

Between the Garden of Eden and Jesus coming, not many people experienced the Father's love and being close in relationship.

Some, like the prophets, priests and a few others who were sensitive to the Spirit had an occasional glimpse.

There were a few revelations; God making Himself known, but they were few and far between and no one experienced "entering in."

No one really experienced an "Open Heaven." But the Lord had already put in plan a place before the foundation of the world that He would restore His family to His presence.

The Restoration:

Jesus represented the first time since Eden that a human being was totally one with the Father in a covenant of love.

John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and tabernacle among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the One and only from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus was 100% God and also 100% human.

His identity was a natural son of Mary with Joseph being the father who raised Him, and as the Son of God.

When He was left at the Temple at the age of 12, He already knew what his identity and purpose were. He was to be in His Father's house doing His Father's business.

For over 18 years, He placed Himself in submission to human parents, becoming a carpenter after Joseph's trade, learning to be a master craftsman.

He was ready to take His father's business at 30 years of age, but His Heavenly Father intervened.

- Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, not because He needed the baptism of repentance but because He came as a man for us to follow and enter into His footsteps.
- As He came out of the water, the dove came down as a picture of the Spirit.
- The Father spoke from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Three baptisms happened that day:

- A baptism of **Water**
- A baptism of the **Spirit**
- A baptism of **Love**

The Father spoke words of affirmation and delight over His Son, flooding and saturating Jesus in His pleasure and promise.

Jesus had been faithful in the natural – obeying His parents; He was about to enter a ministry marked by the supernatural.

He would change the world from the place of rest in His identity and intimacy with the Father.

His Son ship was tested:

- Jesus was immediately led by the Spirit into the wilderness where the enemy who twisted Adam and Eve's identity in the garden now tried to twist Jesus' identity also.
- "If You are God's Son..." testing Him in three areas each of us will be tested in also.
- If you pass the test of identity as Jesus did, you will come out of the wilderness as He did – able to say: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because HE has anointed Me." Luke 4:18.

This is the starting point for everything we do:

Along with Jesus, we need to tell the devil – "This is who I am and you can't do a thing about it."

Jesus had the Father's blessing and He knew it – DO YOU?

Jesus came in with the value system of heaven:

- He did what He saw the Father doing and spoke what He heard the Father speaking thus pleasing His Father.
- Jesus shows the world what the Father looks like – how God loves.
- This is why sinners are so attracted to Him.
- The ones who fought and struggled with Jesus the most were the religious and political leaders.
- His followers and the other people in the world loved Him.

Identity-

When we begin to recognize who Jesus is, we begin to recognize who we are.

Many times then and now, we see Jesus' identity discovered by His followers but questioned by His critics:

- The central story demonstrating this is Matt 16:13-20, when Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"
- Big question today among many people – Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics and many other sceptics.
- Many answers such as: a good person, good teacher, prophet, a martyr etc.

V.15 - Then Jesus asked who do they say He is?

Peter answered from a revelation of heaven perspective:

"You are the Christ- anointed sent One, the Son of the Living God."

- When Peter said that he became a rock.
- He saw Jesus' true identity and stepped into his own.
- He became unshakeable.
- Jesus declared He would build His church on that unshakeable foundation of revelation of His identity and the gates [authority] of hell would not be able to prevail against it.
- Then, Jesus promised His followers the keys of the Kingdom so they could loose and bind according to heaven's reality. He gave us authority.

There is a progression:

- Peter came in revelation to Jesus' identity and began to see his own identity as Jesus declared it to him.
- The other disciples received an inheritance of authority so they could bring heaven to earth.
- When we know the Father loves us and His Spirit is in us, we are able to rest in that identity and fellowship – we become unshakeable.
- Jesus builds His church and gives the keys of the kingdom to those who know who they are.

**God's Spirit is going after His children to bring us into the intimacy
He desires for us**

The world of religion in Jesus' earthly days was amazed that sinners, tax collectors and the rejects of society were attracted to Him.

Why?

Jesus told three parables that demonstrated the heart of Father God towards people:

Luke 15:

1. The shepherd who lost one of 100 sheep went after the one.
 - Wasn't good economics to go to so much trouble for a 1% loss.
 - But from the relational, covenantal family perspective, it was the only option.
 - For all who have been lost sheep, we are grateful that God is like this shepherd.
 - We are not a number, we are sons and daughters, precious members of the family, beloved by a God who delights in us.
 - Jesus is calling Himself the Good Shepherd and connects Himself to the God of Psa. 23 – God goes after those who need to be rescued. This is how God thinks.

2. The woman who lost one of her ten coins, searching until she found it.
 - This parable sheds a different light on who God is and what this heavenly family of the Trinity is like.
 - There is great value placed on the thing that was lost, which reflects God's attitude toward the sinners and tax collectors who were drawn to Him.

