

## **GOD, CREATION, AND TECHNOLOGY:**

*from the Garden of Eden to the City of Restored Eden*

Text: **Genesis 1:26-28**, “<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” <sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

**Rev. 21:1-2**, “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

**Rev. 22:1-4**, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

### **Introduction:**

Futurist Thomas Frey said that in the next ten years, there will be another techno cultural shift that will happen. Other than 3D printed stuff, drones, and the Internet of Things (IOT), the rise of Artificial Intelligence or Augmented Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Robotics will take place. Just days ago, Sebbie, Pat, and I tried to explore this metaverse. There are real people, real community inside that virtual world. In fact, we visited a metaverse mall and saw real stores where you can buy real items through the cloud or the cyberspace.

Regarding to Augmented Intelligence (AI), each of us is already affected by this. You can ask or command Siri, Google, Echo, and Alexa turning on the music you like, turning off Christmas lights, setting an alarm, and finding the best ramen restaurant in town. Moreover, whenever you say something, our virtual assistants listen. You will be surprised that a week after you talked about laptops, then on your social media, ads, and accounts, you will see a lot of references or website links about it.

AI, VR, IOT, these are all thought towards utopia, idealism, and the pursuit of having a perfect world. However, these realities have been influential to the church ever since Covid pandemic happened. Sadly, the challenge and the transition to embracing digital technology as part of the church were not thought critically two years ago. Many thought that it will just subside after the trend of Zoom Online Worship, Hybrid services, and Worship Online streaming. That is why we are going to have this sermon series about God, the Bible, Technology, and the Church.

### **Outline of the series:**

1. God, Creation, and Technology
2. God’s Word and the Bible Apps
3. Humanity and Technology (Seven Deadly Digital Sins – part 1)

4. Games, Social Media, and the Christian (Seven Deadly Digital Sins – part 2)
5. The Church's Response to Technology (Missions, 666, and Redemption)

### **Background:**

Nowadays, GenX (and Baby Boomers) people are digital immigrants who see digital tech as progress. While Millennials see digitality as a norm, essential. And the GenZ—digital natives—as language. The distinctions are needed to be understood to close the techno-cultural gap. Hence, the study of DT is significant to all generations. Explain the challenge or confusion of this gap.\*

To be fair, there are also many people who are skeptics about engaging technology. They see this as part of the 666 or marks of the beast (this topic we will discuss this next time). The tendency is we abhor this technology and criticized those people who are promoting it. So, what does the history of the Church say about this claim? Is technology really bad for the church? Let us see.

### **Technology in Church history**

The greatest technological influence on Christianity was the invention of the **printing press** by German innovator Johannes Gutenberg in the 1440s. The first book produced by **Gutenberg's Press** was a Bible—known as Gutenberg Bible. This technology, his press, was the means to crystalize the Reformation Age of Martin Luther and other Protestants through printing pamphlets, books, church letters, and sermons.

Neil Postman (1992) traced another revolutionary technological development in the Benedictine monasteries' **mechanical clock** between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Postman said, "The bells of the monastery were to be rung to signal the canonical hours; the mechanical clock was the technology that could provide precision to these rituals" (p. 14).

The use of technology can also be found in apostolic times. Apostle John, one of the disciples of Christ, used "**paper and ink**" which was something advanced during their times (2 John 12). This instance was repeated in 3 John 13 when John wrote to elder Gaius, "I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with **pen and ink**" (NIV 2011). Moreover, there was also the use of airwaves as means to proclaim the gospel of Christ (Pohlman 2021). In 1924, Aimee Semple McPherson became the first woman preacher who owned and used a **radio station** for preaching. Today, there are still radio ministries who call for "taking back the airwaves for Jesus" (ie. [SAVED Radio, http://saved.ph](http://saved.ph))

Lastly, during Apostle Paul's missionary journey, he utilized **Roman's road** during the Pax Romana period. This road was an advanced technology made by the Roman Empire to connect their main city to the outskirts and neighboring towns. This road was mainly used by the military. Yet, Paul used this to advance the gospel of Christ as seen in Acts 18. To this notion, the roads that Romans built to move their legions were traveled by Christian missionaries of the first century. Now the network built by the US Department of Defense can be traveled by the Christian missionaries of the twenty-first century at virtually no cost (Bock and Armstrong 2021, p. 29).

