

PORTALS, PRAYER SHIELDS AND OTHER STORIES

Centering on Christ

The Holy Spirit constantly works in our lives to center our thinking and experience on the person of Jesus. The books of Ephesians and Colossians present Christ as the One who created all and principalities and powers for Himself and who is above them all as well as above all angels, experiences, elemental forces and presents the completeness of our lives in Him.

I love how the Holy Spirit fulfills His mandate to reveal Jesus (John 16:13-15). He is the one who keeps centering us upon Jesus. That is why I wonder why so many strange things are being accepted in the body of Christ. We have the ministry of the Holy Spirit and we have the Scriptures. Why can we not keep the main thing, the main thing?

We want to talk about five stories that many in the charismatic movement seem to have accepted. They are the stories of “spiritual portals”, “prayer shields”, “generational blood line cleansing”, “the new season” and “the next or new or higher level of spirituality”. The purpose of this article is to briefly explain these things and to expose the lack of any New Testament foundation for them. Our belief is that these things are not centered in Christ but rather take away from who He is, what He has done on the cross and who we are in Him.

My purpose is not to attack the people who may minister these things. I have been ministered to and have ministered with some who do so. We do not want to be like the pharisees of Jesus day who received His condemnation for straining out a tiny gnat of theological correctness while swallowing a whole camel of legalism (Matthew 23:24)! However, these issues are not small. They are central to the doctrine of Christ! They deserve careful examination. Things cannot be accepted simply because of who is teaching them!

I have talked to some about the prayer shield teaching and asked them what they thought. One leader said he viewed it as nonsense but that “authors have got to write new stuff to sell books!” In another context where I was seeking to confront a situation of gross manipulation and lies, I was told to simply let it go or my “ministry opportunities” would be endangered. What is happening here? Anything goes so long as the people keep coming and the books keep selling? If that is true, then money is god!

A/ SPIRITUAL PORTALS

The following definition is taken from a John Paul Jackson article posted on his website (www.streamsministries.com) and republished on the February 11th Elijah List, (we quote Jackson but most of those associated with the prophetic movement including Rick Joyner have embraced this teaching) “A heavenly portal is a spherical opening of light that offers divine protection by which angels and heavenly beings can come and go, without demonic interference. God has designed portals to begin in the third Heaven, travel through the second Heaven and open upon Earth.”

This article goes on to reference the story of Jacob's ladder and other scriptures about doors and gates, mostly from the Old Testament, to provide some justification for this teaching. We need to remind ourselves that one of the foundation principles for the interpretation of scripture is that the Old Covenant is the shadow of the New and that the New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Old- “the New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed”! The fulfillment of all the scriptures about

doors, gates and spiritual access is Jesus. His declaration in John 10 rings down through history, “I am the door”! His declaration of John 14:6 rings, if possible, even louder, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Without Him there is no going, without Him there is no knowing and without Him there is no living! Jesus is the door!

And the other door is the human heart! He comes this world through us. We are His body. We are His temple. We are His ambassadors! We carry and release His presence, His words, His works into our world. Jacob called the place that God revealed Himself to him “Bethel, the house of God”. In the New Covenant, we are “Bethel, the house of God.” We are the place of revelation! Why would we run around the earth looking for special physical places? That is a weird twist on the temple mentality!

Was Paul at a “portal” when Jesus appeared to him while he was awaiting trial in jail? Was he at a “portal” when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road? Those are two places I would like to find? Not!

What happened to “And I am with you always?” What happened to “Christ in you the hope of glory”?

We seem to be taking new age experiences and putting a twist on them to repackage them for Christian consumption.

B/ PRAYER SHIELDS

A summary of this teaching would be that the more people you have praying for you the more protected you will be from the attacks of the devil. The teaching can become very technical with presentation of the need for first, second and third tiers of intercessors in order to prevent you being overcome by satanic attack on your life and ministry. Of course the basics of this teaching comes from C. Peter Wagner's book, “Prayer Shield”, which is a part of his Spiritual Warfare series.

For example, some time ago my daughter was involved in a 24/7 week of worship. The instruction that she received prior to the week beginning was that she needed at least three intercessors in three levels and that at least two levels needed to be praying for her during her times of worship and that one level needed to be praying for her for at least three hours after each of her worship sessions to prevent spiritual back lash. Why did she need at least two levels praying for her during her worship set? The second level was to pray for the first level so that they were not overcome by the onslaught of the enemy! Of course this begs the question of what would happen if both levels were overcome but it is simply too easy to expose this as silliness.

