

RESTORED: REMADE IN THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

Re-Formed Eikons

Week #4 (March 28, 2010)

- **Suggested Text:** Romans 5:12-21; Romans 8:28-30; or Cycle C texts
- **Suggested Title:** “Restored – Remade Images *Eikons*”
- **Big Idea** = *Transformed and remade into the image of Christ*

Scripture Readings: March 21 – 28 (*from the Revised Common Lectionary*)

- Isaiah 43:16-21
- Psalm 126
- Philippians 3:4b-14
- John 12:1-8

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- In what ways do we need restored?
 - How are we restored? (*Atonement*)
 - Does Atonement work?
 - What does restoration mean?
 - Understanding what atonement did for us helps us to see and embrace the fullness of God’s restoration of us.

Atonement:

1. JUSTIFICATION
2. RECAPITULATION (Chapter 13 / pg. 101)
3. LIBERATION-VICTORY (Christus-Victor)

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A Community of Atonement

By Scot McKnight

During the past several weeks we have shared the primary building blocks of the *Salvation Epic* that is the God-Man Story. We have shared the role of the Hero, God, who is Creator-**Redeemer**. We then shared the condition of man and the brokenness of humans in our teaching about the **Redeemed**. The next stop on our *Road to Redemption* tour was the message of **Reconciliation**, which Pastor Ron shared last week. **This brings us to this week and the objective of reconciliation which is Restoration.**

Today we're going to discuss "restoration" and what it entails... We'll also talk about the areas of our lives and the ways we need to be restored. Restoration is kind of a big word and can mean many things in several different contexts, so let us begin to narrow down our definition with a little help from Mr. Webster who writes the following:

Restoration: *the act of restoring or bringing back to a former place, station, or condition; the fact of being restored; renewal; reestablishment; as, the restoration of friendship between enemies; the restoration of peace after war.* [1913 Webster]

"The act of restoring or bringing back to a former place, station, or condition."

"REESTABLISHMENT." I like that; "Reestablishment." But, what are we being reestablished to? What is the "former place" we are being brought back to?

We are familiar with the Genesis texts that tell us we were created in the **image of God**:

²⁶ *Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."*

²⁷ *So God created human beings in his own image.*

In the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them. [Genesis 1:26-27 NLT]

The Hebrew term for this usage of **image of God**, is *tselem* (*tseh'-lem*). The Greek translation of this Hebrew word, *tselem*, is *Eikon* (*eikón*) and means, (likeness, image, portrait), related to *εἰκέσαι* (*eikénai*), (be like, look like). Let me share some interesting details that help us with understanding why this information is so important.

Most scholars of the meaning of “Eikon” would agree that it refers to humans representing God in this world; humans as Eikons are earth’s divine representatives. The expression “image of God” is only found in the Old Testament at Genesis 5:1 and 9:6. Genesis 5:1 rehearses Genesis 1-2 and 9:6 prohibits, rather significantly, murder because humans are Eikons of God. What we learn in the sweep of the biblical story is that the created Eikons of Genesis 1—2, the ones designed by God to represent God in this world, become “cracked” Eikons in Genesis 3, and the rest of human existence is the life of cracked Eikons who do not accomplish their task of ruling in this world as God’s representatives.

(“Eikon of God” is not found again in the entire Old Testament, though it does appear in noncanonical Jewish texts.) As the Bible moves forward into the New Testament, though, “Eikon” morphs; it shifts from denoting a ruling-representative function to a **redemptive** role. There are a number of NT references, but we will limit our discussion to two principal passages: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 and then 3:17-18.¹

And if our gospel be also hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of **Christ, who is the image of God**, should not shine unto them. (2 Cor 4:3-4)

Now the Lord is a Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. **But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor 3:17-18)

So, here’s the summary: God created mankind to be perfect images of Himself and making us “living portraits of God.” The sin of Adam resulted in the failure of man to project the image of God... resulting in broken images or “cracked Eikons.” Ultimately, it is the true image-bearer, Jesus, who comes to earth as **Redeemer-Reconciler-Restorer** with the purpose of reconciling and “fixing” the cracked Eikons...healing and perfecting the broken images of God. The resultant destiny as the Eikons are re-formed into the Christ-image, is conformation to the Godhead through union with Christ and communion with others (Eikons) for all of eternity.²

¹ A Community Called Atonement; Scot McKnight, Abingdon Press. Nashville, TN; 2007. pp19-20.

