. The Creator left an impression of Christ in everything. That which came forth from the lungs of God when the worlds were spoken into existence was Jesus. The entire cosmos bears His imprint. –Frank Viola

I told you last week that Scripture is the story of Jesus. How far back in our collective story do you find Jesus? Or maybe a better way to ask that is how early is Jesus introduced and placed in the story?

It happens before the Gospels.

It happens before the Messianic prophecies.

It happens before the Messianic psalms.

It happens before his bloodline is traced out in Numbers.

It is before the prophecy to Eve in **Genesis 3** that her seed would crush the head of the serpent.

John 17:24 ...the Father loved me before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:14 ...we were chosen **in Christ** before the foundation of the world

I Peter 1:20 ...was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8 He is the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

This story did not begin with Creation, it did not begin with Abraham leaving Ur, it did not begin with the formation of the nation of Israel, and it did not begin in Bethlehem. This story started before tectonic plates were ever put in place on this globe and it started with Jesus Christ.

That is why the Jesus states in **Revelation 21:6**

*I am **Alpha** and Omega, the **beginning** and the end.*

Colossians 1:^{15.} the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of every creature**:¹⁶For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, ...¹⁷And **he is before all things**, and by him all things consist.¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**; ...

Jesus is Alpha, HE IS THE FIRST. Anything you put before Jesus in your Christianity invalidates your faith. HE IS ALPHA, THE FIRST! But He is not only first; He is not only the beginning of everything...

Revelation 21:6

*I am Alpha and **Omega**, the beginning and **the end**.*

He is the beginning of the story, and He will be the end.

This story will not end with all of the earth's resources running out, and humanity degenerating into a dystopian swamp of despair. This story will not end with the sun going out and imploding in on itself consigning those miserable few left to a hellish death. This story will not end with greed, disease, warfare, racism, poverty, and injustice cancerously taking over the entire planet and afflicting every individual on it. The story will not end with us, through our own ingenuity and technology, finally getting over our addiction to violence and war only to die to the next new disease that we cannot conquer. The story will not end in a Darwinian finale where the wealthiest, healthiest, most advanced few humans survive and everyone else perishes. The story will not continue forever in an endless karmic cycle where we are all hopelessly clawing away trying to get it better the next time around.

Jesus was the beginning and He will be the end.

1 Corinthians 15: 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. **23** But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. **24 Then the end will come**, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father **after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.** **25** For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The story does not just start with Jesus it will end with Jesus.

The Jewish Prophet Daniel saw a vision of every kingdom of the world, and at the end a rock “*hewn without hands*” (not of human origin) came rolling down the mountain and obliterated every kingdom of man, and grew into a mountain and filled the earth. That rock is Jesus Christ and the story will end with His triumphant return. And He will smash every kingdom of men, He will smash communist regimes, He will crush greedy kingdoms that oppress the poor, He will bring an end to a world ordered by class and fueled by avarice, He will smash a world system that exploits children and exalts tyrants, He will end a world where wicked flourish and righteous suffer. He is the OMEGA, the End, and He will bring an end to the brokenness of this world and establish His kingdom forever. Listen to the prophecy about Jesus of the Jewish prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end**, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth **even forever.**

This story started with Jesus and it will end with Jesus and if ANYTHING belongs at the center of your faith, in your castle keep it is JESUS CHRIST. Don't love doctrine, don't love the church, don't love a preacher, don't love spiritual gifts, don't love social activism, LOVE JESUS. EVERYTHING LEGITIMATE STARTS WITH HIM.

Jesus is the DNA of all Scripture. It is not just the New Testament that puts the focus on Jesus. All of scripture does. Jesus told the Jewish leaders of this day...

John 8: ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. ⁵⁷Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? ⁵⁸Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life, but these scripture point to me!

He is talking about the Hebrew Scriptures. They are the ones that point to Jesus!

Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ...31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

*This is what is written ***In Old Testament Scriptures!***

Every time Jesus uses the word "Scriptures" in this passage He is talking about the Hebrew/Jewish scriptures. Christ is the thread that runs through them and ties them together.

The story of Israel is the story of the Messiah: *Out of Egypt I have called my son...* ***Matthew 2:15***

Christ is the new Israel, the new Jacob.

