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WOMEN OF THE BIBLE AND THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

Part One:

Introduction:

The Church, as well as the people of God, has an identity crisis. Have you ever seen a young child role-playing? At one time he may be an astronaut exploring new, dangerous and amazing areas of unexplored space at another time he may imagine himself a professional baseball player setting all sorts of records and receiving far reaching fame. A young girl may envision herself as a glamorous movie star dressing up in her mother's clothes and jewelry or as a mother herself playing house with her dolls in a make believe world about what life is like or will be like.

These are beneficial exercises, for role-playing in our younger years can help prepare us as it helps prepare all children for future life. Challenging our imaginations to think about life and its operation is not only healthy but can be the seedbed for discovery, change and growth. It is from this seedbed with proper guidance and reliance on the Holy Spirit that our God-planned adult walk will unfold.

There is a time for each of us to be juvenile and a time for each of us to attain full age. Under usual conditions, if an adult is still playing with dolls or dressing up in a Superman costume, or running through the neighborhood pretending to be the Capped Crusader most would say this is a sign immaturity. You often hear such statements about immaturity in adults such as, "they never grew up" or "they need to grow up" or

“their reliving their childhood”. This is a real and present condition in the Church as well. The Church and therefore the saints for the most part, have never learned to *grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ*. We are to grow up into Christ to become a Christ company in the world.

Remember the story of the Ugly Duckling? This unfortunate hatchling got separated from his mother and did not know who he was. He went to all the adult fowl of the pond asking the question, “Are you my mother”? He didn’t know who he was so he role-played with the other animals trying to fit in. He followed a mother duck and her chicks. He tried his best to be a duck. To walk like a duck, to quack like a duck, to swim like a duck but he just didn’t fit in. He was an ugly, clumsy and out of place duck and everyone could see it and were happy to point it out to him. Then one day new and seldom seen birds visited the pond. They were swans and they looked just like he looked. The ugly duckling discovered that he was not ugly at all but really very beautiful and graceful, pleasant and gifted. The change happened when he found his true identity.

Like the ugly duckling of this children’s story, most Christians as well as non-Christians do not know their true identity or for that matter their divine purpose in God. They follow patterns that are not God’s pattern. They listen to voices that deride them for not being something others think they should be, for not looking or acting in ways that religion has determined they should. Many have come to believe that they are what others have said because they have not seen the pattern of who they really are. Religion (and their inability because of fear to be real and seek real relationships) has blinded them. They are blind – unable to see who they really are.

(1 John 2:11 KJV) But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. Proper relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ is the answer to our blindness concerning our true identity.

All of us are perhaps blind – unable to see – certain things about ourselves, God or others but the recovery of sight always begins with seeing Jesus as He is, *but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*. This is not a rapture scripture but a present scripture. When He appears to us, when we are able to see Him as He really is, not as we have made Him we will begin to see our true identity. Many in Christianity know of Jesus but few have really seen Him. Religion, our fears, misconceptions, and prejudices have so

marred Him that we have been unable to see Him as He really is; *his visage was so marred more than any man*. He has been so marred that not only the world but also the Church has great difficulty in seeing Him.

Ask the average Christian, “Who are you and what is your purpose?” and you will usually get an answer along the following lines. “I am a Christian and my purpose is to save the lost.” These are worthy thoughts but they do not speak to our spiritual identity or purpose anymore than saying, I am a pharmacist or I am an athlete or I am an African American or I am a minister, etc. All who have come to Christ are Christians and all Christians have been given the privilege to share good news with the world but these do not answer specifically your spiritual identity or purpose. These can only be found In Him.

The phrase in Him is a much used term found in various forms, (in Jesus, in me, in Christ, etc.), over one hundred and seventy times in the New Testament and hundreds of times when phrases like, in truth or in the light etc. are used. Without understanding that our answers to life and life itself can only be found in Him we will never arrive at our true identity and always live our Christian life in confusion and frustration trying to be something we are not because we do not recognize who we are. By understanding we are not talking about a mental acceptance of the term, in Christ – that many have – but a foundational realization from which we derive a true understanding of our identity and purpose. To be mature in Him we have to know who He is not by biblical knowledge or mental comprehension alone, but by intimate relationship.

