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Shadow of Reality

Genesis 2:24 and Revelation 21:1-4

God completed creation in 6 days and it is outlined in Genesis chapter 1. In chapter 2 of Genesis, we see the details of human creation. On day 6 of creation, God institutes marriage.

Read Genesis 2:24

Let us also **read Revelation 21:1-4**

Just as the story of mankind begins with creation of the heavens, the earth and of marriage it also ends with the creation of a new heaven, a new earth and a new marriage. Who is the bride in this new marriage? It is the church of Jesus. There is a critical difference between the events in Genesis and those in Revelation. While we have no choice in whether or not to be born on earth, however we DO have a choice on whether we want to be the bride of Christ.

How and Why did this choice come about?

Right after the events in Genesis 1&2 comes the Fall of Mankind into Sin due to the deception of the devil or Satan. So we now have a marriage tainted with Sin. A creation tainted or subject to the effects of sin.

But God is at work in your life and mine to move us from Genesis 1&2 to Revelation 21. He is in the process of making us His bride, so that we might once again enjoy intimacy and fellowship with Him as Adam and Eve once did before they sinned.

God promised to make things right again. He also promised that He will come back and take us to be with Him forever.

But we have to choose to be part of this process.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, but is patient not wanting any to perish but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

But between Genesis and Revelation we have a lot of trouble. Jesus summed up this trouble in John's gospel.

Read John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Who is the Thief? Who is the ultimate thief? The devil. We must define our enemy. This is OUR enemy. My enemy is never my spouse or my neighbor. How can they be? Both my spouse and my neighbor will stand just like me before God the judge in the end. These are not my adversaries. Who then is the thief and my enemy?

Let's follow the money as they say. We just saw that God wants to move us from Genesis 2:24 to Revelation 21. Who is only one who wants to prevent this from happening? Satan. Any process, law, idea, tool, behavior, attitude that works to prevent us from becoming the bride of Christ will always have Satan as the author and originator. Satan is the thief and enemy.

So now that we have defined who the thief or enemy is, we will look at his strategy...which is to STEAL, KILL and DESTROY. Our life can be drastically altered if we do not define our enemy. And the enemy is out to steal, kill and destroy. Who? Notice the context when Jesus says these things. In this 10th chapter of John, Jesus is speaking to His disciples about how He is the Good Shepherd, which means that Jesus owns sheep. We are His sheep when we follow Him. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep. Who is Satan after? Satan doesn't go after those that are already his! Satan is out to get the children of God, those who belong to Jesus. Do we belong to Jesus?

That brings us to the first step in the process of going from Genesis 1&2 to Revelation 21. From the day we are born, Sin keeps us from belonging to God. It is our responsibility to recognize that. We all have an inbuilt conscience that is guilty because of our sins.

God wants us to recognize our sin and repent of it. This is the starting point of belonging to Him. We call this salvation. Salvation is when we accept before God that we are sinners and accept that Jesus died in our place for our sin and when we repent of our sin, we are saved. We now belong to Him.

What else do we gain as a result of accepting Jesus into our heart? God places in our heart the gift of the Holy Spirit by which we get to have fellowship with God. God speaks to us through His Spirit into our heart and through His Word. When that happens we finally get to live and do the things God prepared for us to do.

Read Ephesians 2:1-4 & 8-10 The Good Works come AFTER salvation!

Read Philippians 2:13- for it is God who works in US both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

What is this Good Pleasure? To make us the Bride of Christ.

So God has a list of things He wants us to do as His children. And this list is different for each of us. The purpose of this “list of things to do” is to conform us, to change us, to prepare us to be like Him so that we can live WITH Him. He is working in us to get us from Genesis 1&2 to Revelation 21.

And right there in the middle of all of this is the enemy who is working against this process. Can Satan influence our lives? Can Satan get us off track? Sure. How does the enemy accomplish this? By stealing, killing and destroying.

The order is very interesting. Let's take a look Satan's strategy. Steal – There are many things Satan can steal from us, peace, joy, love, health. But what is the only commodity that can be stolen from us and we never get back in this life? Time.

Read Ephesians 5:15-17 Redeeming the time or making good use of our time.

