

The Hidden Man (Part 1)

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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The title of our study today and the next Sabbath or two is, “The Hidden Man.” The Bible uses the word “hidden” or “hiding” so many times, it deserves our attention. Like many terms in Scripture, there is a positive as well as a negative aspect, and we should distinguish between them. There is a way in which we should aspire to be a “hidden” person and a way in which we should not.

The perfect pair, Adam and his wife sinned against God and one of their first reactions was to run and hide when God came to the Garden of Eden. Adam that day was a “hidden man,” but in a sense that we don't want to follow. The Bible says, “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Genesis 2:8. They felt shame, sorrow, nakedness and guilt, the consequences of their transgression and so they were uncomfortable with being in the presence of a holy God.

The book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, has an amazing connection with the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Adam and Eve's reaction to God's coming will be duplicated by all transgressors when God comes back to this earth again, as Revelation tells us. The roots of Revelation 6 come from Genesis 3. The Bible says, “Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” Revelation 6:14-17. The rocks of the last day won't be able to hide the unrighteous any more than the trees of the garden did when God came after Adam and his wife had sinned. We don't want to be a “hidden person” in that sense, the sense of Adam and Eve hiding in the garden nor the last day sinners trying to find refuge in the rocks.

Let's focus on the positive sense in which we want to be a “hidden” man, a “hidden” woman or child. Today we'll look at Christ as being a “hidden” Person, both in the literal, physical sense and in the spiritual sense, as that phrase reflects His character of meekness and humility. Later we'll look at how we can be “hidden” in the spiritual sense, growing into a character of humility as our Lord, and sheltered in a very real physical sense in the days of tribulation yet to come on this earth.

Being a Christian means that we follow Jesus as our Example. I love this text in psalms which says, "Righteousness will go before Him, and shall make His footsteps our pathway." Psalm 85:13. That's what it's all about, isn't it? Making His "footsteps our pathway." We look at His life and through the Spirit copy the Pattern that has been given us. Was Christ a "hidden" Person? Here's what the Bible says, "Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior!" Isaiah 45:15. Notice that it specifically references this God Who hides Himself as being the Savior. In what way and for what purpose did our Savior "hide" Himself?

Before sin, mankind enjoyed open communion with the God of glory. Each day holy angels and the Creator God came to teach Adam and his wife the things of life and to fellowship with them. The occasions of these visits were prized and treasured. Adam and the woman looked forward to them with great anticipation and delight. But then the ugly intruder of sin entered the picture and changed everything. The curtain of separation came down and God was no longer able to meet man in the same way as He had before.

What does the Scripture reveal concerning the nature of our awesome God? We're told that His glory is brighter than the sun, a continuously exploding hydrogen bomb so powerful that though we are 93 million miles away it still gives the earth sufficient warmth and energy to sustain life. Wrote Paul in the letter to the Hebrews, "Our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:29. The divine nature is so dynamic that it is, as it were, an atomic bomb in reverse, with matter being brought into existence by His divine energy as He speaks and things become. "For He spoke and it was." Psalm 33:9.

Even the glory of one angel was sufficient to cause the guards at Christ's tomb to collapse in a heap. The morning of His resurrection an angel descended and rolled away the stone in front of the tomb. What does the Bible tell us about this angel? "His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men." Matthew 28:3, 4. If the glory of one angel could do that, how much more the glory of the omnipotent God!

In the Psalms we find the intriguing phrase, "The LORD God is a sun and shield." Psalm 84:11. It's not a long verse, but it has a lot in it, and it bears directly on our study today. It uses the figure of speech called a metaphor, which is a "stated comparison." The text boldly states, not that God is like a sun or like a shield (that would be an "implied comparison," a simile), but that He is sun and shield. It is most significant that the two words "sun" and "shield" appear together in that text. This can't be overemphasized. In our present mortal state, that combination is a practical necessity; our very lives depend on it.