My understanding and experience is that “in Him” we are “far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” (Ephesians 1:21). My “protection” does not increase with the numbers praying for me but rather is founded in my faith in who I am in Christ and who He is in me.

Such teaching as “prayer shields” creates fear rather than faith and then places faith in the wrong place. My faith is not in the number of people praying for me! This teaching creates the possibility of blame shifting. The project failed or I was overcome because my intercessors were not faithful, did not discern properly or maybe were simply asleep at the wrong time! I cannot imagine Paul making such a statement!

At different times people have asked us how we deal with the tremendous spiritual oppression that we must experience as we travel. These friends speak of their discernments of the dark powers and of their difficulties sleeping in some areas of the world. We are well aware of different spiritual atmospheres but we sleep just fine where ever we go. All this talk of the dark powers may sound very spiritual but you are not spiritual if you allow the dark powers to keep you from sleeping. You are merely being stupid. Your protection is not your prayer shields nor your own use of spiritual technology. Your protection is that you are in Christ! Your protection is the finished work of Christ.

The powers of darkness are under your feet. That is the whole point of Psalm 91. It is your choice whether you walk on their heads or they walk on yours. Is Hebrews 2:14 & 15 true for you or not? Where is your faith? That is why Paul told Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith” (I Timothy 6:12). That is why Paul told the Corinthians that the battle was in the mind where we are “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”. Who are you in Christ? Where are you in Christ? Who is Christ in you? Is the work of Christ a finished work or not? That is the battle! What do you believe?

All this talk about prayer shields and the dreadful things that can happen to you if you do not have your prayer shields in place creates fear and fear is faith in the power of the powers of darkness. This is glorifying the devil. The truth is that satan only has power when we believe that he has power! The power of the Kingdom of Light is faith working through love. The power of the kingdom of darkness is fear working through ignorance- ignorance of who we are and where we are in Christ and what Christ has accomplished by His death and resurrection.

When Jesus was talking about satan coming to Him in John 14 verse 30, His concern was not that He would be overcome by spiritual attack. His statement was that satan “has nothing in Me”. That is the issue! If we are compromised from within, then we are subject to attack from without. Do we still believe the scriptures- “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (I Jphn 4:4)! If not, why not?

One of my favorite Smith Wigglesworth stories is about the time he awoke from sleep to find satan standing at the foot of his bed. Smith's response was to say, “Oh, it's only you!” before rolling over and going back to sleep.

Another variation on the prayer shield story are those emails you sometimes get asking you to pray for the little boy who has cancer. They tell you to forward the mail so that they can get “one million people praying” so that the boy can be healed.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 9:29 that your prayers are answered “according to your faith”. James 5:16 tells us that “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” The determining factors are faith, fervency and righteousness, not numbers! One saint with God is a majority!

C/ GENERATIONAL BLOOD LINE CLEANSING

This so called ministry involves the practitioner “discerning” sins of the past generations in your family line. The belief is that these sins create curses that allow evil spirits to influence your life and circumstances for ill. This is not to say that you have evil spirits living in you but rather that they inhabit the air around you and create problems for you. What a wonderful way to give glory and place to the

devil!

The one who discerns the past evils (back to ten generations) then breaks those curses and sets you free from demonic interference to enjoy the blessings of God. Wow!

In asking one who practices this ministry (for \$100 per hour) for New Testament scriptures which support this, I received every reference to familiar spirits in the whole Bible. Not quite what I was asking for! What is the link between familiar spirits and the sins of past generations? The link is made due to the Hebrew root which could make “familiar” read “family”. So now we have “family spirits”. What does that have to do with someone's ability to “cleanse my blood lines”? Nothing. Whether they are familiar or family spirits makes no difference to what God has done in Christ in setting me free from all of the spiritual inheritance of Adam!

Let us deal with some practical problems first. If we are discerning things that have happened ten generations back what objective verification do we have about those things? Most of us have absolutely none. For example a friend who looks a little darker than the normal anglo saxon was told that nine generations back she had ancestors in Spain that were involved in atrocities of war and for that reason she had trouble with spirits of depression and death. Why would anyone accept such stories? My friend did not. In so far as she knew none of her ancestors had ever been to Spain to say nothing of coming from there. Neither was she troubled by spirits of depression and death. She brushed that off as charismatic witchcraft. My comment to others who had received similar ministry, but who did not brush it aside and who were much worse off for it, is that demonic spirits had been channeled into them rather than away from them! They needed and received some real deliverance.

