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Josh,

In response to your txt-msgs, because you are a Berean, I'm writing to give you answers suitable for a Berean. Some of what I'm presenting might not at first seem to be addressing your concerns, but in the end I think you will find everything quite relevant and informative. I will state at the outset that

- Knowledge of the *Culture of the Kingdom* Is Absolutely Essential Today
- Our interpretation of Scripture is radically altered and effected without a knowledge of the *Culture of the Kingdom*.
- Authentic Spiritual Fathers Are Being Raised Up In This Hour to Do the Work Those Presently Called Pastors Should Have Been Doing All Along.

So let's begin with these.

The Culture of the Kingdom

The church today is in an identity crisis. It does not know what its unique function is among the nations. Nor does it know how to adjust to changing times. It has taken on the culture of various nations and therefore can't speak to the current issues, because it is itself a part of the problem. Examples:

- Roman priests abusing children
- Anglicans embracing homosexuality
- Evangelicals supporting the Republicans –
 - Now struggling to find an electable candidate

Meanwhile membership is plummeting.

In most churches, there is no concept of the Kingdom of God as the foundation of belief and practice.

Rather, evangelicals *and* the 'historic church' think that the Kingdom of God will come when Jesus returns and that it doesn't exist in any fashion at present. I will show otherwise.

Therefore the emphasis is on *getting people saved*.

But this is **not** the primary mission of the church. For most, being saved is about being relieved from the burden of sin, by the finished work of Christ so you can go to heaven. While this is a *vital fraction* of the whole Gospel, Scripture tells us that there is *much* more to the gospel that Jesus preached, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, than that.

Let's read Colossians 1:12-13

"Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light, for He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves."

The Greek is very strong here. We are translated from the control of the evil one into the Kingdom of the Son of God.

Think about this -- Darkness – before our translation into the Kingdom of God *all* our decisions were made in darkness.

Now once you've come into the rule of Christ, because a kingdom is about rule, you are now *under the rule* of Christ.

Before He ascended Christ said "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me. Go, and make disciples." We have interpreted this to mean "Go and make converts." (Sadly the Billy Graham Evangelism Association itself confirms that out of 10,000 people who made a 'Decision for Christ,' in a Crusade, 10 years later only 500 are actively pursuing their relationship with God).

Now the ones Jesus disciplined for 3 ½ years are the very ones He told to go and make disciples. Do you suppose He and they

knew what it meant to do that? (Josh, the issue here is what He showed them over 3 ½ years. It was how He did only those things and said only those things that the Father was showing Him to do and say (John 5:19,31;8:28,38;14:10). Whether or not the disciples were themselves born again or not (in the flesh) at this point isn't really relevant – they are fully empowered by the Spirit later)

Historically, the church has thrived on the ignorance of the people. When challenged, its leaders, even as they are passing, say it's the people that are the problem, not the system. Nevertheless, the present church *will reinvent itself*, but when it does, it will be even further distanced from the truth. For instance, while the nation has progressed to a 'post racial society,' still, the most segregated hour in American life is between 10-11 am on Sunday morning. People see this irrelevancy, and have moved to distance themselves from it.

(According to George Barna, in his book *Revolution*, 70M believers have left the institutional church over the past 15 years, and 1M a year continue to leave).

Again, the church will change, but when it does, to the extent that it does, it will rush willy-nilly, helter-skelter into it with no consideration of Scripture. The Episcopal Church in the US is a good recent example of this, rushing to embrace homosexuality by appointing a homosexual Bishop in NH to try to demonstrate itself acceptable and 'in tune with the times,' to the nation at large.

This is because the current church *doesn't understand Scripture*. It's steeped in the culture. The culture moves on, however, and the church fails to stay in step.

Some of those who have left the church yet have a deep desire for heavenly things –some of them, at least, are turning to talk show hosts who have morphed themselves into high priests of spirituality, their formula for which is a strange mixture of narcissism and eastern philosophy with a good dose of self help and wealth to try to spin together an acceptable philosophy for the present age. This is perhaps the worst of all things because it has none of the true nature

of transcendental realities, and it promises nothing beyond living here and now.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

The alternative is to understand that God

- Once offered to man a Kingdom, and
- This Kingdom has come! and
- Its culture is meant to fulfill all the needs that human beings have -----
- Physical and Spiritual.

The Interpretation of Scripture

How does the failure on the part of the current church to comprehend or acknowledge the presence of the Kingdom, and the Culture of the Kingdom, impact its interpretation of Scripture?

If you do not have the Culture of the Kingdom, then the way you interpret Scripture will more or less be on a traditional basis, or on an ad hoc basis, meaning your traditions will decide the meaning of Scripture, or, you will pull Scripture out of the Bible and quote it to support anything you want to do as a contemporary initiative.

