

A Glimpse At The Family Of God

Insight into what we were, what we are, and what w

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About a month ago, Nancy and I rented a movie called, *The Family Man*. It was a kind of *It's a Wonderful Life* in reverse.

Nicolas Cage played a very successful president of an investment firm on Wall Street who had everything he could possibly want in life. He was perfectly content with his existence. He had power and absolute control of his own destiny and life around him.

Early on in the film, he intervenes in the convenience store dispute that turns pretty ugly when one of the people involved in the dispute produces a gun. Well, he mediates the situation and settles it down.

And then he thinks this poor fellow who produced the gun does not know what he is really doing, so he needs help. So he decides he is going to counsel this guy and tells him he needs to go and get some help. The man tells him, what makes him think that he is so capable of counseling somebody else. He is as needy as everyone else.

Well, Cage tells him that is not true. He has got everything one could possibly want. He needs nothing. The other man suddenly calls him by name and says, "You think so?" He said, "You just brought on yourself what's going to happen to you from this point on."

Well, he goes to bed that night in his million-dollar New York penthouse, pleased as punch with his world around him that he controls.

He wakes up in the morning in a house in the suburbs with a wife, two children, and a dog slobbering all over his face. He goes berserk. He charges out of the house, goes back to the city to his to his Park Avenue apartment and his office. And he gets thrown out of both places because nobody knows who he is.

Then this mysterious man all of a sudden pulls up in front of the office building driving Cage's Ferrari. He tells him that he is getting a glimpse. He will not tell him anything else. He says, "What's this all about?" He will not tell him anything. The only thing he does is he hands him a child's tricycle bell, and he will not even tell him what to do with it.

So now he finds himself married to the girl that he had left 13 years before to pursue riches in Paris. And he is given the opportunity to see what his life would have been like if he had pursued relationships within a family instead of relationships with money. What would have happened if he followed his love for another instead of his love for things.

He goes from wearing \$2,000 Armani suits to off-the-rack. He goes from being *the* power broker in one of the major investment firms on Wall Street, to running a small retail tire business that he had taken over for his father-in-law after his heart attack. He goes from a jet-setting Manhattanite to a father and husband and a Wednesday night bowler with the boys. He goes from being in charge and having it all, to being interdependent on others. And he hates it. He feels like everything he really wanted in life has been ripped away from him.

He starts out feeling the tremendous pain of having everything that he thought he really wanted and seeing somebody else have it. He was living a rather comfortable life by our standards, but it still was not what he wanted. He did not have the finer things in life that he thought he should have.

Slowly he learns, though, that he has got to take care of his family. He tries to buy things that his family cannot afford. He realizes that he has an obligation to take care of that family. He still does not like it, but he is gradually sensing his feeling for obligation.

And all along the way, somehow he starts to get a fulfillment that he never had before, so he decides having a family is really a good thing. But he still wants the other stuff. He is sitting on the fence. He has got to have the wealth and the power he once had.

So he comes up with this scheme. He can keep the family, but he works himself back into the investment firm where he was on Wall Street before so he can work his way back up the ladder, and become in charge and in control again, so he can have the best of both worlds. This is a good plan to him.

He tells his wife what he has done, and she gets really upset because he is telling her they are moving back to New York, to the city. She tells them that they made sacrifices purposely to keep the kids out of New York to raise them in an environment where they could grow up properly.

But she tells him that what is really important is that if this is what he really needs to fulfill his life, then that is what they will do, because they are a family, and the family has to stay together no matter what.

It is at this point that he finally realizes what it is all about, that the needs of the family come before his own personal needs and desires. At this point he finally becomes the family man, and he must do whatever it takes to preserve and protect his family, even if it means giving up his personal ambitions for the rest of his life. It is at this point that he understands he must turn over control of the rest of his life to the needs of the family. And it is at this point, at this moment, that he hears the cha-ching of the tricycle bell, and he realizes he understands what it is all about, and he has got to go back.

He becomes frantic. He finds the man who gave him the bell, and pleads with him, saying, "I can't go back. Here is where I belong. This is my family." But the man tells him, "You must remember this was only a glimpse."

He wakes up and he finds himself back in his swank apartment the next morning from when this whole thing actually started. He is back to the master of his own universe, but now it has become a small universe, a pitiful universe that he wants no part of anymore.

