

## Experiencing God: A Divine Encounter

**Experience:** *The act of living through an event; personal involvement in, or observation of events as they occur; anything observed or lived through; all that has happened to one in his life to date.*

**Experienced:** *having had much experience, as in a particular occupation or activity; having learned from experience, made wise, competent, etc...*

**Encounter:** *to meet unexpectedly; come upon, to meet with, face; a direct meeting, especially when unexpected or by chance.*

Life could be defined as experience. We begin life at birth, where we begin to learn from the experience of life. Experience and knowledge are often intertwined, because much of our knowledge comes from what we experience.

When we speak of knowing someone, we mean that we have experienced some shared life with them. We might know about someone that we have never met and experienced.

Experiencing others involves a wide variety of relationships which may be very brief or may be for a lifetime. Also, experiences may be good or evil, pleasurable or painful. We naturally seek for the experience which will be good and profitable for us, but we often experience evil and harm instead.

Experience has a way of making us who we are and what we seek in life. If all experience is evil, we would not trust anyone and would become pessimistic, avoiding all relationships which appear evil. If evil is all that we know by experience, we do not believe that there is any good. We naturally interpret life from our viewpoint, which is based on our experiences.

Our experiences are determining our life. We begin life in a paternal relationship, completely dependent upon parents for all the necessities of life. We then become parents, who experience family life very differently from that of a child. We choose a vocation, live life, meet people, and have experiences which shape and determine our life and lifestyle. We meet different people at different times that impact our lives for good or evil. Since we are souls with a spirit capable of communing with God, we can also encounter God in our spirit.

### Covenant Experience

The Creator revealed Himself to Abraham as God, and then entered into covenant with the children of Israel. The covenant life of a Jew in the kingdom of God would be very different from the life of a Jew in the land of Egypt. The nation of slaves which had experienced Pharaoh would now experience God.

This divine covenant between God and Israel is something new for God and for man. Moses cuts the covenant with God and becomes the mediator of the first and only covenant that God ever had with people. God had made promises before, such as to Noah and Abraham, but the

Moses covenant is a bilateral agreement where God's provisions depend upon obedience of both parties.

Moses explains how unique the covenant is for God and the nation. He stands between God and the people declaring the terms of the covenant. He quotes the vows of God and the vows of the people and seals the covenant in blood. Mankind had been marrying and giving in marriage since before the Flood, but such marriage was between men and women. Now God is married to a nation. Moses made it clear that only one God existed, and he identified Him as the one who spoke to Abraham. Now Israel has the only covenant there is with the only God there is. Such a claim will result in offense to others because it excludes them from life with the only God that exists, leaving them with dumb idols to worship in vain. Such a claim will naturally result in anti-Semitism.

Many questions now arise: Will God keep His vows? Will the people keep covenant? How long will the covenant last? What is the dowry? Will the fathers pass on the benefits of covenant to the children? Will subsequent generations be blessed or cursed?

From Exodus to Jeremiah, we see the nation in covenant relation with God for 1,000 years, but for the most part, the people experience evil instead of good, and curse instead of blessings.

The experience of a person, family, or tribe under the Mosaic covenant would depend upon the state of the covenant in their particular generation. The experience of life in Judaism is determined by the obedience of the people. An individual may be right with God, but he cannot enjoy the blessing of covenant unless God is blessing the national covenant. Life in Judaism in the days of Solomon is very different from living in the days of Manasseh, an evil monarch.

### Paternal Experience

A paternal relationship is different from a covenant relationship. There is paternal relationship in the family between parents and children. There is covenant relationship between husband and wife.

In the Moses covenant, God was the husband and Israel was the wife, but in the Jesus covenant, God is the father and Christians are His children. The House of Moses is very different from the House of Christ. In Moses there is national blessing in the land. In Christ, there is personal blessing in each life. Christians have a personal relationship with God as their Father, and their blessings come directly from the Father, not from the previous generation.

Christians experience God daily anywhere in the world because God dwells in their hearts, while Jews went to Gilgal, Shiloh, and Jerusalem in covenant days to commune with God. We tend to perceive that God blesses Christians in the same way that He blessed the Jews, meaning that the blessing is tribal, national, and covenant. The Christian, however, is personally blessed from a paternal relationship with God, his Father, apart from the state of the kingdoms of this world.