Jacob had 12 sons. Jesus chose 12 disciples.

Israel was tempted in the wilderness for 40 years. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. He suffered the same temptations as Israel did.

When you start looking at the Old Testament through the Jesus Lens He leaps off every page and from every line.

If every line of the Old Testament hints at Jesus the New Testament screams of Jesus and is obsessively focused on Jesus.

The church was born in an incredible explosion. In one day they had 3000 believers birthed into the church of Jesus Christ and after that people were being added daily. That is a lot of new believers and I am sure they preachers and teachers of that New Church in the Book of Acts had a lot to teach them. I

mean, there is a lot they needed to know to be successful Christians right? Look at all of the stuff contemporary churches teach new believers...

- How to live a clean, wholesome life.
- Church multiplication strategies.
- They mark of the beast and end time prophecy
- Intercessory prayer
- How to discover their spiritual gifts
- Signs, wonders, and miracles.
- How to receive a prophetic word
- Divine healing
- How to live by faith
- How to witness and save the lost
- How to defend intelligent design and creationism
- The 92 laws of leadership
- How to memorize scripture
- How to live in prosperity
- The 17 keys to a great marriage
- Spiritual warfare
- How to “name it and claim it”
- Systematic theology
- Seven steps to being a great servant leader

WHEW! But that is not what NT preachers and teachers taught the new believers and not what they focused on...

The repeated message of the Apostles throughout the Book of Acts was not a set of doctrines, it was not a theology, it was not plan of salvation, it was a person. Jesus Christ

Acts 3:20 *That He may send Christ who was preached to you before.*

Acts 8:5 *The Phillip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.*

Acts 9:20 *Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*

The Apostles were the founders of the church and what they preached was Jesus, Jesus, Jesus...

When people come to us with questions today we want to launch them into a 14 week Bible study, get them to learn Greek, sign them up for a seminar, take them through a discovery course... That is not how the Apostles, pastors, teachers, and lay leaders of that first church did it...

Acts 8:27 *a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship ,* **28** *Was returning , and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.* **29** *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near , and join thyself to this chariot.* **30** *And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said , Understandest thou what thou readest ?* **31** *And he said , How can I , except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.* **32** *The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer , so opened he not his mouth:* **33** *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away : and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.* **34** *And the eunuch answered Philip, and said , I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?* **35** *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

All they preached was Jesus. Even when they talked about other stuff they brought it back to Jesus. They didn't preach marriage, they preached Jesus.

Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.
Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord Jesus.

Think I am overstating the case? Listen to what the Apostle Paul, writer of 2/3rds of the NT said...

1 Corinthians 2:1 *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

In **Acts 2:42** the Bible says they continued steadfast in the *Apostles Doctrine*. The Apostles Doctrine was none of the dozens of things modern American Christians obsess on. It was Jesus Christ. You know that list I read to you moments ago about all the stuff the church thinks is necessary to teach new believers? Let's compare that list to what the Apostles preached and taught...

1 John 1: 1 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen*

it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:43 *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

I am out of time. I have gone on far longer than I should have and have barely scratched the surface. So allow me to wrap with this. If you have anything in your castle keep, if there is anything in the center of your faith other than Jesus Christ;

It will not endure. He is the Omega.
It is not worth defending.
It is at best a fallacy and at worst a perversion of Christianity.

Doctrine in your castle keep? Seriously?
Prosperity in your castle keep?
Your church in your castle keep?

The only one worthy of that place in your faith is Jesus Christ. And having Him there is the only way your faith will endure because He is the foundation and He is the finishing line of the story.

Hebrews 12:2 *Jesus; the author and finisher of our faith.*

When I was a kid in the old church we used to sing a little song... *"Oh, how I love Jesus, because He first loved me."* That was the entire song. *"Oh, how I love Jesus."*

In **Revelation 2** God spoke to a very good church in Ephesus and told them, *"I have a problem with you, you left your first love."* Other stuff is in the castle keep, you are enamored with other things. Then He told them this...

Repent, and do the first works.

Turn around, and do again what started this whole thing, fall in love with Jesus.

Today we are going to come and clean out the castle keep, and fall in love with Jesus again.