For some, the proof of the authenticity of generational blood line cleansing ministry becomes the reactions (“spiritual manifestations”) of the person receiving the ministry. Here, unfortunately, we run into post modern mindsets where “experience is truth and emotion is proof”. To this mindset subjective experiences have more validity than scripture and the intensity of the experience provides the ultimate proof. However strong the manifestations may be, we are told by the Master that we are to judge the tree by its fruit not by how hard it shakes (Matthew 7:20)! And fruit is not just “feeling better”. It is Christlike character, miracles and new birth. It is the ability to take Jesus to people and disciple them into making other disciples. It is the ability to live a life of sacrificial service.

There is reality in confessing the sins of the fathers! Nehemiah did it (Nehemiah 9) but that was for sins known, not merely “discerned”. It was repentance based in shared, historically verifiable reality!

However this whole thing also raises huge theological problems. Whatever scriptures there are about generational sin, you can find many about the New Covenant that cancel them out. Listen to Jeremiah 31:29- 34!

In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children' teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the

LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Paul declares in II Corinthians 5:17- 18 ;

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

If it depends upon some sort of spiritual technology for me to be free from the sins of my fathers then the practitioner of that technology will have to go all the way back to Adam. Thankfully that has already been done in Christ! He took the old Adam, all the sin and all the curse to the grave and left it there. That is the gospel- “old things have passed away... all things have become new”(II Corinthians 5:17)! That is the revelation of Romans chapters 5 and 6. Verses 17 and 18 of chapter 5 are powerful! Each word explodes with new creation power!

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Therefore as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men resulting in justification of life.

Anything that takes away from the finished work of Christ on the cross is “blasphemy against the atonement” (to quote a phrase used frequently by Oswald Chambers). Our freedom is not based in Christ plus something else but only in Christ!

This teaching of generational blood line cleansing may be of some comfort to a culture which is fixated upon blame shifting, victim mentalities and refusal to take responsibility for its own choices. Blame it on the ancestors even back to the tenth generation! What a relief!

This teaching may also be of some comfort to those who are always looking for someone to minister to them and who cannot take responsibility for their own walk in Christ.

This teaching may also be useful for ministers looking for another reason to be needed and for another line of income from the body of Christ.

However, such thinking is foreign to the apostle Paul whose solution to spiritual problems was to encourage the saints to pray for a revelation of all that they are in Christ and all that Christ is in them. Take responsibility for your own spiritual life! Take the action recommended by Paul! Pray Ephesians 1: 15- 23 and Ephesians 3:14- 21 until that revelation comes to you (and it will not cost you a single cent!).

D/ THE NEW SEASON STORY

One of the standard lines of prophetic ministry is some variation of “It is a new season”. Isaiah's words about God “doing a new thing” (Isiah 43:18- 19) are repeated over and over again.

A variation on this word is that there is a “new generation” in the earth that will really, really be

radical for Jesus and really, really do the stuff. A new season, a new generation, a new move, a new release of the Spirit, a new wave is coming! Yeah God! And I have also used those lines in ministry. They are powerful but they have lost their power because they are misapplied theologically and practically.

The theological problem is that God recognizes only two seasons. They are the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace. Isaiah's word heralded the New Covenant of grace! Paul makes the contrast in the book to the Galatians and tells us we cannot look back and we cannot mix the two.

The second theological problem with this new generation story is that God recognizes only two generations. They are the generation of Adam and the generation of the New Man in Christ. That is the new generation! That is what it always has been and always will be.

To declare the new season of Grace and the new Generation of Christ is powerful! That is the gospel. That message is new in each generation, in each season, in each epoch of world history. It always has been true and always will be true. However, the people hearing the message are not THE new Generation. They are only part of that new Generation. Their season is not THE new season. Their season is a part of that new season if they enter into it. Yes, the message is powerful but it becomes stale if wrongly applied by being limited.

The practical problem with the wrong application of this message is that it ignores the declaration of Paul (II Corinthians 6:2) that "Now is the day of salvation". The new season, next wave thing creates a mindset where people stop taking responsibility for their world and wait for the next wave. In John 4:35, Jesus said that the fields are "white for harvest"! The disciples saw barren ground and believed the harvest to be four months away. Jesus saw white fields. It was not a season problem but a vision problem. The problem was with the vision of the laborers! Where laborers will go into the harvest fields they will have a harvest. When the laborers go from conference to conference and hear words about the next season they will do nothing and they will reap nothing! And ultimately they will become cynical about anything coming except another conference!