He feverishly searches out the woman that he had left to satisfy his own desires 13 years before, and when he finds her, she too has never married. She tells him she has gotten over it when he left her, and now she is as successful as he is. She is a partner in an international law firm. And she is in

control of her own destiny. At this point she is right in the middle of moving to Europe to open up their European office.

She is leaving and he has got to stop her. He knows what life will be like with them, and without her and their family, it will never be complete. It has got to stop. She has got to understand his vision of their future has become so real to him that he shares it with her as if it is already happened. He tells her that she is his wife and they have two small children that he calls by name. They have a dog and a house in the suburbs. She works part time doing legal work for people who cannot afford it. They are willing to do whatever it takes to preserve and protect their family. He tells her she may think that he is nuts because this is not what she sees as reality right now, but he has had a glimpse of what should have been theirs, and he knows now beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is what they must do for the rest of their lives, and they need to do whatever it takes to spend that time together taking care of their family, no matter what personal sacrifice it takes for each of them.

He convinces her, and the movie ends with them sitting, sharing a meal and their vision of their future with their family.

You may think that I have gone to great lengths to give you a complete movie review of a rather mediocre film. But brethren, I just gave you what these seven days are all about in God's holy days.

This is our glimpse of the Family of God and our part in it. These holy days are the glimpse of the life that God has destined for all of us to be part of His Family. He has called us out of this world that we live in now, to this place where He has put His name so that we can share our glimpse—His glimpse—of our future.

Turn with me to Leviticus 23. Of course, we were there yesterday but I think we need to go back because this is an important starting point for these days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:39-44 'Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a

sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." So Moses declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.

We see here this is a memorial of something that has already happened, but as we have learned over the years, this is much more than a memorial of something that has already happened. It is a look into the future. It is our glimpse of God's plan for all of mankind. It is His holy day plan for bringing people into His Family, the Family that we will become preservers and protectors of.

Do you really understand what it means to be part of Israel? Let us take a look at the words children in Israel that were in this particular passage.

The word children is translated from the Hebrew word *bain*, from *Strong's* #1121, and it literally means, "A son; as in a builder of the family name." And Israel comes from the Hebrew *Ish rael* from #3478 in *Strong's*, and it means, "He will rule as God." It comes from two Hebrew [root] words that literally mean, "He will have the power of a Prince of the Almighty."

Do you comprehend what that means, brethren? That is incredible!

Brethren, we are here today because we are receiving a glimpse, and carrying out our part of responsibilities before God, so that we can be builders of the Family name, and to learn to be rulers with the princely power of the Father.

I would like us to take a minute to look at someone who learned the lesson of what it meant to be a family man. I want to look at someone who saw the

vision of what he was to become clearly enough that it changed his life and caused him to be dedicated to that vision for the rest of his life and to eternity.

Turn with me to Genesis 32. This, of course, is Jacob, who later became Israel. He started out his life as Jacob the Supplanter. He had been a spoiled mama's boy who saw the value in a sweetheart deal and took advantage of another's weakness by buying his brother's birthright because he desired the physical things that it would bring. He plotted with his mother to deceive his father so he could take the blessing that belonged to another. But just as this man in the movie saw things merely as justifiable, so did Jacob.

But now it has changed. In Genesis 32 we see another Jacob; someone who has been through it all. He had gone through a pretty intense training period, and he was converted as he came back.

We see a man who has now changed.

Genesis 32:1-2 So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Jacob had a clear vision at this point. He saw that God had placed His divine protection around him, just like we should see as we go back into this world in the next week, that God is placing His divine protection around us.

And in verse 3 it says,

Genesis 32:3-8 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob says: 'I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.''" Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the

flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."

And then Jacob gave a prayer before God, which I thought was one of the most wonderful prayers I have ever read. And Jacob said,

Genesis 32:9-12 Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

This is a different man than left his parents some 20-odd years before. He now clearly saw the vision of a family that he was to become. He knew it was his responsibility to protect the family and obey God. He divided the group into two bands so that if Esau wanted vengeance, he was going to sacrifice himself for his family, so the family would still be safe. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the rest of the family because he knew God's promise would happen and he was doing what he had to do to get it done.

And now in all humility he tells God he knows what he has been, and what he is, and that he is the least of God's people, unworthy of God's mercies. He is not worthy of having a glimpse of the truth of the Family of God and his part in it, but he has grabbed on to that vision. He will not let go. He reminds God of the promise that He made of his descendants being as the sand of the sea, and he will do his part because he knows that God is moving forward, and He will do His.

