

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 348
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 2:16-18
Topic: A Prophetic Church
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Correspondence can be sent to John Edmiston at johned@aibi.ph
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Acts 2:16-18 MKJV But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy.

The Holy Spirit is not just a fuel additive; rather the Holy Spirit is essential for the proper ethical development of the conscience of the Church into a godly prophetic community.

Pentecost is a fulfillment of the prophesy of Joel and Old Testament prophets were "enforcers of the Covenant" to borrow a term from Gordon Fee. So when Joel says "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" he was not merely stating that "they will have ecstatic experiences", rather he is also saying that "they will become morally insightful and have well developed consciences that accurately hear and understand the will of God."

When people claim to be prophets, yet are morally willful and spiritually insensate, they are false prophets. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10) and a true prophet will walk in the teachings and testimony of Jesus and thus "sound like the Sermon On The Mount".

That said prophecy is not to be lightly dismissed, the New Testament church is clearly prophetic right from the start and continues to be so even in some of the worst churches such as Corinth. For a full article on the nature of NT prophecy go to: <http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/prophecy.htm>

Lets go back to the statement in Revelation 19:10 "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Thus witnessing to Jesus and being a living testimony to Him is central to New Testament prophecy. This testimony is to have profound moral impact:

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 MKJV (24) But if all prophesy, and some unbeliever or one not instructed comes, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all. (25) And so the secrets of his heart become revealed. And so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

Thus the result of NT prophecy is to be a powerful testimony to Christ leading to a repentant world and the growth of the Church. Which is why Paul was so keen for Christians to have the gift of prophecy (see 1 Corinthians 14). Thus the focus of

prophecy in the average Christian church should not be Iraq, the Middle East or the USA – but rather Christ, the human heart and repentance and faith.

Now prophecy is not the same as preaching, the Pharisees preached, but they did not prophesy. The prophetic gift flows from directly hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit and in speaking His Words with His timing. (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-16) It is not just expounding knowledge, it is speaking from God and with words given by God.

1 Corinthians 2:13 MKJV (13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The phrase “but which the Holy Spirit teaches” implies that there is a learning process and as anyone who has sincerely tried to hear from God will tell you, that learning process takes many years for most people. We are in the process of redemption and our minds and consciences are in the process of renewal and we “see through a glass darkly” and know imperfectly (1 Corinthians 13:12). Thus while Christians can claim to have heard from the Holy Spirit they cannot claim perfect knowledge. The days of writing Scripture are over.

As our conscience is renewed we begin to hear from God more clearly and can prophecy with greater power, accuracy and anointing. The Spirit-filled conscience is essential to the true understanding of Scripture (which will otherwise appear as folly) and is the guide that allows us to “walk in the Spirit” and be “led by the Spirit”. (1 Corinthians 2:14,15; Galatians 5:16-18,25)

Joel's prophecy indicates that all Christians will be able to receive wisdom from God without any need for a human mediator, they shall hear directly from God through prophecy, dreams and visions: “I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy.”

The apostle John also says that the Holy Spirit enables Christians to receive wisdom and knowledge directly without a human teacher:

1 John 2:20 MKJV But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

1 John 2:27 MKJV But the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true and no lie, and as He has taught you, abide in Him.

Thus the gift of the Holy Spirit should enable believers to hear from God and receive the testimony of Jesus and live in repentance and faith, walking in the Spirit and being led by the Spirit via His deep anointing in our renewed and redeemed minds so that we “have the mind of Christ” and understand the things that He has prepared for those that believe. (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

Coming back to my opening statement: “The Holy Spirit is not just a fuel additive” – we have to go beyond the view that the Holy Spirit is desirable because He will enable us to have “an international ministry” or some such thing. The Holy Spirit has three primary tasks – to love us into maturity (Romans 5:5, Ephesians 3:14-21); to reveal godly wisdom to us (1 Corinthians 2:9-16), and to empower us to be witnesses to Jesus (Acts 1:8) and in the end the Holy Spirit should build us into wise, loving empowered communities of grace who hear directly from God and have Christ-like consciences.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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