In having the Culture of the Kingdom, we are meant to be given the mind of the Lord in a context by which we can properly understand what the Scriptures meant **when they were written.**

Not just historic factors are involved, but transcendent factors as well because the things of God do not change from one year to another in the sense that God knows the end from the beginning.

Therefore, in every time frame, what is occurring in that time frame has to do with **what God has foreknown.**

We must understand therefore that the foundations, God's intentions from 'before the beginning,' **require us to interpret the Scriptures consistently from one generation to another.**

Importance of Sonship In Scripture – Initial Thoughts

God began creation by creating a son. He began creation by creating Adam (Luke 3:38). To rule and reign with Him. (Genesis 1:26-31) And if you understand that the purpose of God in creating man was to have a relationship with him as a son of God, and that He intends to move forward into time with this intention, and with which He will conclude the purpose of the present creation, and that the whole of creation is groaning for the revealing of the mature sons of God, (Romans 8:19) **this will impact your understanding of Scripture.**

The Matter of Sin

Did the fact of man's sin come as a surprise to God? Does it alter God's original intentions to have sons to rule and reign with Him?

No.

We see in Revelation 13:8b that the "lamb of God was slain from before the foundation of the world." The atonement took place in eternity 'before' it took place in time. The Godhead knew in advance that man would disobey and made preparation for it in advance. Jesus, as the second Adam, redeems the effect of the sins of the first Adam, so that, the original purpose of God, that He would have sons, is fulfilled, and that through Him we all can become sons of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pattern Son

Moreover, the work of the cross accomplished much more than atonement for sin. Paul tells us that we have been given **a gospel of reconciliation** (2nd Corinthians 5). Reconciliation carries with it the concept of being restored to the same relationship with God that Adam had with Him in the beginning. Adam (prior to his fall), and Christ, did and said only those things they were shown them by the Father. Getting saved (forgiven of sin) is just an 'Introduction.' Jesus is the pattern Son, the example of what a reconciled son should look like. He has been given to accomplish the necessary work in us to

bring us, fully reconciled, in Himself, to the Father. On this I will have very much more to say.

So this is what is required from the standpoint of the Culture of the Kingdom in order to correctly understand the Scriptures.

The Ad Hoc Interpretation of Scripture

Again, the present church is irrelevant. It doesn't represent a heavenly culture. It represents either an historic culture (as in the Roman Church), or an ad hoc culture as in the case of the Charismatic and some evangelical churches – especially the mega-church which is the ad hoc culture of the guy in charge. His core doctrines will be Baptist or Church of Christ etc., depending on what he came out of, but from that point on he makes it up as he goes along. It's a mixture of marketing and whatever tradition he came out of. This methodology will be market sensitive, market driven.

The 'Historic Churches' Interpretation of Scripture

If you take Scripture based only on historical applications such as the Roman Church, the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, etc., or any orthodox church, their idea with orthodoxy is to say "We are keepers of the traditions that go back to" .whatever. E.g., the Roman Church thinks it goes back to Peter. Which they claim to be true in the physical. But the Kingdom of God is not physical – it's spiritual. No one is physically the Son of God. We are spiritually made to be the sons of God in Jesus Christ.

In point of fact, the Roman Church doesn't even actually go back to Peter. It dates back to 313 AD with the Edict of Milan when Constantine extended the authority of the Roman Empire to it. The Roman Church "institutionalized" itself at its inception to accommodate itself to this new power source, in the process, evicting the **work and presence of the Holy Spirit.** Moreover, they declared that this organization (actually a legal fiction at this point) had the right to determine who the successor to Peter was, setting aside the relational process of discipling which Jesus had taught.

The power and authority of Rome became a very inappropriate and grievous substitute for the **work of the Holy Spirit**, reducing the message of the gospel of the kingdom to the gospel of salvation, even expropriating to itself the decision as to who would be allowed to go to heaven. The impact of this “train wreck” in the early 4th century has been severe down to the present day.

Now you may ask **“What is this “work of the Holy Spirit?”**

“What’s the relevance of that?”

AT THE HEART OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE KINGDOM IS
THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Romans 14:17-18 shows the centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing forth the model of the Kingdom:

“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved of men.”

Okay. Let’s then deal further with these questions:

- ‘What is the relevance of the Culture of the Kingdom in understanding Scripture?’
- And how does it remain relevant in every age of mankind?’

We said earlier, Jesus sent us to make disciples. What He meant by that He Himself both practiced and taught. What was it that He practiced and taught?