He is a "sun" and "shield." His glorious being is brighter than the brightness of the sun, which makes sense since He made the sun and all the stars. His glory outshines them all, and we could not exist in the presence of such glory. Because we now live in sinful mortality, not able to withstand the glory of His presence, He must also be "Shield" for us. He is a "sun" (that's expressive of the glory of His divine being) and "shield." He must hide His glory; He must shield us from its brightness in our present condition so that we can exist in His presence. What a meaningful statement Isaiah made when He said, "Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior!"

Think about this for a moment. Follow this line of reasoning with me. When did sin enter? At the Garden of Eden, of course. That's when the man and woman transgressed by eating the forbidden fruit. That's when they felt the shame of guilt and the embarrassment of nakedness. When did God visit them, as recorded in Genesis 3? It was after they had sinned, right? Already the effects of sin, in shame and guilt had become known. Consider this then: we need to recognize that this "hiding," this process of "shielding" God's glory when sinful man is in His presence began right after transgression. His full glory was not evident when He came at the cool of the day to speak to Adam and the woman, for they would have been consumed by the brightness of His glory.

It must be then, that in Genesis 3 He was already the God, the Savior, Who "hid Himself." Right? Here then is a divine paradox! Consider this: both Adam and God "hid" themselves that day. Adam "hid himself" in fear and shame. That's what we're told in Genesis 3. God "hid Himself" also when He came to the garden. We know that because at that point sinful man could not exist in the presence of God's glory. Thus God "hid Himself" in pity and love. Adam "hid himself" as an escape. God "hid Himself" as an act of redemption.

At various times throughout the Old Testament period God revealed Himself to mankind, but always it was in the form of the "sun" that was "shielded." He was always the Savior Who "hid Himself." When the Lord spoke to Abraham He "hid" Himself and the fullness of His glory was not seen. When He encouraged Gideon His glory was "shielded." When He appeared to Manoah, Isaiah, Daniel and all the other saints it was in a veiled form. From Genesis 3 and onward, He became the Savior Who "hides Himself."

We are given a graphic picture of this twice in the book of Exodus, once as it was illustrated by God Himself in an interchange between Himself and Moses, and secondly as illustrated in the person of Moses after meeting with God in the holy mount. Moses made a bold request. "And he said, 'Please, show me Your glory.' Then He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.' And the LORD said, 'Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.'" Exodus 33:18-23. For Moses that day, God was sun and shield.

Moses spent quite a bit of time with God in the mount, forty days and forty nights two different times; the first time ended sadly with the golden calf incident when Moses broke the tables of the Testimony, demonstrating the broken covenant, and the second period of forty days and forty nights transpired when he went up again with a new set of stone tablets on which God re-wrote the Ten Commandments. We're told that something very interesting took place when Moses descended the mount that second time. What was it?

"Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid

to come near him. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him." Exodus 34:29, 30, 33-35.

Do you see the parallel between Moses and Jesus in this story? Moses stands as a "type," or illustration of Christ. We have Bible precedent for making this comparison, because Moses himself prophesied, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear." Deuteronomy 18:15. When Moses came down from the mount, holding the Testimony, the Ten Commandments, he was prefiguring the coming of Christ to this earth, with the law written in His heart. Jesus came down to declare the will of God to humanity. The glory that shone on Moses' face, in a dim and imperfect way illustrated the glory and majesty of Christ. Just as Moses' face shone so brightly that the people were "afraid to come near him," if Jesus had come in the fullness of His glory and splendor, we wouldn't be able to come near Him. In fact, if Jesus had come in the fullness of His glory we would have been consumed.

So, just as Moses had to put a "veil" on his face to shield the glory that shone from his countenance, Jesus "veiled" His deity and sheltered mankind from the radiance of His majesty. Remember again the Psalm, "The LORD God is a sun and shield." Moses' shining face was the "sun," and the veil he wore was the "shield." That veil that Moses placed on his face represents the incarnation of Christ, the miracle of God becoming man and setting aside His deity for the period of His sojourn on earth. Moses, wearing the "mask" of that veil, was a "hidden man," typifying the coming Redeemer. What an amazing illustration of the Christ's becoming the God-Man!