Genesis 32:13 So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother.

It shows us here by the phrase, “which came into his hand,” that Jacob also knew that all the blessings—the physical blessings—that he had received while he was with Laban were gifts from God not just to please him in his physical condition, but to use to make restitution and to give to others. That is what all these gifts were all about as far as he saw from now on.

According to Adam Clarke's commentary, the gifts detailed in verses 14 and 15 that he sent to Esau,

A princely present; and such as was sufficient to be to have compensated Esau for any kind of temporal loss that he might have sustained in being deprived of his birthright and blessing. The 30 milch camels were particularly valuable, for milch camels among the Arabs constitute a principal part of their riches.

And down in verse 18, he even refers to himself as Esau's servant.

Brethren, Jacob had had a glimpse of what he was to become his future, and now he saw his duty before God, and he was willing to do whatever it would take to make sure that cherished blessing of an understanding of the truth and the mercies of God were preserved.

Beginning down in verse 24 comes the topper. We all know how he wrestled all that night and the One who he wrestled with was actually Jesus Christ. We also know he would not give up. He kept on wrestling, and he would not give up the struggle. [And then] Christ gave him at that point an even sharper vision into what he was to become when He said to him,

Genesis 32:28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for [as a prince] you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Brethren, when I was preparing this sermon I had great doubts about using Jacob as my example, the family man. We all know too well what kind of family he had physically. We all know how dysfunctional (to use a current word) he was. I thought of a couple of things that his family had gone through. They were fighting with each other all the time. There were all these problems. And they were so hardheaded and could not get along.

But Nancy pointed out to me when I was preparing this, she said, “What better man to use?” He was what we real Christians are. He saw the glimpse of God that gave him his future, and it motivated him to turn around and walk the other way. He was still saddled with a human nature that broke out at times. It was warring within him, and it broke out at times in sin. But he tenaciously battled it and would not give up. He would not quit because he had seen the glimpse of his future, and he knew what God's promise was, and he knew it was going to come to fulfillment.

You know, as an aside, maybe even as we study the Scriptures, God is teaching us something in our glimpse about how we judge other people. Because we do not always have all the facts as God sees them. Even here, we only have a small glimpse of what Jacob, who later became Israel, was really like. We only see him in his failings in leading his physical family and judge him harshly, as we often do with each other. We do not see the day-to-day details of his struggle to build and hold on to that glimpse ahead of God's future.

There are only a few things that we do know for sure about this man, and what we do know is that this man grabbed onto a vision and would not let go, and God said, “You no longer are Jacob the supplanter, but rather Israel who will have the power of the prince of the Almighty.”

You know that even at the point of his death, as it says in Hebrews 11:21, he saw clearly from his glimpse that God had given him to whom the blessings of the physical and spiritual family were to go; and he blessed them. Israel had a glimpse of the Family of God, and it was his motivation for the rest of his life.

Brethren, in the story that I started out with, it ended with a kind of, “And everybody lived happily ever after” ending.

Our lives are not a movie. Our lives are real. And our glimpse of God's future is real. But as the apostle Paul said, part of that glimpse is the insight into what we are, what we were, and what we are to become.

God has given us the opportunity to come out of this what we are, to share with each other at this Feast what we are to become. And James says in chapter 5, verse 7, you do not have to turn there, I will just read it to you.

James 5:7-9 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

So here we are, this week, to share the food that God has given us; to share our lives; to share our vision of the future, and to know what we shall become, that we must be convicted of that glimpse through the holy days that we are celebrating.

You know, as I look around this room, I see people that are infirmed physically; we are all infirmed mentally, spiritually. We have got a lot of growing to do.

Yesterday was the fifth anniversary of my father's death. And also, at 11:52 yesterday morning, my grandson was born. It is the next generation of Schindlers, Jacob Lawrence Schindler. And as I look at him, I see what my father gave to me that I gave to my son that he gives to his son, and that is the family name. We all need that to build on, and that is what he is going to do.

And as I look around this room today, I see everyone that is going to be builders of that Family name that God has blessed with gifts to use to grow and to become like Him.

It is a struggle, brethren! We are going to fight for the rest of our lives to get through it, but as Mr. Armstrong was always so fond of saying, he read the end of the Book, and we win!

John said,

I John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.