Inception

MOV DOC 001

After hearing a sermon this morning, I'm more convinced than ever that Eames' statement is the key theme: "You have to start with something much more basic . . . the relationship with the father." The statement appears throughout the movie in a variety of ways. Jesus told his mother that he must be about his father's business. That statement defined his life and death - doing only what he saw the father doing and obeying him and trusting him no matter what God put him through.

Saito is a father-figure in the Almighty sense; he can make anything happen, and he shows up almost with omniscience to protect Dom. He can buy anything at any time, and he seems to exercise a seeming life-and-death power at the beginning of the movie with respect to the worker who failed. He controls the entire American justice system with one phone call. He tells Dom that he can fix his legal problem but doesn't explain how, as if he has divine power. Dom's real father, Michael Caine, is loving but firm, a source of ethics. Yet, he also is forgiving; he kindly meets Dom at the airport at the end of the movie and restores him to his children.

Then there's the executive's son who has thought throughout his life that his father can't stand him, is disappointed with him. But notice that the end of the movie is in his own subconscious, not someone else's. Also, the man who is his father in the dream is not being played by someone else. This is the real inner consciousness of the son, and his perception of his father, like our perception of our heavenly father, has been faulty all his life. How do we know this? Because the son has had a conversion experience - he dies and rises again; he's born again. This time, when he sees his father, he sees the real father, the one who wanted the best for him, like our heavenly father wants for us.

Thus, Dom not only must be restored in his family relationships, by following his father and father figure, but he also is the person who leads the executive's son to a true understanding of his father. It doesn't matter that Dom doesn't plan it all out perfectly; that's the sovereignty of God at work, who even uses the wickedness of Dom's projection of his wife to bring about the death and resurrection of the executive's son.

There is more to the change that had occurred in Cobb’s wife, Maul (spelled phonetically). After Cobb taught her to doubt her reality, Maul had no standard for distinguishing between God's reality and the dream world. She was a post-modernist or, at least, a nihilist. Her decision to go back to the limbo world - accomplished by suicide - is apparently based on pure desire. There, she had her husband to herself, and they built and lived without any interference from others. It was a selfish world, built around her love that was so possessive and possessed. Because she has no standard to compare this world with (like the thimble top), she cannot distinguish between real and unreal. So, we without the bible, cannot distinguish between the real and the unreal. Our modern problem has never been lack of information; it's been too much.

Notice Cobb's speech at the end to his wife, his projection of his wife, that is. He tells her she is a product of his imagination, and that he did a poor job. That's for sure. His lovely wife (or his projection of her) was a monster in his subconscious, killing and torturing people indiscriminately and always trying to subvert Cobb's jobs, his success. (By the way, this is eerily similar to I Peter 3:7, which warns husbands: "ye husbands, dwell with [them] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.") Cobb's main problem was guilt. He could not escape his guilt for giving Maul the existentialist idea of standardless, meaningless unreality.

Cobb knew the person he saw in his dreams was not real. So, why did he keep going back to the dream world to relive past events. He was doing what we do all the time. We always go back to the memories of failure and sin, and we think we can fantasize that they didn't happen, or conjure some sort of change, or figure out something to cure the past. But we can't. At least Cobb had the temptation of what seemed so real - the dream world. We know our minds can't fix our past, yet we still try. It's utter folly. It's better to face the consequences, the discipline for the past, and live in the enjoyment of redemption and forgiveness, with all beginning with Him.

Interesting sidenote: The song they used to clue them about an upcoming "kick" back tow wakefulness was the Edith Piaf 1940's song, "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien." It's about regret, but the words could be interpreted as a popular Christian song about redemption and conversion. The French translated to English is as follows.

"No! Not a thing! No, I don't regret a thing.

Did I rise? Did I soar? Did I fall? It means nothing at all!

No! Not a thing! No, I don't regret a thing.

All is paid, Swept away, Cast away. I have no yesterday!

I have made a small fire Of my old memories. All past pain and desire Drift away in the breeze.

Up in smoke, my old loves With the tremors they caused. Up in smoke, my old life; I am done with what was!

No! Not a thing! No, I don't regret a thing.

Did I rise? Did I soar? Did I fall? It means nothing at all!

No! Not a thing! No, I don't regret a thing.

All I know, All I do, All I am, All begins now with you!"

In Inception, death is a constant presence. It moves a person from one form of reality to another. However, Dom's imagination, the memory of his wife, the guilt he lives with keeps him returning to a fantasy world of the mind. That fantasy world is an attraction, a pull, even a call to death. It is what draws him to what killed his wife, and it keeps him from the reality of his own children. Is not sin a belief in more than one reality, as Mal asks at the end? Therefore, what can destroy Dom is his sin? Sin allures us with attractive fantasies, and it justifies our engaging in it because their can't be just one reality, that of God and His just hatred of sin.

Interestingly, the person who most often confronts Dom about his problem is Ariadne, who of all the characters in the book, dies the most. Three times she dies in a dream - in her first encounter with a workshop of shared dreaming, when Mal stabs her in part 2 of that same workshop, and at the end when she leaps from a tall building. And we see it register in her face. She, in spite of her name which is taken from the ancient goddess of dreams, is the person most rooted in reality and able to judge Dom's inordinate fascination with what can kill him and harm others who join him on his projects.

Inception is a fascinating and imaginative study of the human psyche, the effect of guilt, and the need for purging that guilt by death. Thus, it not only shows the importance of the relationship with God the Father (see earlier post on the core theme), but it also demonstrates the need for atonement and sacrifice. But the sacrifice is not our own, or Dom would have died at the end of the movie to pay for his sin. Instead, he is restored to his family. Dom is restored from his guilty state by engaging in a project that restores a son, Robert, to his father, Maurice. But Robert must die first, and who kills him in the dream? Mal, the person who gave herself over to the other reality, who believes in more than one reality, and who is trying to draw Dom to death.

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