At the end of part two of this writing is a partial series of a number of “In Christ” scriptures listed as an addendum. Reflect on them as you being in Christ scriptures or in other words as they are only activated by you recognizing yourself in Him and cannot be operational in your life if you do not see yourself as God sees you.

Comparisons of Women in the New Testament with the Church:

We will now look at some descriptions from the Apostle John and other Gospel writers with an eye to seeing how the Church and Saints need to find their true identity if they are ever to fulfill their destiny in God.

John sees things differently from the other synoptic gospels, which is why he is given the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is the one who leans upon Jesus’ breast. It is his defining characteristic. It is not just a term of endearment or a means of describing his affection for the Lord as much as it is that he is able to hear things that eluded others.

The book of Revelations opens with the phrase this is the revelation of Jesus Christ that was given to His servant John. It does not say to the Apostle John but to his servant John and the word servant, in this passage, has the origin of its meaning in the Old Testament as a bond slave. Not any common servant but a bond-slave.

A bond-slave was one who was indentured to another for a period of time because of a debt by him personally or may have even passed to him generationally. He was required by law to serve that man and that man's vision and mission in life for six years. We know that six is the number of labor, "for six days shalt thou labor". We hear so much talk about this being the seventh day.

So many of us have labored for so long. We have labored under a sense of condemnation and debt to God. We certainly owed a debt we could not pay but many have yet to realize Jesus paid a debt He did not owe. Many are trying to pay for what has already been paid for by Jesus. For so long much of Christendom has labored to pay its own debt, which is an impossibility. If you have to pay your own debt then it is saying that Jesus' sacrifice was not sufficient. Your attempts at self-reformation are an admission that you do not know who you really are in Him.

In the sixth year the bond-slave had the option of fulfilling that responsibility and become released from that debt or if something had happened in the process of his servitude that he had fallen so deeply in love with his master he was taken to the door-post and there his ear was pierced and he was marked for life. His ear was pierced, not his ears but his ear, this is why it was John who got the revelation because he fell so much in love with Jesus that he pressed his ear against His breast, (hearing the heart of God). He pressed his ear on the door because Jesus is the real door and by pressing his ear against the real door (which is Christ), he was pierced with a revelation of what and who He really is.

In the gospel of John, we are impressed with the fact that every direction He took, every statement He made was in fact a prophetic gesture. These things are not just given to us to give us insight but they were prophetic gestures. Whenever He sat down it had implications, whenever He stood up it had implication. Wherever He went, there is something to be seen if we look close enough.

As an example, when He went to the Mount of Olives (this is a place where olive trees are growing and olives are harvested), we know this is a type of anointing. He is going into a realm of anointing because of something that is happening following this event. On the Mount of Olives is also the garden of Gethsemane. He was going back to touch something in the garden. Not just a garden outside the walls of Jerusalem but if we

could ever touch the intention of God it is not just to get us out of here but also to bring us back to the garden. All He's ever wanted is a people who will walk with Him in the Spirit, or the cool of the day in the garden and let us find what has been lost to us.

What has been lost to us is in the garden? From John Chapter Eight. This text has marvelous texture. John 8:1-11 *Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

As you read this it is important that we state a few things by way of introduction. It is not our intent to cast aspersions upon ministry or saints. Those who have been given oversight in the lives of people have an important position. Truth be told many are as frustrated, weary, without identity and direction as many of the saints they shepherd. The most insecure Christians are often found in ministry. In many ways minister and saint alike need to know who and what they really are. There are some in ministry however who take liberties not granted by scripture and put a heavy yoke on themselves and the people. We are trying to address the situation without demeaning the office.

Some things may be stated here that initially may be offensive to some people. The carnal mind is at enmity with God; the natural man does not receive the things of God for they are not naturally discerned, they are spiritually discerned. Men do not crucify you for what you say but for what they thought you said.

When Jesus steps out of the temple and said, "Destroy this temple and I'll raise it up again in three days," they were ready to crucify Him because they thought He was speaking of something that was near and

dear to them. For generations the Temple was the place that they made connection with God. He was not talking to them about an earthly temple, He was talking about His own body.