Discipleship According to Jesus

“I only do what I see my Father doing, the Son can do nothing of Himself.” (John 5:19,30;8:28,38;14:10)

So His own personally adopted definition of discipleship was **being led by the Holy Spirit moment by moment**. NB: Being led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days and nights would

not be something one would want to do on his own initiative. So He was serious about this from the beginning.

So He Himself walked this out day by day, moment by moment, doing only what he saw His Father doing.

He was not going to do this, ----- disciple the twelve into that way of being, and then send them to “win souls.” No, He was going to teach them to make disciples of the nations, (*and as the rest of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-19 says*) **teaching them to obey the LORD in everything,** just as He had obeyed the Father in everything. He taught them this **by example!** In their presence 24/7! When He said in Acts 1:8: “...you shall be My witnesses...” this is what they were to be witnesses **to!** So when He said “Go and make disciples, He had **done it to them,** and **they knew what to do.**

Conversely He was **not** sending His disciples to teach the nations of the earth how to obey the Old Testament and the New Testament.

He sent His disciples to teach the people, by the disciples own example among the people, **how to obey the Holy Spirit, moment by moment.**

Why?

Because the Holy Spirit is the One Jesus sent to bring His power and His authority to the earth!

Now we know that He sends them to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because we read in Romans 14:17 “The Kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, *but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.*” **And because the were going to need that power to accomplish the assignments He had given them.**

We need more, however, to flesh this out. When Jesus Himself was on the earth, he taught that the Kingdom of God was ‘**at hand.**’ (Matt 4:17;10:17;Mark 1:15;Luke 10:9,11;11:2;17:21;21:31;John 3:3,5 1st Th 2:12). He told His disciples in Matthew 10 to go and preach the same things.

Now consider. You can have a pen, or glass 'at hand.' What does that mean, saying, "The Kingdom of God is 'at hand'"? It means it's very close by ... within proximity of where you are. In Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27 Jesus makes it abundantly clear that the 'at hand' was this:

"There are some of you standing here who will not taste death until you see the kingdom come with power."

That's His definition of 'at hand.' Now, they are all dead. So, what does it mean? It means that the 'at hand' has become reality. The Kingdom in fact came. And we know that people were put in the Kingdom because of what *Colossians 1:13* tells us:

(Paraphrased): God has translated us. He's lifted us up from 'this' location and put us down in another place. He's taken us from the control of darkness and put us down in the kingdom of the Son whom He loves.

So the relevant questions at this point are:

- How did the kingdom come, and how is that related to the Holy Spirit?"
- Is it really true that we're to be led by the Spirit moment by moment?
- Is this what is meant to be "walking after the Spirit," walking in the Kingdom?
- What kind of culture does this produce that permits you then to interpret the Scriptures the way they were originally written and their relevance for today?
- Does this rescue us from the meaninglessness of church?
- Whether its historic church that's based on an idea of maintaining the history of succession, or the ad-hoc church which is a mixture of historical and marketing techniques?

NOW WE'RE GETTING TO THE ESSENCE OF IT.

And when we understand this, it will turn our faces away from this debauchery and helplessness into which the church has fallen and it will renew us according to the ways of God.

What about the Holy Spirit then? How did the Kingdom come in the Holy Spirit? Let's look at Luke 17:20 for the answer. It says:

“Once having been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘there it is,’ because the Kingdom of God is within you.”

The Kingdom of God is within you. It does not come by observation, so you can't see it in some sort of manifestation that will appeal to the senses. Why?

Jesus gave us the key in John 3, when He told Nicodemus that in order to see the Kingdom of God he would need to be born again, and that unless he was born of water and of the Spirit, he couldn't enter it. Paul explains in Ephesians 5 that the husband should “wash the wife with the water of the word.” So what is meant by being born of water is to have your mind renewed by the word.

So it's the word and the Spirit that produces a person who then sees the Kingdom that cannot be seen by the unregenerate person and allows you to enter into that.

So what are we saying? We're saying that the Kingdom has come, -- it came on the day of Pentecost. After the empowering of the Holy Spirit, 3000 were saved, and from that point on the Kingdom advanced in and by the Holy Spirit.

What followed was a renewing of the mind and a renewing of their understanding and what became the evident reality was that Jews who hated Gentiles, and Romans and Gentiles who would just as soon crucify a Jew as speak to one, ---- by the end of the New Testament – there's a model of these very diverse

people living together in such perfect harmony and well being that something had come to earth and solved the problems of mankind.

The problems of envy, bitterness, hatred, -- all the things with which the world is presently beset, were resolved in the communities of Kingdom believers. Because the church of that day was walking out the Culture of the Kingdom.

