

# THE CENTER

By

Curtis Dickinson

Nearly a century ago Mr. James Inglis wrote, “there is one question which underlies all theological controversy;...whether the glory of God or the supposed interest of man is the center around which all is to revolve...” This question is not limited to theological controversy, but engages all of life.

At creation, man was given dominion over all the earth, but he remained under the dominion of God, as seen in the accounting after eating of the forbidden tree. The earth was created for man, but not to be the center of man’s attention. Both the earth and man were created by God and for God’s own purpose and for His glory. “Thou has created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11). Had there been no creation at all, God would still have existed complete. He is the only being Who is self-contained, self-sufficient and self-satisfied without any need of outside help. At creation He stood completely outside and apart from that which He created, so that He is the basis, the source, and the focal point of everything created. He looked on and said, “It is good.” The Creator judged his own work and gave it its proper place in the creation.

Man was given life on the basis that he relate to God as He is, as his Creator, and the source and center of his universe. When man himself sought to be the center, his own source and judge of himself, (deciding what is good and evil), he negated any purpose for his existence. Where man does not function to satisfy the pleasure of God who created him, man is “without God and without hope in the world” (Eph. 2:12), “mere animals to be taken and destroyed” ((II Peter 2:12).

Two practical observations stand out in contemplating this truth that God, not man, is to be the center of attention in the world.

First, how noble and exalted man the creature may become when he is careful to keep the place to which God has assigned him and at the same time acknowledge the place that God naturally holds. God, the source and center of all things, is faithful to give his highest creation a high place in His economy. He redeems him from guilt, brings him into his family, calling him His child (I John 3:1) and gives him the presence of His own holy spirit. He reveals to him the eternal and glorious purpose of all creation, and then supplies him with the means to attain it. Man, in trying to give God the glory due Him, strives to uphold the laws God has ordained and thus establishes a society where man may be free to live and work unmolested. He recognizes that work is pleasing to God, so in doing His will he dignifies labor and sanctifies the material things he produces by the sweat of his face. By centering attention upon God and not himself nor his fellow man, he obtains peace both within and with others who also are the instruments of God.

When a man rightly sees God as the sovereign center of creation and humbly seeks to serve Him, he is privileged to live close to the Creator, given dominion over the earth, and ultimately will be given an immortal and glorified body and a place in the new creation. Man is not made for the world, the world is made for man, as long as man keeps his proper place under the rule of God. Man is not to live in fear of the environment, as the ecologists would have us believe, but in fear of God, and thus have dominion over the

environment. Jesus was not in sympathy with the people of his day who made life subject to nature. There were plenty of those cults around, but Jesus had no part in them. Scripture condemns astrology, the belief that life is governed by the horoscope. God is master of the stars: they sing His praise and glorify Him (Isa. 47:12–15).

Where men humbly ascribe all glory and power to God, which is simply recognizing things as they are, there is peace and joy and assurance of glorification (Psa 148::3).

Second, the more man seeks to rise above his place as servant to God, and displace God as sovereign center, the more disoriented he becomes and the less harmony he is able to attain in the world. The United Nations is an example of this failure. By raising it up as the center of man's efforts, "the last great hope," men sought to push God aside. The nations are to revolve around the U.N. Its charter rejected the divine order of government, of family and of individual responsibility and freedom, for a strictly humanist order of slavery. This was to succeed, because the General Council would make it work by its "sovereign" power. Instead, the U.N. has become a thorn in the flesh of all nations and a source of constant confusion and contradiction. When the representative of the displaced Palestinians was invited to speak to plead for their homeland, which was overrun by the Israelis, it required hundreds of police and special security agents to protect him from assassination. He spoke with a revolver by his side for his own protection, while in the U.N. building.

The growing dependence on drugs is to be expected of a people who have ceased to depend on the true source of their own lives, and have cut themselves off from the power to function properly. Paul wrote that men who refuse to give thanks to God begin a down hill race that ends in a perverted nature, even changing the function of their own creative powers. The women become lesbians, the men homosexuals! (Rom. 1:21–27). The bleeding hearts who want to justify this form of perverted human nature are themselves also disoriented, having failed to see God as the sovereign center of creation. In a sense their guilt is greater than the sex perverts. The latter have become subject to their fallen powers in a horrible grip, like the drug addict (although, it can be overcome when they are converted to Christ), but their defenders are deliberately defying God with a clear mind and without the pressure of the obsession of physical perversion.