So as you read this it is important for each of you to realize that each of us have certain concepts that are a contraceptive to our ability to receive. If you want to use the Bible and other writings to support your conceptions (which may to one degree or another be misconceptions), then you will never rise to the realm in which the Spirit can lead and guide into all truth.

Every woman that Jesus encountered in scripture is a picture of the Church in varying conditions. We know that the Apostle Paul uses the metaphor telling husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That He might sanctify it and clean it by the washing of the water by the word and might present it unto Himself as a Church without spot or wrinkle or any such things.

Please listen very closely, we have heard this scripture from the lips of legalistic, judgmental, overbearing, wife beating preachers all our lives telling us that if we have spot or wrinkle or any such thing we would not be ready when He returned. Now listen to the instruction of the Spirit. It is not our responsibility to present ourselves to Him without spot or wrinkle. It is not our responsibility to present ourselves without fault. Jesus said that He would present us to Himself without spot or wrinkle. Most of the Church world has labored for the last two thousand years trying to desperately get their act together and the truth is once they think they've got their act together it is still nothing but an act. There were twenty seven miracles of Jesus captured in the gospels yet John says at the end of his gospel that if everything Jesus said and did were written in the volume the world could not contain it.

(See John Chapter Four) So why were these encounters captured for us to read? They are not just about an encounter but a revelation of what He really desires to do in us. He meets a woman at the well. To many it is offensive to use this woman as a description of what is happening in the Church today. This woman is looking for love in all the wrong places and feeling like a fool. The reason why she is doing this is because she is coming to Jacob's well and Jacob is the name given to the deceiver. She is not drawing from the wells of salvation but deception.

She is not getting joy but like most of the Bride today. Like most of the Church, she is drawing from wells of deception and if you believe a lie you will be damned. This is not a lie that is spoken outside the Church but one that is spoken from pulpits constantly reminding you of what you are not instead of who you are. You live confused and you live mixed

up and you live under a cloud, an oppressive cloud of condemnation, (condemn-nation).

This woman had been drawing from a well of deception and Jesus had asked her a question that triggered truth in her. He said, "Where is thine husband?" She said, "I don't have a husband." He said, "You've said well because you've been with five men and the one your with now is not your husband." The Church has been shacking up with all kinds of things. It has been intimate with all kinds of things because it has been looking for who it is in all the wrong places. She'd been with six men but before her was the seventh man the perfect man, her true husband the Lord from heaven, and the lover of her soul.

(See Luke Chapter 13) There is a woman in the book of Luke who is a pattern of the Church as well. She had been bowed to the earth and could in no way lift herself up and she had been that way for eighteen years and Jesus said it was a spirit of infirmity. The reason the Church cannot come into the transformation He wants to do in us is that we are inward and introspective. We are constantly trying to change who we are through our own personal discipline. She'd been that way for 18 years. Why 18 years during which time she could not lift herself up? She could not interface with anybody. She had the terrible stigma of not being able to know a man face to face or have a child or be a partaker of another man's nature.

We can scream all day long that we are partakers of His nature but if we are bent over and twisted in our perspective of what God is really like then we have enormous difficulty in partaking of who and what He is. He is not the God that has been spoken to many by religion. He is not indifferent to me! He is not vindictive toward me, He is not intolerant of me, He is not waiting on me to make a mistake, and He is not waiting on me to stumble. He sees what I cannot see in myself, He believes in me, He knows who I really am.

For 18 years she had been that way. We can come to the conclusion of 18 by adding 6 plus 6 plus 6 which we know is the number of man the number of labor the number of the mark of the beast. She was one short of perfection in every dimension, spirit, soul and body. He is not here to point out our imperfections but He wants to perfect us. He will perfect that which concerns you! Your not able but He is able to present you faultless! The woman's got to get straitened out – the church has got to get straitened out and she will never get straitened out if the church is fed a steady diet every Sunday morning letting them know what they are not rather than what they are in God.

