

Chapter Two: Making Known the Father

The restoration of fathers in the Church today is vital to the fulfillment of God's purpose in the earth. As the time of His appearing approaches the importance of fathers in the Church will become quite clear. We simply will not realize the fullness of God's plan for the Church without the presence of many fathers to lead the way.

In the previous chapter we began to understand who these spiritual fathers are and why they are so important to the church. It is vital that we have a clear perception of this call to spiritual fatherhood. Only then can we properly understand how these spiritual fathers function in God's house today. In this chapter we will continue to shed light on what Scripture says about spiritual fathers.

Why Did Jesus Come?

Perhaps the best place to start in understanding spiritual fathers is by asking the simple question, "Why did God send His Son into the earth?" The most obvious answer is that He came into the world in order to die and by His death redeem mankind. This is basic New Testament teaching regarding the first coming of Jesus. Even Jesus Himself referred to His own death as the ultimate purpose of His coming (John). Prior to the start of his ministry, John the Baptist looked upon and called Him the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). It is clear from Scripture that Jesus Christ was "born to die" and to give His life a ransom for many."

Yet while this is true it still leaves us with an important question: "If Jesus' death was the only reason for His coming into the world why did He live for thirty-three years upon the earth? Why didn't He simply expire soon after He was born or as a young man? This is not a moot question but one that goes to the very heart of why the Son came. *And the answer is that while His death was the means of redeeming a sinful world, it was in his Life that He fully revealed the Father.* In other words, Jesus came not only to die for the sins of the world, but that through Him the Father might be fully revealed.

This is also abundantly testified to by the Jesus Himself during His earthly ministry:

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father and who the Father is except the Son, and the one of whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see' (Luke 10:22-23)

Then they said to Him, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered. "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also" (John 8:19)

"I and my Father are one." (John 10:30)

If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (John 14:7-9).

All of these passages reflect this vital aspect of the coming of Jesus into the earth. It also explains all that He did during the three years of His earthly ministry. Why did Jesus spend much of his time healing the sick and delivering men and women from demon possession? There is only one answer. Since the Father is merciful and compassionate, Jesus manifested that compassion by healing the sick and casting out demons. When Jesus raised men from the dead and gave them life He did so precisely because the Father raised the dead and gave them life. The entire earthly ministry of Jesus therefore can be summed up by simply saying that Jesus came to earth to demonstrate to mankind what His Father was really like. And to a world blinded by sin this was an absolute necessity.

This being the case, it is very instructive to see that Jesus constantly addressed God as His *Father* during His earthly life. In point of fact, He used the Aramaic term for father which when translated into the modern vernacular is equivalent to our English term *daddy*. This was, of course, not the typical way that Jews of His day referenced God. What we must remember is that Jesus did so against the backdrop of centuries of Old Testament history in which God had revealed Himself as *Jehovah*, the Old Testament covenant name of God. That name *Jehovah* was usually joined

to another word giving the Hebrew people a window into the nature of the God who had saved them. For instance, *Jehovah Jireh* (The Lord our provider) and *Jehovah Shamah* () both revealed aspects of God's Person and His relationship to His covenant people. Other names such as *Adonai* (Lord) and *El Shaddai* ((God Almighty) also revealed something important to the covenant people about their God.

Yet the amazing fact is, when Jesus appeared there is no record of his referring to God by any of these covenant names at all! Then what did He mean by saying He had revealed God's name to His disciples:

“And now, **O Father**, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. **I have manifested your name** to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept your word” (John 17:5-6)

Is there a specific name that Jesus used by which He revealed God to His disciples? Searching the Gospels carefully we discover that the primary name that Jesus called God was simply that of *Father*. This is the primary way that He referenced God to those who were His closest friends on earth.

It is important to remember that in Scripture there is a close relationship between a “name” and the person who bore it. The name is the person revealed and the name is the person actively present.¹ The name “Father” therefore is more than an appellation—it provides us with the ultimate description of Who God is. *Simply stated, God is above all else a father.* When Jesus came to earth He came to fully manifest the Father to us. And in that name we find the supreme revelation of the living God ever given to mankind.

