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REVEALING GOD AS A LOVING FATHER

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Before Jesus arrived, mankind knew of God as a superhuman force or **Deity**. The Jews came to know him by the name Yahweh or Jehovah and served him as their **national or personal God**. But Jesus came to reveal God in a new way – as a **loving Father** who seeks a personal individual relationship with each of us as sons. This is an important distinction. It is more than just **believing in** God or **worshipping** God. It involves being in a family relationship with Him. This is the revelation Jesus brought to mankind.

This distinction can be illustrated like this: There was a *man* named *John* who was a *business owner* and the *father* of three children. “Man” is his title. “John” is his name. But “business owner” and “father” designate *a relationship*. In other words, to John’s employees, John was an employer; but to John’s children, John was a father. While both titles refer to the same individual, the difference arises in the nature of the relationship – how the various people relate to, engage or interact with John. And obviously the children would have the more intimate relationship with John.

Similarly, “God” is a title. Mankind in general knows of the idea of a superhuman Deity and call him God. Whereas “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” is a personal name used by the people who seek to worship God personally. But “Father” designates a relationship that only sons would have with God. A relationship that is far more intimate than that of a mere believer or worshiper.

Jesus, as our older brother, knew the Father intimately and came to share that knowledge:

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” – *Matthew 11:27*

While Jesus was certainly willing to reveal the Father, to the people of Jesus’ day, the idea of God being their Father was new and revolutionary. They were used to worshipping God as a Deity, and as King and a Judge, learning about his “ways” and laws, but they could not quite grasp the idea of God as their Father. Even the apostles had difficulty. Jesus said to the Apostle Thomas:

“If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”
– *John 14:7-9*

The apostles did not understand that knowing God as a Father required more than an intellectual exchange. It requires examining Jesus’ conduct and life experience and imitating his relationship with the Father in our prayers, in our conduct, in our faith, in our work and in our association with one another. (See our article “**The Faith and Religion of Jesus**” for an in-depth discussion of Jesus’ extraordinary example.)

It requires that we accept Jesus' invitation to 'follow him' into the Kingdom of the Heavens. "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." – *John 14:6*

When we understand the magnitude of the blessing associated with being a son and following Christ, and we embark on that course, the Father's sends his spirit as "a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" (*Ephesians 1:14*). That is our anointing:

"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your **adoption to sonship**. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."
– *Romans 8:15-17*

Then, the Son sends his spirit of truth to guide us into all truth:

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you." – *John 16:12-14*

The spirit of truth will assure us of our hope and give us wisdom and accurate knowledge as pertains to our hope:

"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so **that you may know him better**. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order **that you may know the hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength."– *Ephesians 1:16-19*

And if we are unsure, we are told to pray about who we are and what our hope is, and the Father will reveal to us the proper mental attitude:

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward **the goal to win the prize** for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if **on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.**" – *Philippians 3:13-15*

We are thankful for our heavenly hope and the inestimable privilege of being adopted as faith sons of the Father. (*Romans 8:15*) We enter the Kingdom of the Heavens with the confidence of sons, not the fear of mere believers or worshipers. We listen to his voice, and follow him wherever he may go. (*John 10:27*)

It is the Father's will that we all come to know him as a Father and share in the Kingdom as both sons and ambassadors, inviting still others to become reconciled to God as sons.

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” – 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Let not the Christ's work be in vain. Rejoice in the hope, not as slaves or servants of God, but just as Jesus revealed, as Sons of the Father.

As always, we welcome your comments.

“Elaia Luchnia”