

Satan's Appeal Trial: The Biblical Basis for a Philosophy of Human History

Addressing The Need for Practical Application

Presented To
Arlington Community Church
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Series Addendum #2

After the previous four lessons in this series entitled "Satan's Appeal Trial: The Biblical Basis for a Philosophy of Human History," I believe it is important to emphasize the practical value of this information through a series of illustrations and other points of note. Some of this information may be repetitive with information presented in classes or in the notes.

Objection: I believe that some good is simply "neutral," not "evil" as you or Chafer seems to imply. For instance, consider statements that Chafer makes such as "The Cosmos is Wholly Evil"¹ and the following as examples:

The cosmos is a vast order or system that Satan has promoted, which conforms to his ideals, aims, and methods. It is civilization now functioning apart from God – a civilization in which none of its promoters really expect God to share, who assign to God no consideration in respect to their projects; nor do they ascribe any causativity to Him. This system embraces its godless governments, conflicts, armaments, jealousies, its education, culture, religions of morality, and pride. It is that sphere in which man lives. It is what he sees, what he employs. To the uncounted multitude it is all they ever know so long as they live on this earth. It is properly styled the satanic system, which phrase is in many instances a justified interpretation of the so-meaningful word, cosmos. It is literally a cosmos diabolicus.²

Response: We need to be careful when reading Chafer's comments and I need to be clear in communicating this information so that some important distinctions are made. In my opinion, these distinctions are absolutely vital to minimize the possibility of confusion on this all important Biblical theme. Consider the following distinctions.

- The distinction between views of human history. I believe the biblical view of human history includes the fact that human history after the Fall is something that God has permitted. The fallen state of humanity is not consistent with God's holiness and is not something He could or would have created. God has permitted the lower creature to continue to exist for a greater purpose – a purpose that has been explained at length in the lessons to date, i.e. to serve as evidence in the appeal trial of Satan. Other views of history omit this explanation; however, I believe it is critical to one's understanding of the answers to many questions such as:
 - Why does God allow sin in the world?
 - Who is the ruler of this world and how does he govern his domain?
 - Is God really in control and if He is, why does He allow suffering in the world that He created?
 - Why is the concept of "unconditional election" (a basic tenet of Reformed theology) inconsistent with God's purpose in human history?
 - Why is important that believers not be consumed with (neutralized by) things related to this cosmos?

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), Volume II, 84.

² *Ibid.*, 77-78.

- The distinction between two types of “good” in this present world order. All “good” in this present world order was not placed here by God. A different category of “good” was introduced at the Fall when mankind ate of the tree of the knowledge of “good and evil” and then attempted to hide or cover their sin in an attempt to align with the righteousness of God – a sincere and “good” effort to make adjustment, but inconsistent with God’s righteousness.
- In other words – the distinction between a good that is temporal verses a good that is eternal in nature. There is much “good” that is produced every day by believers and unbelievers that falls under the umbrella of “making this world a better place.” While commendable, this human “good” will pass as sure as this present cosmos will pass. Believers are never commanded or encouraged make it their life objective to improve this world. Christians have never controlled the culture. Politics and legislation can never make a lasting, positive impact on culture. Only the Holy Spirit can do that, and He operates on the individual believer level--one person at a time through justification and experiential sanctification--not the societal/cultural level. As believers, our mission is to proclaim the gospel and build the Church, not reform society. Societal reformation would be a wonderful result of our mission, but it is not our mission. There will never be a significant, lasting societal reformation anywhere on earth, no matter how much we proclaim the gospel. Consider Paul's prophecy in 2 Timothy 3 about the state of humanity in the "latter times" of the Church age.
- The distinction between benefiting or even enjoying the “good” of this cosmos (e.g. the protection of freedom that results from laws and governments, the sports world, the medical technology of the age, etc.) and being consumed by the cosmos. Believers can and should enjoy the “good” of this cosmos. As believers, we should not be “of” this cosmos even though we are “in” the cosmos. The principle of leveraging the things of this cosmos is found in 1 Corinthians 7:31 where Paul instructs believers who “use this world” to not “misuse” the world. I believe that every discussion of the “good” of this cosmos in Chafer’s Systematic theology is addressed from the perspective of those who are consumed by its godless ideology.
- The distinction between law and grace. The present age of the Body of Christ (a.k.a. the Church Age) is one in which the believer is to be guided by the Spirit and Truth – a realm in which there is no explicit prohibition or direction regarding most decisions a believer makes. We do not live under the Mosaic Law, even though the same principles found in nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in epistles to the Church. Therefore, each believer must structure his or her life with a set of priorities consistent with his or her understanding of Truth and consistent with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The believer’s understanding of the purpose of human history will play a vital role in the priorities and decisions a believer makes. If the “good” of this cosmos is neutral, the believer can avoid sin, but be neutralized in service for Christ in the area of the believer’s spiritual gift by being consumed with such “good” things as improving government, medical research, sports, entertainment, etc. The believer can and should enjoy these “good” things of this cosmos since they are a part of what has been permitted by God. However, the primary focus of the believer’s life should not center upon them. To the extent this occurs in the believer’s life, then to that extent the believer has been neutralized and is no longer salt or light in the world.

Question: How can you on the one hand say God is in control, yet on the other hand say this world is under Satan’s rule?

Answer: God has allowed sin and evil to enter His perfectly created and restored earth consistent with what He permits – His permissive will. Satan gained dominion over this earth at the moment Adam and Eve succumbed to his temptation as discussed and documented in the lessons to date in this series. Our faith that God is in control is sure based upon the fact that Scripture informs us of: 1) how human history will conclude; 2) the ultimate fate of Satan and those who follow him; 3) fulfillment of past prophecies; and 4) the essence of God. In addition, it is easy to see that God has put in place rules that establish the parameters within which Satan

can execute his rule. For instance, he is prohibited from destroying man and the earth by a direct interaction on his part.

In order to accomplish His objective and in order to facilitate the preservation and perpetuation of humanity throughout time, God introduced four institutions: 1) Volition; 2) Marriage; 3) Family; and 4) Nations. The last three of these institutions are designed to preserve and perpetuate the concept of volition throughout human history.