² **my personal summary and thoughts gleaned from: *A Community Called Atonement (pp.18-20); by Scot McKnight*

Our earlier question asked about reestablishment; “What are we being brought back to?” We are being brought back to God as Pastor Ron reminded us last week (in our text from 2 Corinthians 5:20), “*Come back to God.*” Restoration then is being brought back to the condition and state in which God originally created us. **Restoration is being reestablished as an image of God.**

How are Eikons (humans) restored? What is the vehicle or means of restoration? The Bible refers to the means of restoration as **atonement**, and this atonement was accomplished by the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. This information satisfies (more or less) a textbook interpretation of biblical reconciliation and restoration, but what does this really mean in a practical sense... How does it make a difference in my life today?

What atonement corrects and accomplishes is directly relational to our understanding of sin. There is a lot more that can be said on this, but the result is an incorrect understanding of sin (and its catastrophic effects) will lead to an incomplete imputation of the atoning work of Christ. For instance, if I am given a canned ham, but I don’t realize there is ham (to eat) on the inside of the can...or I don’t understand I need to open the can to get to the ham, the canned ham brings me minimal benefit. Oh, I can use it for a doorstop or a house decoration and I may find other uses for it, but unless I fully comprehend its intended purpose I’ll never get to eat it.

To help us with a better understanding of sin, let us look at a few definitions.

- “Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act., attitude, or nature” (Wayne Grudem)
- “The personal act of turning away from God and His will...not only His law, but against His person. (J. Rodman Williams)
- “Any acts and dispositions for which some person is to blame. In short, sin is culpable shalom-breaking and shalom is God’s design for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and therefore an affront to their architect and builder.” (Cornelius Plantinga Jr.)

God made man to be relational. God made man to be in **relation with (God) Himself**; God made man with a free will, so making him **relational and accountable to himself**; God made man to be in **relationship with others**; God made man a steward of the earth...and **relational to the world**.

Scot McKnight summarizes the problem with atonement completely and succinctly in this statement from *A Community Called Atonement*.

“The problem we face again and again in atonement theory is, in fact, the problem. We cannot discuss atonement until we define the problem that atonement remedies. If we define sin as basic mistrust (Ted Peters, Mark Biddle) that becomes pride and fear, then atonement remedies basic mistrust, pride, and fear. But these foundational problems are not comprehensive enough. If sin is defined as guilt against the law, then judicial remission becomes the focus of atonement. But judicial remission, or the wiping of guilt by declaration of justification, does not resolve the fullness of the hyperrelational problem, for it resolves only one element of the God-relation. Thus, Wolfhart Pannenberg’s point that sin is ‘the universal failure to achieve our human destiny,’ expresses our point exactly... The sin in the Bible is the choice to ‘go it alone,’ to be ‘free’ in the sense of independence, to achieve (like God) absolute freedom.”

“Herein lies the problem: Eikons are made for union with God, communion with others, love of self, and care for the world. To strive for absolute freedom is to ask the Eikon to do what it cannot do. Eikons can’t Eikon alone. Eikons are made for relationship and to give Eikons a life without relationships, without dependence, and without love will diminish them. To pursue absolute freedom in all directions severs the Eikons from God, from others, from the world, and therefore from the self. Severed Eikons diminish themselves.”

Putting it all together... (3 Primary Elements and Views of Atonement)

Most of us probably have a similar view of atonement and what it accomplishes for us. The primary metaphor in contemporary society for atonement comes from the reformation. The reformed view is that of **justification**. The problem with the justification metaphor is that it limits the scope and complete working of atonement which leads to biblical imbalance and our

incomplete restoration. You may have heard the saying used to help explain the “justifying” work of Christ as something like this; “God justified us through the cross of Christ and now it’s **“just-if-I’d”** never sinned.” Again, this isn’t wrong...it’s simply incomplete.