### **Main Idea:**

Today, we will ask two questions:

**Is it biblical?** In a word, yes. How? Let us explore this idea of **Theology of Making**. Found in the book of Genesis, the biblical grounding from God as the Creator (Genesis 1) also extends to perceiving

humanity as *imago Dei*. Humanity as the image of God bears the calling to create, rule over, multiply, and subdue all creatures on earth (1:26-28). The beginning of the principle that human beings, as the image of God, are called to be co-creators in this world. Part of this co-creating is the creative development of digital technology for the society which includes the church.

The Bible starts in the Creation narrative (creating the world; Genesis 1) and ends in the New Creation (Revelation 21-22). God commanded Adam to give or “create” names for the animals (Genesis 2:19-20). God created covenantal bonds for redemption starting with Adam and Even (3:15) also known as the *protoevangelium*. Next, God asked Noah to build or “create” an ark to preserve life (6:14-18). Moreover, through Abraham (12:2-3), God will “create” a nation—descendants of Abraham (15:18).

Likewise, God “created” the laws to regulate the Israelites relationship with Him (Exodus 20). He commanded the Israelites to build or “create” the tabernacle in the time of Moses (25:9). Even during the times of David, the king desired to build or “create” a temple which was done during Solomon’s time (2 Samuel 7). However, this temple was destroyed, and Israelites were exiled. Nevertheless, during the restoration of the nation, the prophets called the Israelites to rebuild or “recreate” the temple.

The New Testament is also full of creating narratives. Jesus Christ “created” the church as the new covenant family (Matthew 16:18). The Holy Spirit creates “new hearts” (Ezekiel 36:26-27) in the believer’s heart and created a “new temple” as the indwelling place of God (Rom 8:9-11). Finally, fast forward to the coming future. On the day of the Lord, we await the New Creation (Rev. 21:1-2).

Therefore, the creation and engagement of technology are means to conform to God as an Intelligent Creator. Next question is...

**Does it Glorify God?** Why is it important to ask this question? In 1 Corinthians 10:31, “*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*” Similar passage in Colossians 3:17, “*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*”

Yes, because it is conforming to God in His creation, and it serves its purpose. To create something is a part of our daily experience. We create decision, you create a meal for breakfast. We create relationships. We are even called to procreate to multiply. Even in the church, we are called to create a worshipful atmosphere. Last year, we thought about Elevate Worship yet our worship music does not compel us to elevate this matter. Sadly, we have been a mediocre when it comes to this. I understand lyrics are essential too, however, if this lyric is not sung and played in a creative musical experience, then we pull it down and make it something that is “just okay.”

That is my challenge to our music team. Maybe we can explore new things incorporated with technology. Let us learn from other churches; there are livestreams, prerecorded music, and so on. We should have been elevating, not demoting our worship.

This is of course applicable to our prayer as well. That is why, we will pursue to have a regular church prayer meeting rather than in our small groups, and ladies’ prayer meeting only. A church that prays together is a powerful church. We can search for an app that will assist us to collect the prayer requests so we can have the database for this prayer list. Tech as amoral.

**Conclusion:**

Again, technology is part of God's providential wisdom. God is not surprised with these things that our society develops and create. However, the church must maintain to be part of this engagement. We are not mere consumers and observers to this technology. We ought to take part in this techno cultural shift. Remember in the 90s and early 2000s, what mobile brand was famous during that time? Nokia, right? However, in the following years, they have been left behind from the rapid changes of development. Likewise, the church will be left behind if we will not be critical with this matter.

Digital We praise God for technology. We can continue worshipping God even many of you are there Online, via Zoom, and FB Live.

**Cliffhanger:** However, as much as we want to give thanks to God for this provision of technology, there are many aspects that we do not like about it as well. Understanding that humanity is sinful, there are things that affect these technologies with corruption, addiction, lustful desires, and so on.

**Ptr. John Paul Arceno**

UCBC New Jersey

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