The Place of Father/Son Relationships In All of This

I've tried to lay a foundation here for interpreting the Scriptures from the beginning in the total context of the plan of God. Let's look further from this vantage point at father/son relationships in the Scriptures. Adam was separated from his Father, and as sin has proliferated since, fatherlessness has become the defining condition of the earth. But into this mix, God has sent restoration because the intent of God has always been to restore....to restore the relationship between Himself and man. In fact, here it is said in the book of II Corinthians chapter 5:

“God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making His appeal through us. So we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Now here are two important questions:

- How could we in fact be given a message of reconciliation?
- How could we be permitted to reconcile men to God?

Clearly, from the time that man was separated from God his Father, to the time that this ministry of reconciliation had been given, there had to have been some series of events that would permit the

reconciliation of man who had been separated from his Father, to occur.

You see, when we speak of the gospel in the churches today, we're not speaking of a gospel of 'reconciliation; we're speaking of a gospel of getting saved. And we assume that because someone is saved he is reconciled to God, but the word 'reconciliation' is a specific term of art.

It means 'fixing a broken relationship', it means 'healing the breach.' Anything else is 'just introduction'. And the very fact that our gospel is a gospel of reconciliation presumes that there was a 'state of being' which was lost. Now, what's really funny is that we really do not understand nor appreciate (in our historic or ad hoc interpretations of the Word) what God was creating when He made man a son; He was really making sons. Adam, Luke chapter 3 verse 38, "Adam was the son of God."

Now when sin entered in by reason of Adam's disobedience, separation came between Adam and his Father. And all the children of Adam were as separated from the Father as the man himself. Because the curse that Adam's sin brought upon his children, was that he introduced an environment of sin from which man could not extricate himself. God had to extricate him when the time was right.

So repeatedly God showed us, in the Scriptures, the model by which He was going to reconcile His sons to Himself. Now the fantastic aspect of this is that all throughout the Scriptures He gives us 'prophetic breadcrumbs', meaning He tells us what He's going to do. And He rolls it out, at the end of the Old Testament, and tells us in the book of Malachi chapter 4 verses 5 and 6, He says,

"See, I'm going to send you the spirit of Elijah, who will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers." He said the alternative would be, "I'd have to destroy the land."

So how was God intending to heal the breach between Himself and His sons, between that people who would come from the race of Adam, who would be sons of God? God said, "I'm going to send the spirit of Elijah," and this spirit of Elijah would turn the hearts of the

fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. Well what's "the spirit of Elijah?"

The Spirit of Elijah

Let's go back and look at Elijah for a moment. Let's take a look at II Kings, in chapter 2 beginning with verse 5, picking up where Elijah and his servant Elisha were having a discussion. Verse 5 and following says,

*"The company of prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, 'Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?' 'Yes I know,' Elisha replied, 'but do not speak of it.' Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here, the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' And he replied, 'As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them walked on. Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the water with it, the water divided to the right and to the left and the two of them crossed over on the dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?' 'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.' Elisha said. 'You've asked a difficult thing,' Elijah said, 'yet if you see me when I am taken from you it will be yours, otherwise not.' And as they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out (**very significant**), **'My father, my father.'** Chariots and horsemen of Israel and Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. 'Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' he asked. When he struck the water it divided to the right and to the left and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho who were watching said, 'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha,' and they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him." And it goes on.*

Now, a remarkable story in the Scriptures; it comes down to the expression of Elisha who when he saw Elijah being caught up in the whirlwind after they were separated, when a chariot of fire and horses came through and separated them, he cried out and said, "My father, my father." Then he picked up the robe and struck the water and the fifty of the company said, "Surely the spirit of Elijah is upon Elisha."

I want to show you how this comes forward now into the New Testament. This is the story in the Old Testament; at the end of the Old Testament in Malachi, We've seen that God plans to reconcile fathers and sons.

Elijah, when he was taken up, was replaced by Elisha and Elisha had a double portion....a double portion...of the grace that was in Elijah. That's significant, because now come to the New Testament and in the book of Luke chapter 1 verse 17 you will see an interesting fulfillment of this prophetic scripture spoken here.....this is when Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, was visited by an angel who told him about John. The following is said,

"He will be great in the sight of the LORD," verse 16, *"Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the LORD their God and he will go on before the LORD (meaning he will fore run Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous to make ready a people for the LORD."*

Finally, the last piece in this puzzle, is what Jesus has to say in the book of Matthew chapter 11. In verse 10 Jesus is speaking of John the Baptist and He quotes the Scripture,

"I will send My messenger ahead of You who will prepare the way before You."

And then He speaks of John in verse 11 and He says of men born of women...There has been no greater than John but He said the least in the kingdom will be greater than John.