Jesus chose to use this name for God for good reason. It is only by understanding that God is Father that we are able to grasp His purpose in the earth. In that name (Father) is bound up the entire plan of God! Why? Because when we refer to God as *Father* we are speaking of that which He purposed in the beginning before He ever created the earth and placed men and women on it. It is in understanding God as Father that His unique plan finds its origin.

¹ See an excellent discussion of the Bible effect of a name on pages 862-864 in *The New Bible Dictionary*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1974, Edited by J.D. Douglas. The article was written by J.A. Moyyer, M.A.BD. Vice Principapl of Clifton Theological College, Bristol, England.

The Proper Place to Start

When we speak of God as Father we are talking about God in His supreme role. The fact that He is a Father governs all of His holy activity. Is He Creator? Sustainer? Provider? Yes, indeed God is all of these things, but they essentially describe what He does in relation to His creation, not Who He is. If we want to talk about Who He really is we must say that He is first and foremost *Father*. And knowing Him as such is the only way to accurately understand what He has purposed.

.During His earthly ministry, Jesus not only referred to His present relationship with His Father, He alluded to the relationship He had with the Father in eternity past as well. This comes out clearly in what is known as the High Priestly Prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel. While praying before the disciples, Jesus spoke of the "glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24). This prayer affords us a small glimpse into the relationship between the Father and the Son that existed even before Creation.

What these and other passages reveal is that God was a *Father* before He ever created Adam and Eve and entered a relationship with them. That should raise an interesting question. If He was a Father in eternity past who were His children? The answer is that He was first the "God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ" before He became our Father through the miracle of regeneration. Even though the Father and Son were one in essence in the Godhead they maintained a "father and son" relationship. His relationship to God as Father therefore did not just begin on earth. It was an expression of that relationship with the Father that the Son enjoyed before Creation in the Godhead. There is great mystery attached to this but it is clearly revealed in Scripture.

Where then do we come in? What is clear is that in eternity past the Father initiated a plan to expand His divine family. Through the agency of His Son He would bring into existence a race of sons¹ all bearing the image of His lovely Son. That is exactly why in his translation of the New Testament epistles, J.B. Phillips translated Ephesians chapter one and verse four this way: "Before eternity God determined to bring into existence a

¹ By using the male gender term "sons" the Bible is not excluding females. It is a generic term by which all of the children of God are referred to. Elsewhere Paul says that "we are all sons of God through Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:26).

race of sons.” Phillips caught the essence of the divine plan to have a vast company of sons. This entire first chapter of the book of Ephesians provides us with a wonderful window into this incredible divine mystery. Throughout this chapter, the apostle Paul constantly refers to the *Father* as the origin of the divine plan. In fact, the Father is the main subject of almost every verb in the chapter! From the beginning, Father had a plan to include this wonderful creation called Man in the fellowship that existed between the Father and the Son. This is the reason for the creation of Earth and the bringing into existence of a unique race capable of entering into the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

What seems clear from this passage is that the divine plan was not conceived by the Father as a knee jerk reaction to the Fall. As we have seen, it was conceived “before the creation of the world” (1:4). Obviously, that predates the Fall itself. Because man is fallen it would necessitate the Son’s coming to earth in order to die to redeem fallen man, yet that is not the main focus of the plan. From the beginning, the divine plan in the heart of the Father was to bring into existence a race of sons all patterned after His own unique Son. Because they were fallen they must first be redeemed, but redemption is not the central reason for bringing these sons into existence.

The Sons Share Life

Scripture goes further in describing the relationship between Father and Son by pointing out that Father and Son also share the same life:

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son to have life in Himself (John 5:)

This passage provides us with a window into the mystery of the triune God. Jesus alludes to the fact that both He and the Father possess this life in themselves; it is not derived from any other source. Theologians are accustomed to referring to this aspect of the divine nature as “self-existence.” The life these Scriptures speak of is not mere human life; the consciousness of being alive which human beings share with all other creatures, but divine life. The fact that the Father and the Son share this life is the basis for the unique fellowship that exists between them. This

fellowship began in eternity past and continued on when Jesus left glory and came to earth.

