

CHAPTER ONE

BIBLICAL ROOTS AND PRINCIPLES

One of the great tragedies repeatedly witnessed in history is the persecution of the Jewish people by Christians and organized Christianity. Anti-Semitism did not begin nor end with the rise of the Third Reich. Paul forewarned the Christians in Rome “*Do not become arrogant toward the branches...*”¹ He was referring to our Jewish heritage, and warning us not to despise it. It would be irrational and erroneous to dispute the fact that Christianity has its origin in Judaism. By the Father’s own design, Jesus was born as a Jew into a Jewish family and culture. He lived and died as a Jew. His followers called him Rabbi, and it is likely that He dressed as one having tassels which hung from His prayer shawl. Even after His resurrection and ascension, Jesus is a Jew. In the Revelation to John, Jesus is called “*...the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*”² We know that the Old Covenant patriarchs and prophets were Jews and the New Covenant apostles were Jews. The Bible has its basis in Judaism. Therefore, to rediscover Biblical sonship and fatherhood, we must return to these Hebraic roots.

A basic characteristic of the Judaism is that it is fundamentally patriarchal. Webster defines the word patriarchal as, “A state of social development characterized by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family.” **Fatherhood is a central feature of Judaism and of Christianity.** God’s decision to take the name and the title of Father gives this role supreme importance. In fact, fatherhood is one of the primary roles and purposes for which God puts men on the earth. However, fatherhood in the scriptural sense is more than just procreation. Human fatherhood is an opportunity for man to reflect the very character of God. Sadly, what passes for fatherhood in today’s world is far from a reflection of God’s character. Abusive, absentee and perverted men have used the position as an opportunity for exploitation, thus smearing the reputation and glory of our Heavenly Father.

We know little about Jesus’ childhood, except that He followed the traditions and customs of His Jewish parents. Along with his half-brothers and half-sisters, Jesus lived under the discipline of His earthly parents. The method for instruction commonly used among Jews is the practice of apprenticeship. In the Bible, it is referred to as discipleship. We can surmise from the Scriptures that Jesus had a working relationship with Joseph, his ‘foster father.’ We assume that he learned His trade as a carpenter from him.³ As a Jewish boy He learned by listening, observing, and then by doing. Jesus not only had a natural working relationship with His earthly, foster father, but He also had a

¹ Romans 11:16-18

² Revelation 4:5

³ Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3-4

faithful relationship laboring with His actual Father, that is God. Both in heaven and on earth Jesus worked for His Father.⁴

Centuries of anti-Semitism has robbed our families and therefore our churches from this understanding of the Hebraic roots of our faith. The word ‘father’ in both the Covenants comes from the Hebrew and Greek words meaning “source” and “sustainer”. The Biblical father functioned as the source of life, and the source of provision, protection, acceptance and love.

Having laid some groundwork let us now move on to some key principles of Biblical interpretation and exegesis. Webster’s dictionary defines exegesis as, “An exposition or a critical explanation of a portion of Scripture.” We should all recognize that if we take passages of Scripture out of their context we could do great damage to their meaning. Having established that the Bible must be the map for our journey, here are some principles or tools that I have learned to use when studying the Scriptures. **Those who navigate at sea understand that neglecting small variants at the beginning of a journey can require serious course corrections later on.** As we continue our journey together, we will use certain laws like a sailor’s sextant to keep us on course.

During the first decade of my service as a pastor, I had the enormous privilege of fellowshipping with and sitting under the ministry of the late Dr. Derek Prince. Derek was a brilliant scholar, and a world-renowned and respected Bible teacher. Apparently, he could read Hebrew and Greek like you and I read the newspaper. Few men could compare with Derek in his ability to exegete Scripture. One of the principles of exegesis that he taught us was ‘**The Law of First Mention**’. More clearly, the first time a word or idea is mentioned in the Scriptures it carries a seed. This seed holds the genetic code, or the DNA of that word or idea. Any use of a word from the point that it is introduced [its first mention] requires that all the following uses of that word must remain true to the seed, or the DNA. In layman’s language if the word or term used to describe a tomato in Genesis was “red thing”, then “red thing” must describe a tomato in Revelation.

Now let me illustrate how the Law of First Mention relates to our theme of sonship and fatherhood. An experience between Abraham and his son Isaac, recorded in Genesis, serves as a shadow, or antecedent, of an occurrence on Calvary some millennia later. In Genesis we read, “*God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And Abraham said, ‘Here I am.’ God said, ‘Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a*

⁴ John 5:36; John 17:4

*burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.’”*⁵ I was stunned when I first discovered that the first mention of the word *love* is found in this text. It is not found in the relationship between husband and wife, but rather in the relationship between a father and his son. It refers to Abraham’s love for Isaac: e.g., a father’s love for his son. Continuing on we read, “*So Abraham arose early in the morning, along with Isaac his son, and took two of his young men with him. Abraham split wood for the burnt offering, and went to the place where God had told him. On the third day, Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Then, Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey, the lad and I will go over there; and we will worship and (we will) return to you.’”*⁶ Careful scrutiny of this passage will reveal the first mention of the word ‘**worship**’. As Abraham speaks to the two young men who accompanied him and Isaac, he says, “*Wait here... my son and I will go, and we will worship...*”⁷ This forever links the first use of the word worship with a ceremonial event involving a father and a son. Observe that the pronoun for worship is we, not I; “*We will worship...*” In addition, the antecedent for return is we, “*and [we] will return...*” Here is one of the most explicit examples of Abraham’s faith. He said, “*We will worship and [we] will be back.*” Since the promise to Abraham was to him and to his seed (not seeds), and Isaac carried the seed of that promise, Abraham was assured that even if he killed and burned Isaac on the altar, God would have to raise him up.