A second theory of atonement is also the oldest explanation in the history of the church. Irenaeus (202c) and Athanasius (373c) are assigned credit for the theory of atonement called **Recapitulation**. At the most foundational level, the story of recapitulation teaches that Jesus “restarted” Adam’s life. In recapitulating Adam’s life, Jesus also did the same for Israel, and the life of every human that would follow Adam.

He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things...in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one. ~Irenaeus

“For He was made man that we might be made God.” ~Athanasius

What this means to us in the most practical sense is this; Jesus became all that we are—he *absolutely identified himself* with the fullness of humans—so that he might lead us to God.³ The ramifications of this are simple, we can live the life that Christ lived on this earth and “...walk as Jesus walked.”⁴

The final atonement theory, which is actually a fruition of the Recapitulation theory, I want to share with you at this time (*there are others, but for the most part they are simply variations of these primary three theory-explanations*) is the **Liberation** theory also known as the **Victory** theory (*Christus Victor*). The summary understanding of the *Christus Victor* theory is that God assumes the nature of the first formed human (the incarnation), humanity resumes union with God through the substitutionary atoning work of Christ for the sin of man, and the image of God is reestablished in the Eikons (see again 2 Cor 3:17-18—Now the Lord is a Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ***But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image*** from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord).

³ *A Community Called Atonement* (pg.102)

⁴ 1 John 2:6

What is the fruit of atonement?

Understanding what atonement has done for us in the fullness of what God has intended, helps us to wholly realize restoration in a “now and here” perspective as well as looking forward with joyful anticipation to our “eternal” restoration.

The fruit of atonement is abundant life... now, and in the future-eternal kingdom of God.

Jesus told his disciples, and He tells us, ***“I have come to give you life”***⁵ The life that is offered is that of a reconciled and restored image of God. The apostle Paul writes of this “recapitulated” or “restarted” relationship in his letter to the Romans (8:29), telling them *“God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”*⁶ Indeed, as we are instructed to *“imitate God, therefore, in everything you do”*⁷ again by the apostle Paul, this time in his letter to the Church in Ephesus...the understanding is that we have been made complete by the work of Jesus Christ; fully enabled and empowered by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit of God. We are able to *“Walk as Jesus walked.”*⁸ This is the emphasis and gift of the Christ-filled life.

Our shortcoming fails us when we only receive a portion of the work of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Illustrations abound that help us to realize the absurdity of our plight when we attempt the journey of a disciple of Christ using only a portion of the tool set He has equipped us with. Imagine if you are the fixer-upper type, having a full chest of tools and trying to accomplish the multitude of tasks you may undertake with only the use of your hammer. Forget that you have a saw...you will hammer your board in half. Why use your Phillips-head screwdriver when you can pound the screw into the board? Can your tasks be accomplished? Maybe they can, and maybe they cannot...certainly, if you do accomplish your mission, it will be with much frustration and not a very clean finish. If you are a golfer, can you imagine being equipped with an entire bag of various shaped and sized clubs, yet only using your sand wedge

⁵ John 10:10

⁶ Romans 8:29

⁷ Ephesians 5:1

⁸ 1 John 2:6

for every shot on your eighteen hole game? Consider the farmer, can you imagine how crazy it might look for you to gaze out across one of the fields here and see a group of farmhands pushing a tractor to get a field plowed?

Show Big Red Tractor Video

These illustrations seem rather extreme, but they are not far from the mark when we assume to be following Christ with only a limited understanding of atonement and restoration. Jesus said to His followers; “who the Son sets free is free indeed.”⁹ He meant it.