As we have already seen, it was the Father's good purpose to bring into existence an extended family whereby inviting them into the same fellowship He enjoyed with His Son (I John 1:1-3). Since divine life was the basis of that fellowship it would require that each of the sons receive that life and thus become his children. That is why Scripture presents salvation, not only in terms of receiving the forgiveness of sins, but sharing of divine life as well (II Cor. 5:17, II Peter 1:3, I John 5:12). This is what Jesus means when he tells Nicodemus "you must be born again"² (John 3:3). The very life that both the Father and Son shared in themselves would now become the basis of the life of the children of God through procreation. When the children of God call God *Father* therefore it is not a mere appellation, but a confession that they have now come into possession of divine life or as Scripture calls it "eternal life."

It is critical to see the priority that God places on *life*. Wherever God manifests Himself there is the presence of life. This life was the basis of everything in the beginning (John 1:4). God is a God of life and when He manifests Himself there is life.

We are living in a time when the modern world is preoccupied with discovering the origins of life. Recently, scientists announced that after many years of trying they have successfully mapped out the entire genetic code of human DNA. This genetic map is the first step in allowing modern man to control such things as the sex of a newborn, and the ability to predict certain propensities for disease. These discoveries have only strengthened man's resolve to "be as God"—not only understanding the mystery of life, but being able to create it as well. The implications of this are incredible and the debate is only now beginning.

Of course, man's preoccupation with discovering the origins of life pertains only to the physical side of things. Unregenerate man knows nothing of the *Spirit* side of life. It is to the Church alone that God has given the privilege of partaking of divine life. And it is only as we understand this that we can properly understand how God intends the Church to function.

² The word translated "again" in John 3:3 could also be translated "from above." In fact, this seems to be the best English translation of the term. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus is not referring to time, but to place of origin. Those who are born of God are "born from above" that is, heaven is not just the place of destiny, but of origin as well.

Life in the Church

Since the Church is the company of those who have received divine life it must be built up by that same life. Perhaps the best way to understand this is by using the term “organic” to describe the life of the church. By ‘organic’ we mean that it is something alive because it possesses life.

The alternative to organic is ‘mechanic.’ What we mean when we say that something is mechanic is that it is animated by means of a certain mechanism by which it is able to duplicate some of the actions of a human. A robot, for instance, might be programmed to make the same movements as a human being on an assembly line. But making the same movements does not mean that the robot possesses life for it does not. The animating life principle of the robot is *mechanical*—it is programmed to act a certain way and cannot act otherwise. The opposite is true of that which is organic. It lives and moves simply because it possesses life.

Failure to recognize the organic nature of the church will exempt us from being able to build her up. Yet many churches have no understanding of the organic nature of body of Christ. Bereft of understanding as to her true nature, they treat the church ‘mechanically’, equating busy church programs for the presence of life. Others perpetuate age-old traditions devoid of spiritual life. God help us when programs and structures become a substitute for the anointing of Christ (life) in our churches!

What we want and need is real life in our churches. Those of us who want to go on and fulfill the end time destiny of the church desperately want real life to be manifested. Divine life will attract men who are now living in death. Throughout the land today prophets are speaking of a worldwide harvest of souls ready to be reaped before the Lord’s appearing. This will necessitate the presence of life in our churches. We have mistakenly assumed that this harvest will be reaped by means of certain methods or programs. It will not. The church in the end of days will be a Church that possesses divine life and that manifests that life. And because of that life it will be a church which has produced many fathers who in turn will beget many sons.

Fathers and Life

What does all of this have to do with fathers in the church? It has much to do with it. It is only as we understand the primacy of life in the church that we will recognize the importance of fathers. For in a real sense, fathers are those who are characterized by two things; intimate fellowship with the Father so that they share his viewpoint, and the ability to impart life to others. We will look at both of these in the remainder of this book.

The apostle John describes fathers as those who “know Him Who is from the beginning” (I John 2:14). The reference to knowing Him Who is from the beginning means that fathers are those who possess a knowledge of God rooted in his eternal purpose. They have understood God’s intention to have a vast family of sons “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

Yet what makes them fathers is they themselves have begotten offspring. The whole issue of divine life in the church means that God must have those who are able to produce a spiritual progeny—sons who will themselves be able to impart to others. Fathers are those who no longer live for themselves but to give themselves to others. Without these fathers a spiritual work will never outlast its own day. Spiritual fathers are the only means of preserving a true work of God beyond a particular generation.