3. The son known as the Prodigal.
 - This focuses on the failure of man rather than on the faithfulness of a loving father.
 - They were called sons, not sinners; but they were not living in fellowship with the father.
 - The rebellious son had an orphan heart – focused on looking out for himself – “Give me – Give me – Give me.”
 - He didn't understand his identity and didn't have intimacy with his father, but insisted on receiving his share of the family wealth and ran away with it.
 - Asking for your inheritance before the father's death would be offensive in any society, but especially in the Middle Eastern culture.
 - He wanted his share. But sons and daughters had been killed for much more minor offenses than this.
 - It was extremely dishonorable.
 - But the father honored his request and gave each of the sons their share of the estate, even though inheritance is meant for mature children.
 - The rebellious son was not mature at all, and he took his inheritance and wasted it.
 - This son ended up tending pigs – an unclean animal the Jews are forbidden to eat or touch.
 - He soon ran out of money, all his friends left him, he became destitute.
 - It would be like the son/daughter of a wealthy family ending up homeless addicted to crack or heroin desperately searching for his next fix in alleys.

- This son is as far from the father as a son could get.
- The religious listening to this parable would be so enraged at this characters that they would stone the son if he were there.
- At the end of his rope, the boy comes to his senses and decides it would be better to be a servant in the house of his father than a son in a distant land.
- He doesn't really repent, we see regret but no sorrow for how he broke his father's heart, violated the covenant of love and rebelled and dishonored the community.
- He is still thinking about himself and the course of action that would be best for his interests.
- The father saw him a long way off, probably looking every day for his return home.
- The father did the unthinkable thing for that culture; he ran to greet his son, lifting up his robes to run – baring his legs – extreme act of indignity; getting dirt on himself – a dishonor reserved for servants and slaves.
- Why did this father run to him?
 - Yes, probably eager to see him; but he may also have been wanting to prevent an honor killing from the community. This boy had not only disgraced his father; but the entire community had been offended by his lifestyle and would have wanted to kill this rebellious son. Duet. 21:18-21.
 - **He had to reach him first!**

The father didn't run away from his son's sin, he ran towards it!

- He didn't rebuke him, correct him, strike him, insist that he get cleaned up for he was an embarrassment to him, grudgingly receive him back if he fulfilled certain conditions, and anything else, Jesus' listeners might have expected.
- He embraced his son, dirt, failure, smell, disgrace and all.
- You overcome evil with good and love and it's the kindness of God that leads to repentance.
- He put the family robe on this filthy young man, offered the robe or righteousness and relationship to cover the rags of unrighteousness and offense.

When we see and begin to understand this type of unconditional love that our Heavenly Father shows towards us, we are changed and start to love the way He loves, His love does something to us. We enter into His resting place and where we have everything we need and our orphan heart is healed and we can love others.

Our Heavenly Father wants His family back.

The robe is a picture of justification by faith – the first reformation.
Then the ring is a symbol of identity – intimacy and authority.

The sandals are so we can walk as a family member in the shoes of peace.
The children wore sandals, slave had no shoes.
The party is to celebrate – the fattened calf is killed, the symbol of covenant.

The older brother, out in the field, was not in a resting place with his father.

- He was **doing** so he could **have** so he could **become**.
- He didn't want to be in a family relationship with his brother; he calls him "this son of yours," rather than my brother.
- He can't believe this brother has squandered his father's inheritance and yet the father is welcoming him home?
- He doesn't have the same rebellious spirit his brother has, yet he has a religious spirit.
- The religious spirit is offended when people off the street are immediately receiving the Father's favor.
- He is like Christians who say: "I've been in the church for years, I've been faithful and filled with the Spirit; I've been serving You; Lord. Why are you doing good things for these people and not for me?"
- Even though a different spirit from a rebellious spirit, it still comes from an orphan heart.
- It was there in the beginning – "the knowledge of good" in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- The younger son went after the "evil" branch of the tree, while the older son went after the "good" one.
- Yet it was still the same tree.
- This brother was doing all the right things **for God**; be he did not know how to work **from God**.
- He was in a restless place because he did not know how to be a son in the father's house.

**God is not after servants – He desires relationship.
He wants a house full of sons and daughters who know how to simply
be in His presence**

God already has multitudes of angels who can serve Him 24 hours a day.
He wants relationship – sons and daughters.

The father in Luke 15 pleads with his older son to come back in the house where there is fullness and joy in the father's presence.
He doesn't have to work to be a son there; he can just be one because that is already who he is.

That is what the Biblical story is all about, from Genesis to Revelation.
God wants His children = both the rebellious and the religious ones to come home and enjoy His fellowship.

Yes, there are things to do and responsibilities to fulfill – but this relationship begins first with identity.

Who are you? A son or a daughter or do you consider yourself a slave?

Or, are you trying to be a servant, a minister, an employee, a student, a spouse, or anything that makes you feel like you are performing a role?

There are millions of believers doing the work of the kingdom in order to prove to themselves and others that they are important in the kingdom.

All of them were already important from the beginning.

You were made in the likeness of God, you have become a son or a daughter when you believed and your identity is already established.

You can never be satisfied chasing after identity in what you do and what you have. You can only do and have from the identity you already have – if you know who you really are as an anointed son or daughter of a good, Father, you can only experience the kingdom from a place of rest.