The church is an assembly, a congregation, a household of faith consisting of many Christians. God is individually blessing the Christians, who in turn bless the church when they assemble. The individual Christian does not need the church in order to walk, talk, and commune with God, or in other words, to experience God daily for himself. Rather, the church needs the Christian in order to be the church, just as the body needs its members to be the body and the family needs the children to be family.

The inheritance of the Christian is the spirit of God which is resident in the soul, allowing the Christian to take his inheritance with him wherever he goes. The inheritance of the Jews was the kingdom of God in the land, but the inheritance of Christians is the kingdom of Christ in the heart. Christians need not be in the land to possess their inheritance. They don't go to Jerusalem to visit God in the temple, since God has already visited them in the heart. Christians don't have a homeland to return to, for their Jerusalem is above and they worship God in the spirit. (John 4:24)

Jews are heirs to covenant benefits which pass from generation to generation after the covenant is cut with the original generation. The first generation receives the covenant from God, but subsequent generations will receive it from men. Each generation will pass on to the next - not what it has received, but what is left to give. The woodpile received isn't necessarily the woodpile that is given. Such is the case with ancestral inheritance of land and kingdom. This is not so for the heirs of the New Covenant, where every generation of Christians receive the inheritance from God the Father, just like the first generation - receiving the Breath of God just like Adam, and being filled with the Spirit, just like at Pentecost.

The Jews were the children of Israel. They were not the children of God. Christians have been born of the spirit as well as of the flesh. They are in the family of God from spiritual birth just as Jews are in the family of Israel from flesh birth. Christians are spiritual children with a spiritual father in a spiritual family with spiritual siblings. They are heirs of a spiritual inheritance, which is spiritual life.

Jews were heirs to the land covenant of Moses. They must be born again of the spirit to be Christians and to inherit the life of God in the New Covenant of Christ.

In other words, possession of the Christian inheritance is at birth, given by the Father. Every child of God is in possession of his inheritance, but not so with the children of Israel. A Jewish child may discover that his covenant inheritance has been lost by his father or ancestors.

### **After Death Experience**

The Mosaic covenant had no death benefits - no afterlife blessings. Moses was a mediator, but not a testator. The Mosaic covenant was like a marriage or contract, compact, treaty, etc...where compliance in this life will result in benefits for partners in this life or for the time then present. (Hebrews 9:9)

Jesus was a testator who died leaving all that He possessed to mortals, not to descendants, for He had no descendants. Moses did not die and leave an inheritance, but rather passed on the covenant while he lived. Jesus died before He mediated the New Covenant. Jesus was a testator before He was a mediator, which means that He mediated the New Covenant after He died, or in the afterlife. Some people today speak of death and the "after death experience". If we could talk to Adam, he would tell us of his after death experience outside the Garden, but he could also speak of his experience with God back in the Garden.

The song says that "I want to love hard, die young, and leave a beautiful memory", but Jesus' desire was to love hard, die young, and leave a beautiful Life for an inheritance. Hank Williams did die young and he left a memory. Moses died old and left a covenant to living mortals, but Jesus died and left a legacy to the spiritually dead.

When Jesus died, He gave up the Ghost - the same Ghost which Adam lost in the Garden. This Ghost is all that Jesus possessed when He died; not even His clothes were in His will. This Ghost is the inheritance of the children of God that compose the Church. This Ghost is the Holy Ghost which raises the dead. To be raised from the dead by the Holy Ghost is Regeneration. To be regenerated is to live again after death. Jesus is the first to live again, to be regenerated, and to experience Life after Death, which is immortality.

Jesus gave up life in order that mortals might live again in immortality- not that they might continue to live a mortal life. The legacy of Christ is immortality, which is the need of all that are born in Adam. Immortality is not the extension of mortality into eternity, but rather living again after death. There is a transition and transformation between mortality and immortality. We understand that mortality is the result of birth, but the Bible teaches that immortality is likewise the result of birth (born again from the dead).

