

Exchanging Emptiness For Fullness

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1 Corinthians 10:1-6 emphasizes Israel's experiences in Egypt and the wilderness as an example. "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (Vs. 11, 12). Sober words to be sure so let us take a fresh look at Paul's admonition.

The Bible says God created man in His image and likeness in order for them to take dominion of His creation. He did, man did, but man lost it. God gave man only one order, "Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," but "they" did and mankind entered the realm of death.

What was this tree, which caused so much trouble? Theologians have speculated everything from sexual intercourse to who knows what, but whatever it was resulted in the "knowledge of good and evil." What is knowledge? Knowledge is everything we've experienced through our five physical senses.

Before man's fatal fall his spirit guided his life. That's how he consciously walked with God, but immediately after he rebelled and ate of the tree he lost all intimate contact with Deity. God was gone and fearful man was dead in sin; however, God immediately promised a Deliverer, the seed of the woman, who would legally restore all man had lost in Eden.

Beginning with the historical record in Genesis 3 every biblical account reveals God bringing forth His promise to restore man. He sovereignly chose Noah to survive the flood. He chose Abraham and Sarah from the teeming millions on earth to bear a miracle son of their old age. From Abraham's children he deliberately chose Isaac and later his descendents in Egypt

when they had become the nation of Israel. From the twelve tribes of Israel He sovereignly chose the tribe of Judah and from Judah's many families he chose the insignificant house of Jesse and from his eight sons, David and from David's many sons He sovereignly chose Solomon. Every calculated by YHWH fulfilled His purpose to Redeem and Restore man. Finally, when the fullness of time came, He sent forth His only begotten Son, Jesus, the Second Adam.

Who was the Creator who said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness," and what was His pattern? Again the theologians try to explain from the confines of their denominations, but the Bible tells us who created everything. "In the beginning was the word, and the world was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1-3). He was in the beginning with God and all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that were made. We know who the Word was since verse 14 says: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." See also Col. 1:14-18.

Hebrews declares who and what the pattern image was: "In these last days God has spoken to us by His Son, through whom He made the worlds; who, *being the brightness of his glory and the express image of His person...*" (Heb 1:2,3). Col. 1:15 says, "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God." He was not just a comparative likeness, but also the exact express image. When we see Jesus, we see God in all His fullness.

Do you want to know what the first man was like? Would I be assuming too much to declare the man Jesus was everything the first man was before he sinned? The man Jesus had dominion over all the works of God just as Adam exercised dominion because The Creator gave him that dominion in Genesis 1:26. Paul made this plain in 1 Cor. 15:49 when he wrote: "And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man." "Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The writer continues: "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

What marred man's original image? After man digested the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" he existed by his soulish senses, his calloused conscience, and his rational reason. That's why Paul wrote: "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Jesus died for more than just man's inherited sin and death; Calvary dealt with our self. Inherent sin is so deep it is called the "mystery of iniquity." How casually we blame everything on Satan? Satan is not all-powerful; he is not omnipresent, or omniscient. He is but a created angel using usurped authority and he can't possibly be everywhere at once. But it is convenient to blame him rather than man taking personal responsibility for his behavior.

However, man's fall was not an afterthought. I've read articles leaving the impression Satan got one up on the Creator and man's rebellion was an accident. This insults the sovereignty of God's Who foreknows and predestines everything according to His will.

Eph. 1:4 says we were chosen in Him *before* the foundation of the world."

Rev. 13:8 says the Lamb, Jesus, was slain *from* the foundation of the world. Before God made man He knew the what, when and why of both man's fall and redemption. In God's overall plan Christ was slain before the world was created. *Heaven is NOT a goal; it is a destiny.* If you're saved you've got to go to heaven, no one else wants you. What God wanted and wants for you is not just heaven, but YOU, a body through whom He can manifest Himself.

Here is a fabulous revelation from the apostle Paul. The book of Ephesians is called the believer's inheritance, a type of Israel's Canaan. Paul exalts Christ to heaven's highest pinnacle. After everything is put under His feet He is made head over the church, which is His body, the *fullness of Him* who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23). Everything in the Head is in his body, the church.

Then in chapter 3 he prays for the church/body to realize their fullness. All believers must see the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God...according to the eternal purpose, which He accomplished in Jesus Christ our Lord. What the apostle wants us to grasp is: That you may be filled with all the *fullness of God* (v.19). Again in 4:10-14 he says the Risen Lord gave the five-fold ministry gifts to mature, edify and unify the church until it matures into the *fullness of Christ*. The church/body, not a denominational organization, is the “fullness of Him, the Holy Spirit, who fills all in all; the fullness of God and the fullness of Christ.

Do you see it? When God made Adam He created a body He could fill with Himself. His goal in your new creation is to fill you with Himself. He is love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness and more than man can tell, but He must have a body through which He can reveal Himself in a time-space realm.

Jesus is the Pattern Son. When the Son was made flesh (He 2:14), He said, “A body you have prepared for Me” (Heb 10:4). His body was not only the sacrificial offering of Christ’s body, once for all, but also a body through whom God the Father made Himself known to the world.

When Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father,” he said, “Have I been with you so long you have not known Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? The words I speak are the Father’s words, not mine. I only say what I hear the Father say. The works I do, the Father who dwells in Me does the works. I only do what I see Him doing.”

When He prayed the night before His passion He said He had manifested the Father’s name (Jn. 17:6). He knew God intimately and He knew the full meaning of the name YHWH (Yahweh) (Ex. 3:14-15), and fully manifested everything the Name meant. This was much more than just knowing how to verbalize the divine name; He made God the Father real in a time-space world.

God was IN Christ reconciling the world to Himself. All that Adam lost was fully restored, but He didn't stop there. Religion tries to provide a way to heaven, an escape from judgment and hell, and somehow make man acceptable to Deity. It didn't work when Adam and Eve unveiled The First Holiness Church of the Fig Leaf and it still doesn't work. Only the Creator can breathe a New Creation into existence.

What was the first thing the Risen Christ did after he returned from heaven? He breathed on man and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:22). The spirit of life Adam lost and the generations of death it produced was restored. The Old Creation was "paid in full" and a New Creation came forth, created after the image and likeness of the Risen Christ, the Second Adam. Just as God the Father, in His Son, manifested and revealed Himself to man, so Christ brought forth His body, the church, in whom and through whom He would manifest Himself.

In John 14 Jesus said, "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them (that's obedience flowing from grace- Titus 2:11-12), it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and *manifest Myself to him.*" The disciple asked, "How?" Most believers overlook verse 23. Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me (that includes us), he will keep My word (obedience again); and My Father will love him, and *We will come to him and make Our home with him?* (Jn. 14:20-23). God is in heaven, but particularly, He is in US.

Understanding this truth is the difference between emptiness and fullness; the difference between having and hoping. As an intimate Disciple of Christ Jesus you are not "hoping to make heaven your home," you are redeemed and cleansed and Spirit filled through whom The Father and The Son can and will reveal and manifest themselves to you and the world around you.