Then He goes on to say, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and

forceful men lay hold of it. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” Now it's critical that you hear this, verse 14,

“And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Then He goes on to say, “To what shall I compare this generation...” (who really did not have the ears to hear...)

Jesus says that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the prophet Elijah who was to come. The fascinating thing is that Elijah, as powerful and important as he was, Elisha was greater, by double. So in a real sense, Elijah was the forerunner of Elisha; like John was the forerunner of Jesus. And John would say,

“I must decrease while He increases.”

The sign of the time when God will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children is when John the Baptist came to announce Jesus, for Jesus has the double portion, for He is the firstborn...He's the firstborn of the Father.

So Elijah fore runs Elisha who has the double portion and it's Elisha who is the type of Christ; Elijah is a type of John. But the prophecy from Malachi says the days when God would restore, would reconcile Himself to His sons and would permit the ministry of reconciliation to heal the breach between God and His sons, when the One who has the double portion has come, that day God will begin to heal the breach again between His sons and Himself. The announcement that that day had come came by John the Baptist who came as Jesus said, “If you can receive it in the spirit of Elijah.”

He wasn't the quote 'incarnation' of Elijah because there is no 'incarnation'; biblically reincarnation is unsound, it's not the truth. He didn't say he would come 'as' Elijah, He said he will come 'in the spirit of' Elijah.

So he's like Elijah who prophesies the days of reconciliation. Now it's fascinating because Elisha says, when he sees Elijah being taken up, he says, “My father, my father.” Jesus would say, “Abba, Father,” or,

“My God, My God.” This is the key, this is the prophetic key of understanding as to how God intended, through Jesus, to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children. The prophetic key is, “My Father, My Father.” We'll be able to recognize how in that way.

Now Jesus comes to show us the Father, and His ministry may be summarized by His own words, **“I have come to show you the Father.”** Now how does He intend to do that? Let's understand something about the authority with which Jesus came into the earth. What authority did He have? He occupied a number of titles. One was 'Everlasting Father'. From Isaiah 9:6

*“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, **Everlasting Father.**”*

A 33 year old man being called the Everlasting Father? Yes.

- In what way is He the Everlasting Father?
- And how does this restore the heart of the Father God to the children and the children to the fathers? How does this function, what is this about?
- The answer is, He said, “I have come to show you the Father.”
- How does He show us the Father?” (watch this >>>>>>)

The answer is, He said, **“I am only doing what I see My Father doing.”**

He said, “Its the Father who is living in Me who is doing His work...the Father living in Me.”

What does that mean?

That means Jesus provided a location in time by giving up His own right to rule and govern His person; He gave His person, His body, His mind, His Spirit, He gave everything to God as a complete sacrifice. And then God came and lived in Him by the Spirit. The Spirit would instruct Him as to what to say, the Spirit would instruct Him as to what to do. (This is the ministry of reconciliation that we are all called to!!)

So the conclusion is, that in His whole life, He only did what He saw the Father doing; this is the quintessence of discipleship. Discipleship is not...is not...teaching somebody how to be a good church member, this isn't discipleship. We may call it that, but it doesn't make it so. From the very beginning, the pattern was established by God, who disciplined, disciplined, Adam. So that the responses of Adam were like God. Adam began to rule the way God rules. To this very day, we see the effects of Adam's arrangement of his inheritance. Adam was made the ruler of the world; God said to Adam, "Have dominion over the whole earth," and Adam began to rule the earth.

And he arranged the whole earth according to a kingdom arrangement; he associated the animals that went together in one order and then another order and another order. And he arranged the plants in the same way, things according to their own kind and to this day we still refer to the animal kingdom, we refer to the plant kingdom. Because the one who arranged them, arranged them with the mentality of a king.

Where did he learn that, considering that he had just been made out of dust of the ground? He learned it from his Father. Adam's Father was God, Adam learned how to arrange the world from his Father with whom he met everyday until the fall; this was the original discipleship. The Last Adam was also disciplined by the Father, and from this, we have been given the pattern of discipleship. **What we see with Elijah and Elisha is a father discipling a son;** Elijah was the father who was discipling Elisha and Elisha wanted to act just like his father. And indeed when Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha cried out, "My father, my father."

Father/Son Relationships Intended From the Beginning

Now here is the nub of the thing. It was always the intention of God to use one man to show another the character of God the Father; this was the order of society. The order that God established in society was patriarchal. The intention was, by a patriarchal order, that a man might see the Father God in the relationship that he would have with his own human father, or the father who reminds him of God the Father. A human father is supposed to remind a disciple, a son, of the heavenly Father. So Jesus would say it this way, "If you have seen

Me, you have seen the Father because the Father and I are one.” In this sense, Jesus was the Everlasting Father in that He perfectly modeled, completely presented, with nothing left to chance, with nothing unfinished; He perfectly showed who God the Father was.