We tend to think of the legacy of Jesus as benefits for this mortal, Adamic life, when actually the legacy (inheritance) is regeneration, or resurrection from such life. In other words, it is a new and eternal life to live and experience once we have it. Mortals do benefit from the life of Christ, but immortals benefit from the death of Christ, the testator. Moses, before he died, cut a covenant with benefits for mortal Jews in first birth - Adamic life - while Jesus, after He died, cut a covenant with benefits for risen mortals in second birth Christian life, which is also called immortality.

Mortals are dying souls that are heirs of Adam's death. Christians are living again (risen) souls that are heirs of Jesus' Life. This Life is the inheritance of the Saints. It is the life which God gave Adam in creation and which God gave Jesus in procreation.

Jesus died so that we may encounter God in after death (spiritual) experience. This is much more and better than the covenant experience of Israel or the creation experience of Adam. This paternal experience is with a heavenly Father in the family of God with Jesus, our brother, who saved us. (Hebrews 2:11)

## Walking With God

Adam walked with God before death entered. Adam experienced life with God before spiritual death; then Adam was driven from the Garden to experience mortal life. It was this mortal life which Adam passed on to his descendants. His children were born mortals (subject to die). Adam could tell them about his life with God, but he could not give it to them because he no longer had it. Spiritual death (separation) had taken away the spiritual life which Adam enjoyed in the Garden. He would now die physically because he no longer had access to the Tree of Life. His children would also die because they also were separated from physical immortality.

Adam was separated from God as well as from the Garden. Since God is a spirit, then Adam is spiritually dead. Since the Garden is physical, then without it, Adam's body will return to dust. If Adam could have returned to God and the Garden, he would have received back his spirit life and walk with God, as well as have access to physical immortality. In this case, he would experience transition (from out to in) but not transformation. If he physically dies outside the Garden, he must be raised from the dead. He must be reformed because his form is now dust.

Walking with God was a before death experience for Adam. If his offspring could walk with God or eat of the Tree of Life, it would be an after death experience for them. If Adam's children followed him back to God and the Garden, it would be a return to original life for Adam, but receiving new life altogether for his offspring.

Adam was created, not procreated. Adam received life from his creator Father, but his children received life from their procreating father. Before Adam became a father, he had lost his life in the Garden with God; therefore what he had received by creation, he could not pass on in procreation because he no longer possessed it. This is why the Bible speaks of man as "lost in Adam" – needing to be saved, and "fallen in Adam" – needing to be restored.

Adam and Eve were the first humans to experience God. They walked with God in the Garden. This walk is a spiritual walk. They had a physical experience with the Garden, but a spiritual experience with God. They lost the physical experience when driven out of the Garden, as well as the spiritual walk with God when alienated from Him. Their walk with God in the Garden became history and all they had was the memory. They could tell their children about their divine experience, but since the children had not ever seen, heard, or even thought of such, they could not perceive it. Adam and Eve could commune with each other about the divine experience, but not with others.

We see this whenever people have a common experience. They enjoy sharing in communion. They understand one another and each remembers things differently. Two Christians or many Christians may commune about their Christian experience, but non-Christians cannot join in or even perceive what the fellowship is all about.

## A Spiritual Experience

A divine encounter would be a spiritual experience. Adam and Eve began life on earth experiencing God. Likewise, so did Jesus; but everyone else begins flesh and blood life estranged from God. Their mortal birth brings them into the world where they will have many experiences, both physical and spiritual, but they may or may not ever encounter God Himself.

Jesus made it possible for God's spirit to be born into man's spirit. This makes it possible for fallen man to have a spiritual walk with God – much like Adam and Eve in the Garden.

The Bible tells of many personal encounters with God – Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, etc... But none of these are like that of Paul the Apostle in the Christian experience. Before the days of Moses, God had spoken to certain people at different times about different things. Now God promises to walk daily with a congregation of people and to commune with them (over the mercy seat) from the holy place within the Tabernacle. This covenant experience provided by Moses is very different from the paternal experience provided by Jesus. God was a husband to a congregation, which was His wife, but in Christ, God is a Father to many sons born of His spirit.