A second law of exegesis is what I will call the ‘**Law of Pattern**’. This refers to the principle of binary mention where repeated references are made to certain pairs of elements or things. In the Bible, there are patterns that are as common as salt and pepper. A case in point would be the pattern found in the mention of water and fire. Water and fire are commonly paired together in the Bible. For example, water was used in Genesis to destroy the world; fire will be used in Revelation to destroy the world. Water (in the form of a cloud) and fire (in the form of a pillar) were used to lead Israel in the wilderness. On Mount Carmel we see Elijah pouring water over the sacrifice before the fire fell from heaven to consume it. The relevance of all these illustrations is found in water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Spirit expressed in the words of John the Baptist. John said to them all, “*As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*”⁸ John said that he was

⁵ Genesis 22:1-2

⁶ Genesis 22:3-6

⁷ Genesis 22:6

⁸ Luke 3:16-17

authorized to baptize in water, but Messiah would baptize in fire. The backdrop for this event was not only the baptism of Jesus, but also His authorization and release into public ministry.

One more example that may help us to understand and appreciate the Law of Pattern is the recurrent use of the couplet bread with wine, sometimes referred to as grain or flour and grapes. I suppose to all of us bread and wine have become symbols of the Lord's Supper. They signify or correspond to the elements of covenant; bread representing the body and wine the blood. Let me mention a few important incidences in Biblical history where this pair emerges. In Genesis, we find the first mention of the bread and wine couplet. "*Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of the Most High God.*"⁹ By the way, this is also the first mention in the Scriptures of the word '**priest**'. Numerous Bible scholars deem Melchizedek as a theophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.) Here Melchizedek, as a priest, offers Abram the elements of covenant, and then blessing.

"So you may ask, "What does this have to do with fathers and sons?" As we all know, Abram became Abraham, an earthly father who became the spiritual father of all who call themselves Christians.¹⁰ What's more, we know Melchizedek, the spiritual Son of God, became the earthly Son of Man. Relating this to our theme, we see that the spiritual Son of God, Melchizedek, blessed and offered covenant to the earthly father Abraham. One of the most significant and primary roles of a father is to perpetuate his lineage in the covenant community through his sons. The Old Covenant practice of confirming the covenant through circumcision of male children demonstrates and verifies this. In the New Covenant, the circumcision is performed by cutting away of the "flesh" in the heart. The Hebrew word for covenant is the word b'rith meaning a cut where blood flows. Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit circumcises the heart of both men and women; thus, the perpetuation of the New Covenant is no longer gender specific.

A further illustration of the couplet of grain and grapes is the call of Gideon. Notice that when the angel of the Lord visits Gideon, he finds Gideon beating out wheat in a wine press. As God looked down and witnessed the pogroms of the Midianites against the Israelites, perhaps wheat (the primary ingredient in bread) in a wine press reminded God of His covenant with the people of Israel. It is rather humorous that the angel of the Lord addresses Gideon hiding out like this as "mighty man

⁹ Genesis 14:18-19

¹⁰ Romans 4:16

of valor.”¹¹ The Bible states that the Lord called Gideon to save the Israelites from the Midianites. First, look at what was required of Gideon. *“And the angel of God said unto him, ‘Take the flesh (body) and the unleavened cakes (bread), and lay them upon this rock (a name for Jesus), and pour out the broth (blood). And he did so.’”*¹² Like David when he faced the “uncircumcised” giant Goliath, Gideon went forth and was victorious in the power of God’s covenant faithfulness. Pertinent to our theme of fathers and sons, notice that Gideon’s valor in pulling down the images of Baal emboldened his father Josiah to stand and defend his son in the face of the multitude who were demanding that Gideon die.¹³

A further understanding needed for the exegesis of scripture is the **Principle of Paradoxical Truth**. Western culture and mindsets cannot fathom the idea that two opposing truths can occupy the same space. Recently, my son Sean shared, “Our cup is half full, and overflowing.” He was speaking of the grace that fills the empty spaces of our shortcomings. Jesus is at the same time the Lion and the Lamb. The Principle of Paradoxical Truth hits us head on when we attempt to settle the issues of predestination, election and the sovereignty of God with the doctrine of moral agency and freedom of choice. Perhaps it is best to think of coins having two sides; we refer to these sides as heads and tails. When buying something, whether you place the coin on the counter with the head or tail facing up, the value of the coin remains the same. Personally, I believe in eternal security, that is, “once saved always saved.” However, I would not encourage you to test it. Making room for paradoxical truth is not relativism. Both grace and mercy, with justice and truth came in the person of Christ Jesus. When it comes to the question of being a son and being a father, they are indivisible.

¹¹ Judges 6:11-12

¹² Judges 6:20

¹³ Judges 6:31