We can find a lot of fault with each other and we may very well be guilty of what they say we've done but we are not who they say we are. The problem this woman had who was taken in the act of adultery is the same problem of the Church. The fundamental difference between a whore or harlot and a wife is that the former receives seed from many men where the latter receives seed from only one. That is why the church is so mixed up about who it is. She was taken in the very act of adultery.

What is wrong with this picture? The righteous religious Gestapo, the scribes and the Pharisees are the ones that take her in the very act of adultery. That encounter is usually an intimate and discretionary rendezvous yet they knew where to find her and what she was doing. These self-righteous ones are depicted in the story of another woman, the one with the issue of blood. She is anemic, constantly hemorrhaging at the point of intimate conception. The reason why this woman is in that condition is as scripture says, *(Mark 5:26 KJV) And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.*

She had been to every conference and seminar she had been to every counselor and therapist she could go to. She had given her seed offering, she had made her vows and sent in her offering to the tele-evangelist, she is still growing worse. Every one of us has an issue of some kind but the reason this woman was in this condition was because she had suffered at the hands of physicians. The practitioners of medicine in that day were the Pharisees.

Remember when Jesus healed the leper? He said, "Go to the temple and show yourself" for they had a record of his leprosy and then offer a sacrifice. Preachers that demand and command reformation from the saints often do not realize that they are part of the problem. Should it bother the church that for all the preaching of prosperity the only ones seeming to get rich are the preachers?

She was in that condition because she had set under a ministry of self-righteousness. These Pharisees had preached righteousness or at least what they thought was righteousness. Your righteousness is not based on what you do. *(Mat 5:20 KJV) For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven,* Your not right because of what you do but because of who you are in. *(2 Cor 5:21 KJV) For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Note: See the Addendum at the end of Part Two of this writing:

You can be guilty of what is talked about in Romans – going about establishing your own righteousness while being ignorant of His righteousness and forsake your own mercy. You will not get truly free until you realize you cannot do enough good things to please Him because the only thing He is pleased with is His Son and His sacrifice. I can't serve him enough to deserve anything. There is a great manipulation in many ministries that while speaking grace keep the hearers bound to the Law.

When you get fed up with the manipulation, when you get fed up with the control, when you get fed up with the expectations when you get fed up with the expectation that sets you up for rejection when you don't measure up; you'll find these are rooted in your bondage to the law. We need to be taught by grace to enter His righteousness. When you begin to preach a message of grace (which is what the whole New Testament is about - the contrast between law and grace), it makes people uneasy.

So many people get concerned when you preach this kind of grace (which is sometimes called 'greasy grace' or 'sloppy agape'), that people are going to run unrestrained and commit all manner of sin. Listen, many have sat under ministries for many years that have been constantly browbeating and preaching a legalistic overtone messages and have witnessed more sin in the Church than on the streets. The preaching of the law makes you think you get in the flesh when you leave the worship service or when you slam your finger in the car door. No Galatians says you get in the flesh when you bring yourself back up under the law. This worries some because they think it is a message of leniency. No it is a message about not having faith in the law.

The law was not given to you anyway, the law was given to Israel and Jesus came to fulfill the law. You can't fulfill it; He just gave you the law to prove to you that there is no way you can do this yourself. He never intended you to live for Him! The Christian life is not difficult it is impossible, He made it impossible but through Christ I can do all things, *(Phil 4:13 KJV) I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Our trust cannot be of ourselves but through Him, *(2 Cor. 3:4,5), And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*

The riches of His grace come through Jesus, *(Eph. 2:6,7) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* The peace of God can only come through Christ not through our labors, *(Phil 4:7 KJV) And*

the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

With Him all things are possible, (2 Cor 5:17 KJV) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

If we teach people as is spoken in the book of Philemon, *the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus* it will make their faith effectual. The seed of God is incorruptible. It is not the Law that constrains or restrains you but it is the love of Christ! We don't run out on those we truly love because of the penalties imposed by society under its law for neglecting our families and children. We care for them because we love them.

If you will fall in love with Him and the only way to fall in love with Him is to understand His love for you. So many live in a complex of feeling they have disappointed God so many times. It is impossible for you ever to disappoint God because if you were able to disappoint God then that means you would be able to do something He didn't know you were capable of doing. When do you think He finds out your sin, when you confess it?

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