Only Adam and Eve experienced God in the Garden. Only the circumcision experienced God in the midst of the congregation. Only a Christian has experienced God in his heart. Only the circumcision experienced God in the camp, but anyone may experience God in the heart.

The covenant relationship which Israel had with God is very different from the family relationship which Christians have with God. In the house of Moses, the people were in the kingdom. In the house of Christ, the kingdom is in the people. In Moses, the circumcision was in the flesh, but in Christ, the circumcision is in the spirit (the heart).

One may be born a Jew and discover that he is not in the kingdom of David, rather in the kingdom of the Romans. A child of Jacob (Israel) may not be in possession of his inheritance, but the Christian inheritance comes to the heirs at birth since it is the spirit of God, their Father. Therefore, it is impossible to be a Christian and not possess the Christian inheritance.

## Conclusion

We see how experience may relate to physical activity or spiritual activity, and if God is involved then it is spiritual and religious. The Bible reveals the activity of both God and man. We know that it does not include all the activity of man, and we should realize that it does not cover all the activity of God.

Different people have experienced God in different ways, because different people may have a different God. If their God can talk, then they may have his word in print, and if their God can walk, they may claim to have walked with him. The God of the Bible is the God of the Jews as well as the

God of Christians. The God is the same, but the worshipers and followers are not. God is the creator of all things who becomes the God and friend of Abraham, who then becomes the God and husband to Israel, who then becomes the God and Father of Jesus, who then becomes the God and Father of Christians.

Many are experiencing God, but in different ways, and at different times, depending upon God's revelation or manifestation. One may see God as Creator, and glorify God for the creation, but only if he believes that God created it. A Jew may see the creator as a covenant God, but only if he believes in Moses. A Christian may see the creator as His Father, but only if he believes in Christ and recreation.

Experiencing God for Jews in Moses' covenant is very different from experiencing God for Christians in Christ's covenant. By his birth and circumcision, Paul was an heir to the Jewish covenant, but his divine experience on the Damascus Road was very different from his Benjamite ancestors in the days of Moses. He makes this very clear every time he recites the experience.

John Wesley had an experience with God similar to that of Paul. Both were very devout in their religious devotion. One followed Moses in Judaism, and the other followed Jesus in Christianity. Both possessed the spirit of God within the heart, and neither possessed the inheritance of the Jews.

Paul's Christian experience resulted from his spiritual birth – not his flesh birth into Judaism, where his fathers had lost the earthly inheritance. Wesley's experience with God likewise resulted from spiritual birth – not his flesh birth, where he received alienation from God.

The Jewish experience with God preceded the Christian experience, and neither is possible until manifested by God and revealed. Paul regarded the Christian experience as much more and better than his walk with God in Judaism. Likewise, Wesley spoke of his life with God as so much better and different from his walk with God in Christianity. Apparently Christianity had lost the power of regeneration which it had in Paul's day, because Wesley was devout in all tenets of the faith, and yet with twelve years as a Christian minister, Wesley had never experienced an encounter with God.

It seems right to conclude that God communes today in the New Covenant with individuals the same as in the Moses covenant with the congregation. The communion is in the presence of God, which was in the Garden for Adam and Eve, and in the Holy Place for the congregation of Israel, and in the heart for the heirs of the New Covenant.

Since the spirit of God dwells in the heart of His children, then God dwells in the heart. Since the Holy Ground (or Holy Place) is where God is, then that is the place of all communion. Moses put the mercy seat in the Holy Place, and this Holy Room he put in the Holy Tabernacle. The spirit of God then entered the Holy Room and dwelt with the people.

Moses did not put the bush where he met God in the Tabernacle; rather, he put the God who spoke to him in the Tabernacle where God continued to commune. This same God left the temple (forsook His people) but took up residence again in a place prepared by Jesus (a man like Moses). That place is in the heart, where faith operates the door (access).

People may have all kinds of divine experience. They may visit God in many places where He has been or is supposed to be, but Jesus brings God to man. God first visited the Jews, and then He visited the Gentiles. Religion seeks to bring people to visit God. Faith may open the door for God to visit *forever*.

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