HaDavar Messianic Ministries

Making Sense of Suffering
With Pastor Jeff Carter

Week Two

Network: ICC_Guest1
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Review:

- God has implanted in each of us an awareness of how things ought to be.
- We’re looking at a big picture perspective
- Why is the church age characterized by so much suffering?
- God always prepares His people for what is to come
- Birth pangs = “suffering as preparation for significant change”
- “Birth pangs of the new creation”

II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem
1) Reconciling 3 propositions: God is good, God is all-powerful, Evil exists
2) Classic syllogism:
   a) All men are mortal
   b) Socrates is a man
      c) Socrates is mortal

II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem
3) Bad syllogism:
   a) God is love
   b) Love is blind
   c) Stevie Wonder is blind
      d) Stevie Wonder is God
II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem

4) Assumptions:
   ▪ If God is all-powerful then He can create a world without evil
   ▪ If God is omni-benevolent (or all-good) then He would prefer a world without evil
   ▪ Evil exists

II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem

5) Argument:
   a) If evil exists then an omnipotent and omni-benevolent God cannot exist.
   b) Evil exists.

   c) Therefore an omnipotent and omni-benevolent God cannot exist.

II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem

6) What does omnipotence entail?
   ▪ God is not able to do that which is not logically possible.
   ▪ God cannot do anything contrary to His nature
   ▪ God cannot perform logical contradictions
   ▪ God cannot create a world with morally free creatures without the possibility of evil in it
II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem

7) What is omni-benevolence?

- Moral sufficiency—God could have reasons which justify otherwise inexcusable permissions of evil and suffering (i.e. for the sake of a greater good)
- As finite creatures we are in no position to know
- We cannot see the future

B. Why do bad things happen to good people?

1) How do we define what things are bad?

- Suffering does have a role in our lives
- Pain is integral to God restoring the world back to Himself

2) Who are these “good” people?

- Luke 18...there is no one good but God
- Any “good” we might do is tainted with evil motives

II. The Problem of Evil

A. The logical problem

8) The positive case for the existence of God from the existence of evil

a) If evil exists, then objective moral values exist.
b) If objective moral values exist, then God exists.
c) Evil exists.
d) Objective moral values exist.
e) God exists.
III. Birth Pangs

A. Birth Pangs in Scripture

1) New birth does not come without birth pangs
2) Glory does not come without suffering
3) Birth pangs accompany the birth of the new age

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8:18-22)

"While they are saying 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child." (1 Thess 5:3)

"I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace. Ask now, and see, if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? Alas, for that day is great, there is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s distress.” (Jer 30:5-7)
...all hands will fall limp, and every man's heart will melt. And they will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame.” (Isa 13:7-8)

“In that day the hearts of Moab's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labor.” (Jer 48:41)

“When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together, they saw and were astounded; they fled in terror. Trembling seized them there, pain like that of a woman in labor.” (Ps 48:4)

III. Birth Pangs

A. Birth Pangs in Scripture

4) The tribulation is a time of birth pangs
5) Some passages focus on the fact of the pain and suffering—as well as the suddenness & intensity of the pain...(1 Thess 5:3; Jer 30:5-7; Jer 4:31; Mark 13:8)
6) Birth pangs are used to express the feeling of helplessness
7) Forward looking hope is also present

“Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.” (John 16:20-22)
“The sequence of this passage corresponds to the sequence of eschatological transition: tribulation – redemption. The death of Jesus will bring weeping, mourning, grief, and tribulation. But as with birth, so with the passion: it is a prelude to joy. Grief will pass, and it will be turned into rejoicing, for the disciples will see Jesus and He will see them…. the image of a woman in pain bringing forth her child was a well-known symbol for the eschatological transition in Judaism and the early church, and is used in the Tanakh in connection with the coming of the day of the Lord.” (Dale Allison)

“The passion [the death of Christ] is as the great tribulation, the resurrection as the arrival of the age to come.”

“... it is difficult to avoid the impression that ... [in John 16:19-22] the prospect of tribulation turned into joy was at one time a prophecy of the coming eschatological woes and the subsequent salvation.”

“Hear the uproar from the city, hear that noise from the temple! It is the sound of the Lord repaying his enemies all they deserve. Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son ... no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children. ‘Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?’ says the Lord.” (Isa 66:6-8)
“... that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth? Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth ... you will be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.” (Micah 4:9-10)

“The pangs of childbirth are not only a terribly intense pain, and not only a pain that dominates the sufferer and makes them helpless—it is a pain that grips the sufferer and forces the sufferer to go through a prescribed pattern (even if not of predetermined length). The birth pangs are a pain that, once it has begun, must run its course to completion, regardless of what happens to the mother or child along the way.”

III. Birth Pangs
A. Birth Pangs in Scripture
8) Birth pangs—a pain which must run its course
9) In Matt 24...these are the beginnings of birth pangs
10) You cannot have a birth without the birth pangs
III. Birth Pangs
B. Birth Pangs in every new beginning
1) Prior to every new epoch or phase of God’s plan there appear to be birth pangs
2) Birth pangs precede life outside the garden of Eden
3) “The fall” was the cause of us having birth pangs at all
4) The flood served as birth pangs for the fresh start with Noah
5) God’s choosing of Abraham saw birth pangs

Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth, for now you will go out of the city, dwell in a field, and go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies ... therefore He will give [Israel] up until the time when she who is in labor has born a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel.” (Micah 4:10-5:3)

III. Birth Pangs
B. Birth Pangs in every new beginning
6) The birth of the nation of Israel contained many birth pangs
7) The Babylonian captivity served as birth pangs
8) The captivity previews for us the sufferings preceding the second coming
9) The coming of Christ saw the world turned upside down—birth pangs preceding the birth of the church
10) The tribulation is the perfect example
III. Birth Pangs
B. Birth Pangs in every new beginning

11) The preparation of individuals:
   ▪ Moses’ 40 years of preparation
   ▪ Joseph went through many trials
   ▪ The apostle Paul spent time in Arabia
   ▪ Jesus had 40 days in the desert

12) This age itself is a transition
   a) All the previous transitions between ages were similar—the next one is different
   b) Creation is being made ready for this transformation
   c) “The present sufferings are like birth-pangs. They anticipate the coming of new life.”
   d) Just like birth pangs, suffering will intensify as the end approaches

e) The whole period from the first advent to the second encompasses the period of birth pangs
f) “[Jesus’ suffering] marks the inauguration of the eschatological tribulation, tribulation which the church continues to suffer until the end of the age” (Mark Dubis).
III. Birth Pangs

B. Birth Pangs in every new beginning

12) This age itself is a transition
   
g) This age is the age of birth pangs and is itself the preparation for the age to come
   
h) Suffering serves as warning signs as well as preparation for coming change
   
i) The 17-year cicada
   
j) The struggle is necessary for their development
   
k) Struggle and pain accompany new births