Angels who left their "proper habitation" were cast out, committed to "outer darkness" to await final disposition at judgment! (Jude 6). All men who fail to see God as the sovereign center of the universe are like those fallen angels, wandering in an outer darkness plunging deeper and deeper into the chaos they create by being out of the proper orbit around the Creator. They ultimately will be destroyed because they reject the giver of all life.

The solution to the problem is for man to return to his proper orbit, the place where God put him in the first place. How? Through the means God himself has provided: Christ.

Christ, as the one sent from God to return man to his proper place, is the example of a man who kept his proper habitation in relationship to God. He said, "Lo I am come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). His explanation of his actions to the world was, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). "The son does nothing of himself, but whatsoever he sees the Father doing...for the Father loves the son and shows him all things that Himself did" (John 5:19–20). The Father is the center, the authority

and the power. Jesus, as a man on earth, was submissive, “obedient even unto death.” The death itself was God’s means of running the universe according to His own justice, and yet showing mercy to the rebels. Jesus, in willing to do the will of the Father, bore the sin and took the death penalty for all the rebels, and the justice of God was satisfied.

Man can return to the dominion-ship ordained of God, but only through the means God provides. This is the test of every man, to humbly acknowledge from the heart that he is not his own boss, that he is not the captain of his fate and master of his soul, but that God is, and that he wants to be under God’s control enough that he will return by the way God has provided, the blood of Christ.

This is the stumbling block. We would get back into the place of dominion and glory, but to come back on the merits and work of a humble and totally submissive servant! To become servants ourselves! Man wants to do it by his own works, by his own devices. We would get right with God, but we will do it our own way, in our own time. We’ll straighten up, go to the “Church of our choice,” love our neighbor, be good, all just like He says — you’ll see! Just look at how good I am already! Yes, look at me — look at man in the center of the stage! What man wants is not Grace, but a right to run the show himself. He wants God to be present, to approve, to save him so he can still be the center of his little world.

That’s why man in all of his great knowledge and power continues to multiply confusion, tension, violence and sorrow. He will not have God as the absolute sovereign center of the universe, especially the center and power of the individual’s life. As the citizens in the parable said of the King (Jesus “We will not have this man reign over us” (Luke 19:14). Man wants to think of power and direction as coming from God but **centered in man**. For example, the popular thing in churches today is for people to tell their “experiences,” all the ways in which God is “using them.” While God is given credit, the center of interest is still not on God but on man. You see it in the TV shows that specialize in healing. The center of interest is man, not God. God will heal you if you just believe. The concentration is on the illness and the healer. Indeed God heals — only an idiot could believe God is Creator and yet hasn’t power to heal His creatures or supply their needs. God heals according to His own will and purpose. Man who approaches God for the purpose of using Him is denying God as the center and directing power of life. God is not a servant of man, an actor to be kept in the wings and called out on cure to do his thing for the interest and delight of man! God is the audience and producer of the show and he puts it on for His own delight. “Of him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). Faith is to believe God is in control, that he works all things after the counsel of His will and that they work together for good to all who are called according to His purpose — not that they work for our every whim and desire.

What did you sing about the last time you went to church? With few exceptions the hymns center on the believer, not on the attributes and glories of God. Gospel songs, with some exceptions, tell of experiences of men, and the interests of men rather than the glory of God.

Christians are saved, not because our good is the end purpose of God’s action, but that God might “be glorified in them.” Thus we are to do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31). What a change this would make in church programming, to say nothing of individual efforts, if all saints took it seriously. Christians are called “the glory of Christ” (II Cor. 8:23).

When Christ had perfectly accomplished the Father's purpose, making the Father the very center of all his life and finally enduring the curse of sin and death as the Father desired, he was exalted above all that exists, save the Father Himself. He is our "forerunner", leaving an example that we should follow his steps. This is the purpose God has for man, that he humble himself to walk in the way prescribed by God, that he may eventually be exalted to and glorified in God's own image, for God's eternal glory.

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.  
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute  
Curtis' articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article  
for permission to be valid. Vol. XV, Number 11.  
.....