It is true that our ultimate restoration will not be fully realized until the Lord Jesus returns, but the gift of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, fully enables us to live a *Christus Victor* life on this side of eternity. Yours and my separation from God has been mended; we no longer have to live as “cracked Eikons.” Jesus promised us the Kingdom of God is within us who follow Him.¹⁰

Maybe you didn’t know this information. Maybe you’ve been frustrated by feeling “short-changed” in your relationship with Christ. Know that it doesn’t have to be that way. Knowledge, submission, and obedience to His leading will lead to your fully realizing the awesome gift of restoration that is yours through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

⁹ John 8:36

¹⁰ Luke 17:21

The Story of the Six Blind Men and the Elephant

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived six blind men. Each of them was very wise. Each of them had gone to school and read lots of books in Braille.

They knew so much about so many things that people would often come from miles around to get their advice. They were happy to share whatever they knew with the people who asked them thoughtful questions.

One day these six wise blind men went for a walk in the zoo. That day the zoo-keeper was worrying about all of her many troubles.

The night before she had had an argument with her husband, and her children had been misbehaving all day long. She had so much on her mind that she forgot to lock the gate of the elephant cage as she was leaving it.

Now, elephants are naturally very curious animals. They quickly tried to push the gate to the cage to see if it might open. To their great surprise, the gate swung freely on its hinge. Two of the more daring elephants walked over to the gate. They looked left and right, and then quietly tip-toed out of the cage.

Just at that moment the six blind men walked by. One of them heard a twig snap, and went over to see what it was that was walking by.

"Hi there!" said the first blind man to the first elephant. "Could you please tell us the way to the zoo restaurant?" The elephant couldn't think of anything intelligent to say, so he sort of shifted his weight from left to right to left to right.

The first blind man walked over to see if this big silent person needed any help. Then, with a big bump, he walked right into the side of the elephant. He put out his arms to either side, but all he could feel was the big body of the elephant.

"Boy," said the first blind man. "I think I must have walked into a wall." The second blind man was becoming more and more curious about what was happening. He walked over to the front of the elephant and grabbed hold of the animal's trunk.

He quickly let go and shouted, "This isn't a wall. This is a snake! We should step back in case it's poisonous." The third man quickly decided to find out what was going on, and to tell his friends what they had walked into.

He walked over to the back of the elephant and touched the animal's tail. "This is no wall, and this is no snake. You are both wrong once again. I know for sure that this is a rope."

The fourth man sighed as he knew how stubborn his friends could be. The fourth blind man decided that someone should really get to the bottom of this thing. So he crouched down on all fours and felt around the elephant's legs. (Luckily for the fourth man, this elephant was very tame and wouldn't think of stepping on a human being.)

"My dear friends," explained the fourth man. "This is no wall and this is no snake. This is no rope either. What we have here, gentlemen, is four tree trunks. That's it. Case closed."

The fifth blind man was not so quick to jump to conclusions. He walked up to the front of the elephant and felt the animal's two long tusks. "It seems to me that this object is made up of two swords," said the fifth man. "What I am holding is long and curved and sharp at the end. I am not sure what this could be, but maybe our sixth friend could help us."

The sixth blind man scratched his head and thought and thought. He was the one who really was the wisest of all of them. He was the one who really knew what he knew, and knew what he didn't know.

Just then the worried zoo-keeper walked by. "Hi there! How are you enjoying the zoo today?" she asked them all. "The zoo is very nice," replied the sixth blind man. "Perhaps you could help us figure out the answer to a question that's been puzzling us."

"Sure thing," said the zoo-keeper, as she firmly grabbed the elephant's collar.

"My friends and I can't seem to figure out what this thing in front of us is. One of us thinks it's a wall; one thinks it's a snake; one thinks it's a rope, and one thinks it's four tree trunks. How can one thing seem so different to five different people?" "Well," said the zoo-keeper. "You are all right. This elephant seems like something different to each one of you. And the only way to know what this thing really is, is to do exactly what you have done. Only by sharing what each of you knows can you possibly reach a true understanding."

The six wise men had to agree with the wisdom of the zoo-keeper. The first five of them had been too quick to form an opinion without listening to what the others had to say.

So they all went off to the zoo restaurant and had a really hearty lunch.

(This story is a well-known fable from India. Modernized and re-told by Phil Shapiro)