We must be careful with our time. We do not get it back. And if are unsure of how to spend our time, the Holy Spirit is there is help us and guide us. Satan will always try to get us to waste our time....doing both BAD stuff and GOOD STUFF but NEVER God's Stuff!! Bad stuff is easy to identify. Our conscience pricks us when we do it. The seemingly Good Stuff is more deceptive. God gave me a new car a few years ago. Now, everyone of you will agree that is my job to be a good steward of what God has given me. So how about if I make sure it is well vacuumed, washed and serviced regularly. Nothing wrong with that. How about I do that every Sunday morning at 10:30am, because that is the best time for me to beat the rush at the car wash!

Here is another...For me, having a dedicated time in the mornings with God and meditating on His Word is a challenge. It is a constant battle. There are plenty of excuses not to have one! I am so tired, the kids are crazy this morning. I have so much to do, I need to get going...and the list of thoughts go on. I have to bring all of these under the subjection of Christ reminding myself that my very existence and success for that day is dependent on starting it with God.

God has a head start on us already. Take a look at what He does for us with respect to our life on this earth.

Read Acts 17:26-27 Paul is addressing Greeks in Athens.

God has determined our address and time frames that we might find Him. We all have a manufacture date and an expiry date. And within this time, God has to save us, prod us to consider His list of things to do, through which God transforms us to His image, and God has a limited time to accomplish all of this- our lifespan! The enemy knows this and will work to try to prevent us from being saved and from doing what God has already prepared for us to do.

We can disobey the Holy Spirit and go our own ways. King Saul, Jonah, Paul all lost time in pursuing their dreams! Interestingly "Follow your dreams, follow your heart" is the garbage advice being given to us and our children in the popular media, cartoon movies and books.

Why can't I rely on my heart? Because my heart is deceitful above all things is what God says. We need to beware of the external powers of darkness and our own internal fallen fleshly nature at work in and around us to steal away our time.

Satan tries to get us very subtly and slowly. When he first steals away our time from following God and God's ways, decay starts to happen in our Spiritual life.

What is the next target? Kill – Satan kills. Do you think Jesus meant death? What is Jesus talking about here? The Christian believer has an assured Salvation and life after death. So Satan cannot touch our Salvation or life after death since these are given to us by God. But what can Satan kill?

“The day you eat the forbidden fruit you shall surely die”. Adam and Eve didn't die after eating the fruit or did they? They did die Spiritually because of sin and the consequences of that sin was their physical death.

Let's look back at the children of God in the Old Testament. Satan started with the Jews and was very successful in killing them Spiritually.

Remember the doctrine of Balaam the prophet. The prophet Balaam advised King Balak that the only way to defeat the people of Israel is by getting them way off track from following God. Satan uses the same strategy now on those saved by the blood of Jesus.

Remember Shadrach Meshach and Abednego? They understood that their body was worthless compared to what they enjoyed with the Heavenly Father. That is why they did not fear death in the fiery furnace and were willing to risk everything for the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19, Paul exhorts Christian believers to rejoice always, to give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Then he adds DO NOT quench the Holy Spirit. Do not put it out. Do not extinguish the Holy Spirit in you and me. It is through the Holy Spirit that we enjoy communion or fellowship with God. I need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead me even if it is through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, a difficult circumstance, because being in the center of God's will surrounded by calamity is way safer than being outside the leading of God.

Satan wants to Kill the working of the Holy Spirit in my life and yours.

The last strategy, is to DESTROY.

If Satan is successful in Killing the working of the Holy Spirit in my life, the next step is easy for him to do. That is to destroy my relationship with God. No Holy Spirit, no relationship.

Satan is a destroyer of relationships both vertically and horizontally.

The devil succeeded in cutting off our relationship with God right in the Garden of Eden by helping Adam and Eve sin. And subsequently sin causes the destruction of our relationships with other humans as well. It is the end result of why our families fall apart. It is the reason why our communities fall apart, it is the reason why our country is falling apart. We are fighting the wrong enemy.

So how do we guard ourselves against the enemy?

Read John 10:10 I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly. In richness, in fullness, without lack.