When they looked upon His actions, they did not see a 33 year old man, for His actions were not the actions of a 33 year old man, by the standards of antiquity or by modern standards. He was not self centered, He was not particularly naive, He was not preoccupied with clothing Himself, feeding Himself and the like, He was not worried about His career. None of the things that so typically characterize 33 year old men could possibly be said to be the way Jesus was because at 33 He had perfected...He had perfected...the representation of God the Father.

He was, if you like, the exact representation of God. He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, although He was the equal of God; He was the Word who became flesh. But He came into the earth, not to grasp equality with God and to show Himself to be the equal of God; He came into the earth to be the exact representation of the Father.

So He took on the form of a servant and He was found in the likeness of men but He was the Servant of God; He perfectly and completely did this and without any unfinished aspect to it, and presented the nature and the character of God the Father in the earth. And He did it in the presence of His disciples so that they would see how the Father was by knowing, and seeing, and walking with, Jesus. As God disciplined Adam, Jesus disciplined twelve, Paul disciplined Timothy, and so on.

Sam Soleyn's Suggestion

“In our time, we have gotten used to referring to men as 'pastors'. I would like to suggest that we change the word to become a more accurate representation of what God intended because pastoring today is mostly about training people for membership in churches and to serve in churches. Change the word to 'father' because that's what it actually is, to have a spiritual father.”

Elijah/Elisha – The Importance of the Double Portion

In discussing this issue of spiritual fathers, I have referred to the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, and to Matthew 11:14 in which Jesus identifies John the Baptist as the one who came in the spirit of Elijah.

So we have the Old Testament story of Elijah and Elisha being brought up to date and brought into focus in the New Testament, through Jesus. And John the Baptist is identified as the Elijah who was to come. So whatever role Elijah had in symbol and in symbolic representation, John the Baptist now has it in referring and in conjunction with his role of announcing the Christ. Now if you go back to the story of Elijah and Elisha, you will recall that as Elijah was about to be taken into heaven, his servant Elisha requested his mantle. And Elijah said to him, "If you see me when I go up (when I'm caught up), you will receive a double portion." A double anointing. In other words, "What I have, you will have the double portion of."

Now the double portion has a long history in biblical reference. The double portion is a reference to a biblical concept called the "primogenitor", it is related to the term "father". The father is the one from whom the culture comes. The root word of "father" and of the word "primogenitor" is "pater" and the father is represented in the next generation by the primogenitor, the son who carries on the culture of the father.

An example of this in the Scriptures is when Jacob is sending his sons Reuben and Judah back to Egypt to redeem Simeon who is held as a hostage and of course Joseph required that they bring down Benjamin as part of the redeeming of Simeon, proof that the story that these men from the land of Canaan, these Hebrews, that they had in fact told the right story.

Now Joseph understood perfectly well that these were his brothers and he was simply putting them through the paces and in the process fulfilling his own desire to see his brother Benjamin. Nevertheless, Jacob their father was totally reluctant to allow Benjamin to go because of his love for Benjamin and his continuing mourning of his loss of Joseph himself.

So he requires first of Reuben and then of Judah, pledges that they would bring back both Simeon and Benjamin alive; the son who was lost would be brought back. To that end, Reuben, the first born and the one who would normally be considered the primogenitor, pledged upon the life of his children that he would bring back the lost son. But Judah pledged his own life as the guarantee that he would bring back both sons; the lost son and Benjamin, Simeon and Benjamin.

When it was time for Jacob to bless his sons, when he came to Judah he said, “And the scepter (the kings staff) shall not pass from **Judah.**” Why? Because in pledging his life to restore the son that was held as a hostage, in pledging his life to bring back both sons, he was fulfilling the essence of the story of the gospel, that Jesus would come and pledge **His own life** to bring Adam back to the house of the Father. And by that of course, to bring back all the sons of Adam who would accept His pledge of His own life.

This is the concept of the primogenitor in the Old Testament.

The primogenitor, the son who represented the culture of the father, in this case, the case of Judah, the son who embodied the gospel, the story against which all creation’s purpose is unfolding in the fullness of time. (Jesus was born into the tribe of Judah)

So the double portion was critically important. The primogenitor - the son, normally the firstborn - the primogenitor would obtain the double portion. So when Elijah speaks to Elisha and says, “If you see me when I’m going up, you will receive the double portion,” he’s spiritually speaking about the One who would receive the double portion from the Father **because He was coming to represent the Father.** Like Judah would represent the story of Jesus, so Elisha is the one who is continuing the story of the one who comes to redeem. And in that case, Elijah is pointing to the one who would receive the double anointing. It is then not hard to see why Jesus said, “If you can receive it, the spirit of Elijah is fulfilled in John the Baptist.”