This "hiding" of God's glory in Jesus reached its fullness as the Savior was born into human flesh. "Mary did you know?" asks the songwriter, that you held the God of the universe in your arms. We could ask the same question of all who crossed His path, Did you know that the Creator God taught from the grassy hillsides, slept in fisherman's boat and wrote forgiveness in the dust of the temple floor? The One Who "spoke and it was" walked the paths of Palestine! The One Who formed Adam was born in a stable! It's not easy for us, nor was it for them, to grasp the reality that the humble Nazarene was indeed the God of the Universe, the Maker of heaven and earth. He was indeed the awesome God, but He had "hidden" Himself within the folds of humanity.

A few weeks ago, while on a walk, I happened to pass by the facade of a tire store, Express Tire in Vista. As I approached, I could see that two gentlemen were engaged in conversation outside on the sidewalk. As I came closer and passed by, only a few feet from them, I looked up and saw that one of the men was our congressman, Darrell Issa. He didn't look the same way that I had been used to seeing him on TV, dressed sharply in a dark suit and tie, leading out in a congressional hearing or some other official function. That's not the way he looked as I saw him at the Express Tire store! He was in shorts and sported a casual shirt. But there was no mistaking who he was, once our eyes met. I would have liked to talk with him, but because he was so wrapped up in conversation with the other gentleman, I gave a polite nod of recognition and a short wave of my hand as I walked by, and he responded with a quiet smile.

Someone of importance that I walked right by and almost missed because he didn't look the same as he does in his official capacity. He had "hidden" himself by his casual dress and unassuming appearance, plus the unexpectedness of seeing him, one who makes laws in Washington, that day in Vista at a tire store. In a similar but vastly more important way Jesus, the eternal and omnipotent God is the Savior Who has "hidden Himself" through the Incarnation, a process which began in Eden when sin entered.

This process of "hiding" culminated at the cross. Notice this beautiful passage which describes the giving of the law upon Mt. Sinai in glory and power, but also touches on the incredible way in which Jesus lowered Himself to become our Savior. Here's a text in which the beauty of both the law and the gospel are perfectly meshed. "God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, and there was His power hidden." Habakkuk 3:3, 4. A most interesting text!

What is this text talking about? The prophet is speaking of the giving of the God's holy law from Mt. Sinai, no doubt recalling Moses' description of this event given centuries before. "Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said: 'The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of His saints; From His right hand came a fiery law for them.'" Deuteronomy 33:1, 2.

The prophet Habakkuk refers to this event, which, by the way, was the greatest demonstration of God's splendor and majesty since creation, and has not been equaled since. He manifested Himself this way to impress on the people's minds the majesty and glory of His holy law. But Habakkuk adds an additional thought, the very intriguing phrase that, "He had rays flashing from His hand, and there was His power hidden." The King James says, "there was the hiding of His power."

What is this referring to? Have in your mind the pierced hands of Jesus, with beams of light and grace shining through the openings in His hands which He received as He was crucified. "Rays flashing from His hand;" rays of truth and love revealed through the piercings of Christ's hands. Notice how the beauty of the "law" and the "gospel" are combined in this picture! It is the pierced hand that holds forth the divine law. His law is truth and endures forever. We have made a miserable attempt to live up to it, but because of His great sacrifice, which caused His hands to be pierced, there is still hope for lost sinners like you and me.

The pierced hands are the "hiding of His power." What a profound statement! Satan aspired to achieve the power of God's throne through selfish ambition and pride. His mental framework was channeled toward the "love of power." Jesus, on the other hand, stooped and lowered Himself from the throne of the universe all the way to the cross. By this unbelievable act of self-denial, we catch a glimpse of God's amazing love. His approach was the "power of love." The cross, the ultimate expression of agape love and humility is the "hiding of His power."

Christ indeed is the "Hidden Man." After His resurrection He spent 40 days with them until He was taken from their sight by the cloud. He became the "Hidden Man" in another sense as He departed to heaven, there to appear on our behalf. "After He said these things, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight." Acts 1:9, NIV. But the day is coming when He will be hidden no longer. The day is coming soon when the sky will split and our Savior will be revealed. That day His glory will shine forth. What a day that will be!