What is this promise of Jesus? Life and more abundant or a full rich life. Does Jesus promise a good comfortable life here on earth? How about a healthy cancer free life on this earth? Or does He promise a safe life without any suffering? Or a rich materialistic life?

Jesus promises 2 things, life and more abundant life or life to the fullest or one without lack. What does He mean here? How can we apply this to our life today?

Read John 17:3

Here Jesus is defining life in eternity, which is to know the Father and Jesus whom the Father sent to die for us.

In John 10:10, the life Jesus is talking about has to be life eternal. Because there is nothing of eternal value in this present life. Therefore the abundant life must also have an eternal perspective. It is totally incorrect to assume that Jesus died so that we can enjoy a life full of riches and success and 2 car garage, and dog and pony.

Everything in this earth always leaves us lacking. I eat a fantastic meal, I am still hungry in a few hours. I have a great relationship with my spouse or friends, but I have to keep working at it otherwise it falls apart. I enjoy fields, houses, kingdoms, but none of these can satisfy me to the fullest. How are we so sure, well just look at rich people. They are never satisfied. They often end their lives. Nothing in this earth is infinitely abundant.

In Luke 10:38-42, we read the story about Martha and her sister Mary. Jesus visits them and Mary sits at Jesus' feet while Martha is very busy with food arrangements. She complains to Jesus about the lack of help from Mary. Both the Sisters know who Jesus is and that He came from God the Father. This is life eternal, but Mary went a step further, she not only knew about Jesus, she was not distracted by anything. She enjoyed the presence of Jesus and more than anything else wanted to learn from Him. She was aiming for "Abundant Life" that only Jesus can provide.

Paul talks about this too.

Read Philippians 3:10 ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, conforming to His death.

That I may know Him...Jesus defined that as life eternal. Experiencing the power of His resurrection in my daily life, seeing how God helps me overcome my flesh daily in my present life through the resurrecting power of Jesus that is abundant life.

Then Paul ends by saying "that I am y conform to Christ in His death". What does Paul mean? You know, when you love someone so very much, you want to be just like them. That is what Paul means here, Paul wants to be just like Jesus, even to the point of death. Death to self and life in Christ.

The question I want to ask us today is Do the Father and Son satisfy us? Do we enjoy the Father, Spirit and Son in our lives.

Or are we like Mrs. Lot who kept looking back at her old life, longing for the things that she had left behind even after being redeemed from destruction. Or perhaps we are like King Saul who wanted God on his terms.

Does the promise of being His bride satisfy us? Remember God is moving us from Genesis 1&2 to Revelation 21. God is working in us to make us as His Bride.

Talking about brides, that brings us to the last point today.

The church we know is the bride of Christ. We will be united with Him forever in eternity.

So why then did God institute marriage in Genesis 1&2? Why not just live together?

In the bible there is always a shadow of the reality to come.

What is a Shadow? It is a picture of an image. The Shadow is Virtual, the Reality is what is depicted by the Shadow.

Paul talks about this in Colossians. An example is the Passover feast- was the Shadow; the reality was the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The Jews were commanded to celebrate the feast of weeks- the shadow. And the reality was the Pentecost. The mercy seat was the place above the Ark between the cherubim adorning the wooden box. This is the shadow; the reality is the mercy seat of Christ before which we will appear. And what about marriage? It is a shadow of the reality.

Paul talks about the roles of husbands and wives in Ephesians chapter 5 and ends with this.

Read Ephesians 5:30-32

How does Paul link a believer's marriage to Revelation 21?

The Christian believer's marriage is a Shadow of the Reality to come.

What does this mean for us today? When even the definition of marriage is strange for a Christian?

If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? That is from a popular movie.

If our marriage were scrutinized as a shadow would it reveal the image of Christ and His bride the church?

The purpose for a Christian believer's marriage is that it may reflect the reality to come.

Do not believe Hollywood. How does Hollywood want our marriage to be? It is not how God envisions our marriage to be. Can our neighbors see our married life and get a glimpse of Christ and His church for eternity? May God help us to become His Bride and May our marriages reflect our eternal destiny with God.