Why?

Because like Elijah, John the Baptist was going to point to the One who was going to receive the double anointing, the primogenitor, Jesus.

So as Elijah announced Elisha as the primogenitor, the one with the double anointing, John the Baptist announces Jesus as the One with the double anointing.

So in the day of the spirit of Elijah the primogenitor will come, the one who would show the spiritual father, the one who would show the Heavenly Father by his own actions and his activities. A spiritual father, then, is one through whom God the Father is to be seen because this story is being played out, not against the background of biology and the evolution of human society, the story is being played out against the background of the original intention of God for the creation of man,

“See I will send you the spirit of Elijah and He'll turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the father.” In the day when this good news comes, one will function to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, in the day when Jesus would come, in that day and following and the epoch that would follow will culminate in God the Father being shown through those who are the primogenitor, who have the character of the Son through whom the story continues.

And that Son through whom the story continues receives a double anointing from God the Father of the house of God.

If we are talking about something more than provision and protection, if we're speaking about something greater than what you shall eat or drink or wherewithal you will be clothed, if the anointing is meant to present something greater than the issues of survival; *then what will we see when the primogenitor and the spirit of the primogenitor is manifested?*

We'll see the Father, we will see the Heavenly Father. So Jesus said, “I have come to show you the Father.” And He would make this the center piece of His gospel, indeed it would be the very purpose for His being. **Not only would He come to show us the Father, He**

would do nothing except what the Father was doing; He would confine His activities exclusively to the purposes of representing His Father.

Why? Because the primogenitor comes to be the exact representation of his Father, the primogenitor exists to **radiate the Father's glory,** the operative presumption being that the Father has given permission to the Son, the Father has consented to **live in the Son as Himself.** So the Scriptures would say, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's sins against them." **So it was God who was reconciling the world to God,** He was doing it through Jesus Christ.

The primogenitor then is the one who is the faithful and true witness; he is the reliable representation of the Heavenly Father, "If you've seen Me," He would say, "you've seen the Father because the Father and I are One inasmuch as it's the Father who's living in Me who is doing His work."

This was always what the gospel was supposed to be, it was never meant to be this crazy notion of what we could do FOR God. That is absurd, that was never the gospel.

Yet you hear preachers all the time referring to,

"Let us go and do something good for God."

This is to be totally uninformed about what the gospel is.

It is how God **was found** in the **Primogenitor**, in the **Son of promise**, reconciling the world to Himself. And this Son of promise now has established His own Body in the earth and bequeathed the **right to represent the Father to HIS Body.** So whoever is in the Body of the Son, whoever is a member of the Person of Jesus Christ, there you are not a member in your flesh, you're a member in spirit because this is a spiritual house and you are joined to this anointing, you're assembled into the anointing that is Christ.

So you are part of the Firstborn, you are co-heirs with Him, you're not apart from Him, you don't come to the Father except by Him, you

have no standing before the Father apart from His anointing, you have no way to go forward except in and through Him. Therefore, everything that He is constrains everything that we are. We are the Body now in which He lives by His Spirit to do exactly what the Father sent Him to do, **it is His continuing work.** So He would say in the Great Commission found in John 20, “As the Father sent Me, now I am sending you.”

So this anointing is manifested first and foremost and principally in the form of *spiritual fathers* because the culture of an orphan cannot see God as Father, because there is no accurate picture of a father present in the culture of an orphan.

One of the reasons why this generation will not discipline it's children and yet is obsessed, many of them are obsessed, with the physical care of their children, yet in terms of the discipline of their character, the generation is as negligent as it is obsessed with their physical care. It's because that's their understanding of fatherhood. Because they were fathered by a generation that gave them money, that provided resources and did all the physical things for them but did not spend time investing their lives, their culture, their understanding into the lives of their children.

The generation of the yuppies rejected the culture of their fathers in pursuit of money who thought they could buy their way into every result, and their children have borne the consequences of their failure, and they're now putting the consequences of their failure on display in the way that they're raising their children.

The yuppies bought their kids expensive toys of every kind while freely divorcing one another, so the children shuttled between parents who thought that their way of parenting was to take them on yet another trip to Disney Land or to buy them the newest gadget.

