

He awakens to a moment of clarity. For years he has been nibbling around the edges of the truth, struggling, grasping, groping to take in the full meaning of Jesus in his life. Years of questioning, years of only partial comprehension. Then, in the same way that Jesus entered his life in the first place, surprised by the wonder, he understands.

He understands.



God With Us

Fellowship

THE MAN HAS NO REASON TO BE THINKING OF IT, but there it is. Out of the blue. With the sharp clarity of a sunset painted across the western sky after a rain storm, it suddenly comes to his mind.

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..

Genesis 2:7-8,21-22;3:8a

At his creation, man began in fellowship with God. Through no mechanical process of their own, the first man and woman began their existence in harmony with their Creator. It was not the result of a choice they had made. They were simply made that way.

Man and woman were beautiful, inside and out. They remained naked, as they had been made, for there was nothing to hide. Their spirits were at one with God. Thus it was His habit to come down to walk with them, to fellowship with them. They enjoyed His company, and He theirs.

But then the fellowship was broken. The man and woman gave in to temptation and sinned. Though their world was perfect, needing nothing to be added or changed, the serpent touched a nerve and tickled their vanity. He held out the honey of their becoming God-like, and the first couple believed the lie. They chose, not another god, but themselves and their own desires, over fellowship with the one true God.

Knowing Him

After many centuries of men and women being left on their own to struggle back up to fellowship with their Maker, after many centuries of empty disciplines and vain imaginings meant to replace the sweet communion they had once enjoyed, God looked down upon His people and delivered hope in the form of a tiny child.

He sent down to them, not a new creation, but a very ancient part of Himself in the shape of man. And once again man could know fellowship with his Maker. He could walk with Him, listen to His quiet counsel, commune with Him.

Immanuel

Here was the last piece of the puzzle. Here, illustrated with a simplicity even he could understand, is the essence of what the man's life with Jesus is to be. It was set down by the prophet Isaiah and explained by Matthew in that old familiar passage he had first heard so very long ago as a little boy.

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

Matthew 1:22-23

For so long the man has struggled to understand Jesus as friend, as comforter, as forgiver and restorer, as the giver of joy, as leader and example, as teacher. But even this, he now realizes, is just nibbling around the edges. All of it is true. All of these images faithfully describe his Lord, his Jesus. They describe His character, explain His purpose.

But not one of these by itself captures the *essence* of the relationship as succinctly as the image of God walking the garden path with the first man and woman.

Immanuel.

God *with* us.

God with *me*.

A Broken Intimacy

This is the full measure of the actual Jesus the man has been seeking. It is the unifying glue that holds together all the rest.

Jesus is a dependable friend—because He is *with* him.

Jesus is a reliable comforter—because He

is *with* him.

Jesus graciously forgives and restores—because He is *with* him.

Jesus gives unmeasured joy—because He is *with* him.

Jesus consistently leads and teaches—because He is always *with* him.

God designed Eden, "in the beginning," as He wished. It was a paradise not just for its inhabitants, but for God as well. It was the desire of His heart to commune intimately with His creation, to walk with them, to speak with them, to listen to their long-

*I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear;
The Son of God discloses.*

*He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me,
Within my heart is ringing.*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him
Though the night around me be falling,
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

C. Austin Miles

ings, their desires, in a most personal way. In their pristine state, man and woman *dwelt* with their Maker. They could gaze upon His full glory and majesty. They could hear His audible voice. Though they knew Him as God and Lord, they also knew Him as friend and confidant. And they reveled in His boundless joy.

Sin broke that intimacy. Snapped it in two. From that point on, God would hear and respond to the entreaties of His people—but He would do so only from a distance. Man's

sin had erected a barrier that man could not surmount. God would not walk with him in the cool of the morning dew. Except for rare exceptions, He would not commune with him, intimately, face to face.

Just as God had separated Himself from Adam and Eve because of their rebellion, He separated Himself from all mankind because of the resulting sin nature.

Right Here

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 4:4-7 NKJV

The full realization comes upon the man like the enveloping warmth of the hearth in a winter storm. The warming Spirit washes over and through Him, speaking the tender words of Jesus to his heart: "*Do you see now? Do you understand? I am right here with you. My flesh touches yours. My Spirit is united with yours. I am right here. You need only whisper and I will hear. And when you cannot speak at all, I will hear every unvoiced word of your heart. For I am right here. I will always be here.*"

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In 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 is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

John 14:18-21

concluded next week...