And all the time some are talking about the next wave of revival coming, there are people in the earth who are experiencing personal revival and harvest. They are not going to conferences about revival. They are going to the next village, the next valley, the next neighborhood, the next gang member, and they are healing the sick, casting out the demons and planting new churches. They are doing it! They are experiencing it.

Another practical problem with this teaching about the "new, radical generation" is that it creates arrogance in those that hear the message. We are the new generation! We are the reformation! We are the next move of God! It creates arrogance and destroys obedience. They wait for the wave rather than going out in obedience and releasing one. The gospel is simple and always has been. It is not difficult to understand. You need humility and faith to do it! Just do it!

Religion will worship the past and will declare the future but does not want to move in faith and

obedience now. Religion does not want to take the risks of actually living in the now.

That is why the Christian world spends twice as much money on conferences about missions than it spends on actually doing missions? Don't believe that is true? It is the truth and there are many more disturbing statistics on this page. Check it out!

(http://www.thechurchofliberty.com/articles/scary_stats.htm)

E/ THE HIGHER LEVELS STORY

The talk about generational blood line cleansing, prayer shields, spiritual portals, new seasons and new generations all leads those involved in these things to have a sense of spirituality which is higher than those that are not involved in their super spiritual worlds. They have spiritual terminologies, technologies and revelations which others do not have. You have all heard someone dismissed as “not being spiritual enough” for a certain task or position. We make ourselves feel better by creating a group that we belong to and then kicking others out of it!

We have gotten used to seeing body guards around the spiritual super stars and we have accepted all sorts of hierarchies in the body of Christ. Some of that is simple practical reality. Wherever Paul went, he did most of the talking. He had seen the most! He had done the most! But that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about an acceptance of a world view which promotes and celebrates different levels of spiritual attainment.

Jesus stood against this satanic world view when he commanded us to call no man father since we are all brothers (Matthew 23:8- 11). Peter tells us we are all royal priests (I Peter 2:5 & 9). Paul tells us we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28) His example was to work with his own hands in order to minister to his needs and the needs of his team so that he could demonstrate it was better to give than to receive (Acts 20:34- 35)! And almost every scripture about submitting to authority is within the context of being “submissive to one another” (I Peter 5:5) Against this backdrop of teaching and example where does the higher levels thing come from?

All religious systems, all new age and occult systems have different levels that you can advance through based upon your efforts and attainments. We have seventh degree witches and thirty-second degree masons. We have priests, bishops, cardinals and then the pope. We have charismatics using the five fold ministry as stepping stones. At first there were “just”pastors and evangelists but then came the prophets and soon everyone wanted to be a prophet and then came the apostles and soon everyone wanted to be an apostle! But soon apostle was not good enough so then came different sorts of apostles from vertical to horizontal to ambassadorial. Where is that in the bible? And, of course apostle was never good enough for some so they called themselves “bishop”. I am waiting for the first charismatic cardinals and for the fight over who will be the first charismatic pope!

What happened to “servant of all”? What happened to “slave of Christ”? What happened to “brothers and sisters in Christ”? What happened to “bond servant”?

What happened to serving the least? What happened to simple, sacrificial life style? What happened to wanting to be like Jesus?

CONCLUSION

If our focus is on going to the lost, the least and the hurting we will move in the faith and grace of the Lord Jesus. We will know that we are in Christ and that He is in us and that He is with us always.

If our focus is on the next conference and having something new to say to the people who have been to the last conference so that they will come to the next conference so that I will get another honorarium so that I will sell more books, then I have to have something new to say. I have to have a new revelation. I have to have a new spiritual experience. We are catering to a new age spirituality which seeks spiritual experiences without obedience, which seeks spiritual superiority rather than a servant life style and which seeks to escape responsibility rather than take the risks of faith.

We tend to speak of methodologies, techniques and lists of thing to do to be blessed. These can only be called “spiritual technologies”. Things that we believe we can do to control our environment. This impulse comes from two sources. The first is our western, scientific mindset which believes that with the right technique we can control everything. We love the sense of control! The second source is the new age which has extended the technology of control to the spiritual realm and we copy their techniques. There is only one technique in the Kingdom of God and that is sacrificial obedience.

We give people conferences to go to rather than leading them into harvest fields. We make them consumers of religious information and religious experiences rather than fishers of men. But Jesus is still the Lord of the Harvest. Maybe we would have a lot less problems with heresy if we simply did what the Master calls us to do and went to where the Master is and did some real fishing? Did some real harvesting? Did some real work?

Where is the Master?

He is not in the hospitality suite!

Try looking in field 25, section 40 of Matthew!