This is the phenomenon of that generation being given every conceivable material thing and not hardly ever being given the time of their parents. As a result they have nothing that connects them to the culture of their parents. This was an undisciplined generation who now refuses to discipline their own children because whenever they were disciplined, on the rare occasions wherein they were disciplined,

they were harshly treated and their whole idea of a hand raised in discipline is a hand of violence. So they lack restraint and they've carried on this pathology to their own children, so they will not discipline them.

Now society will break down on this point!

The rescue of this generation will not be accomplished by the thirty-somethings – it will not occur as the result of their physical or natural fathers reappearing because they've largely disappeared into the haze of self indulgence.

For that generation to be rescued, it will require spiritual fathers who will show them God the Father. **And the spirit of the primogenitor is now in the church to raise up a generation of spiritual fathers to show God the Father and it's these spiritual fathers who will exercise the propriety of discipline and training that will rectify and remedy the condition of a fatherless generation.** If this does not happen, the casual violence and neglect, the lawlessness that is already running wild in this generation,

will consume human society!!

The spirit of the father has been restored to the earth but the perfect manifestation of the spirit of the father will be evidenced in the Body of Christ.

Now let me distinguish the Body of Christ from religious organizations because religious organizations will not pick this up, because to father someone is a labor intensive process. And the user friendly church or the average church is trying to make its budget and so it is too involved with monetary prospects and everyone understands that the crowd is related to finance.

So we will continue to have the office of pastor, but it will not mean “father”. Yet, they will refer to these congregations as “spiritual families” but if these are spiritual families then the lack of communication and the lack of discipline makes these pictures of dysfunctional families. The absence of discipline in the church is an exact mirror of the absence of discipline in secular society. So we will

keep feeding the children of these families information, like the natural families find out about car seats and formulas and all of that, but will not discipline their children.

And I'll promise you this: everyone who is undisciplined is treated as an illegitimate child. (Hebrews 12:5-8) **God will never commit the serious issues of leadership and responsibility to an undisciplined son.**

So the future of the undisciplined church is pretty evident: boys will rule. "*Woe to the nation,*" the Scriptures say, "*whose king is a boy.*" Pastors are behaving like boys in their rush to show themselves as being non-threatening, they have defined love in this perverse way of never confronting anything in anyone. But the truth is these models are not constructed for the confrontation of *anything* because these are marketing models. The post modern church, which calls itself the "emergent church" speaks of the love of Father, but it's orphans are discussing their need for affirmation and masquerading this as loving the Father. **Loving the Father is a matter of obeying the Father,** Jesus taught us that much, He said, "**Why do you call Me Lord and do not obey the things that I say?**" The word "obey" is equated today with control. And in this present paradigm everyone knows that control is wrong, and I'll agree that control is wrong.

But in the rush to show that pastors are not trying to control, they've come up with a form that is the form of boys leading the house.

In Africa, ten year olds are the heads of households. When orphans are the heads of households, the culture of the orphan continues to proliferate in that house.

A spiritual father is by definition **a mature representation of God the Father with the spirit of the primogenitor; one who will pledge his own life to bring back the son who was lost in the fashion of Jesus who laid down His life on the cross that others would be brought back to the Father.**

Jesus did not come to shake men by force into His will because that is not the culture of heaven, that is not the culture of the Father. Jesus came to **show** the Father, to reveal the Father because what

orphans need is a model of the truth. Before anyone can change, that person must be presented with an authentic model of what is true. I do not have to labor the point with my own children about the character of God the Father, they know who God the Father is because they were raised by one who (ultimately) showed them the Father.

And the order of my house is not based in any fashion upon manipulation and control; the order of my house is based upon showing...showing. If you've come out of the culture of manipulation, it is hard to believe in the power of showing. Jesus said, "I have come to show the Father." **When you are closely related to anyone, the most powerful aspect of your life is what you personally put in demonstration**. The word says, for example, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church."

Now love is not about controlling but it is about showing, it's about showing. You must first show and then speak. The Scriptures say in Acts Chapter 1, "I'm writing to you Theophilus as I did in the first letter concerning that all that Jesus began to do and to teach." You must first do it and then you may teach it. But in this mass marketing that we call church, no concept of the showing of the heavenly is at the base of this. You have church leaders that are behaving atrociously, routinely, not just looking at the headlines, but go down to the local church.

This isn't about the Father's house, this is about religion, and showing requires a close enough fellowship with a person that they can touch you and handle you.

I have attempted to teach in this letter about the *Culture of the Kingdom*, and how the knowledge of this radically impacts your *interpretation of Scripture*, and about the relevance and place of *spiritual fathers*.

God permitting, some time soon perhaps we could talk about how fathers preside over spiritual households.

Much affection,

Bob Highland