

Prophecy, Conviction, and Covenants

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Could we ask some questions about prophesies and proclamations that see natural disasters as the judgment of God on a people or a nation? Could we suggest this testifies to a deficient understanding of the Old Covenant and does not embrace the new? Why deficient? Even in the Old Covenant, if God could have found only ten righteous, He would not have destroyed Sodom. Besides, did not He finish with the “disaster as judgment thing” with the flood, and promised to never do that again. When this kind of judgment is in the context of the New Covenant, do we not have total undermining of the New Covenant? Let us look at Jesus presenting the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8- 11 as an example of how the New Covenant can be subverted by an Old Covenant mindsets and values.

Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit comes, “He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” We can be clear about what this means, as Jesus gave a concise commentary on each point in verses nine, ten, and eleven. If we are going to prophesy by the Holy Spirit, then we need to be convicted by the conviction Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would bring—the convictions of the New Covenant.

“THE SIN OF NOT BELIEVING IN ME” - John 16:9

Much talk about the conviction of sin goes like this: “The Holy Spirit is convicting me to stop lying, smoking, or whatever.” Well, these are but a few of a long list of potential sins that one could commit. Jesus does not say that the Holy Spirit would convict us of “sins” (plural) but of “sin,” (singular). He plainly states that the one sin under consideration is the sin of not believing in Him.

A guilty, legalistic, Old Covenant mindset is focused on the “sins of the hand.” That is, sins that can be listed, counted, seen, and judged. To the religious and legalistic mind, freedom from these sins is attained through knowledge, will power, accountability, and the various steps of self-help programs or, if you prefer, a progression of “principles.”¹ However, it does not take the work of the Holy Spirit to convict me of the sins of my hand. My spouse can do that, my conscience can do that, and certainly the accuser of the brethren can do that as well. Why does religion and legalism focus on the sins of the hand? Because will power is unable to change the heart. To focus on sins of the heart destroys the purvey of religion.

Legalism is like trying to change the fruit on a tree by taking off the rotten fruit and wiring on the good. No matter how skilled you are, no matter how similar to the real fruit, the stuff you attach has no life. It will rot and the tree will keep growing rotten fruit.

The power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to take my eyes off my own efforts to be righteous, to take me away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and to focus my attention on the root of all the sins of the hand which is, the sin of the heart. The primal sin of the heart is the sin of not believing in, and relying upon, the finished work of Jesus on the cross as the solution to the sin problem. Through the work of Jesus, we have become the “righteousness of God in Christ.”

Human pride of performance, desire for independence, and the fear of losing control focus on dealing with sins rather than seeing the true sin of not trusting the finished work of Christ. Religious humanity thinks that preaching the law brings holiness, while preaching grace leads to sinning! Unless you are preaching grace to the point that religious people accuse you of giving license to sin, as they did of Paul, you are not preaching grace. It takes the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the revelation of grace that is available only by relying upon Jesus.

“OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BECAUSE I GO TO MY FATHER AND YOU SEE ME NO MORE” - John 16:10

Old Covenant mindsets understand righteousness as the good and right things that I do, and that He will reward me when I do them. This is the mentality of a wage earner rather than a son. A worker/slave wants his daily wage for his daily effort. A son receives by inheritance based upon the wealth of his Father, rather than his own efforts.

This wage/slave mentality is so engrained that it takes the sovereign power of God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, to

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Most churches run on “legalism light” –legalism disguised as principles, values, and culture.

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convince us that righteousness is not what we do, but who Jesus is. Without seeing Jesus by the Holy Spirit, for who He is, we will readily fall into the lie that my works are my righteousness. Righteousness is the Righteous One that I embrace by faith. Righteousness is not the works of my hands.

Think of the language that we have all used, “The Holy Spirit is convicting me that I need to pray more or _____ (fill in the blank).” All you need to do in any charismatic/evangelical group to make most feel guilty is ask about people's quiet time and the need for prayer. All one needs to do to be honoured in these same environments is to parade how much one prays or fasts.

All religious systems work by creating false guilt. For a price,² the guilt is then alleviated by religious professionals thus making them the mediators between God and humanity. The systems create performance expectations around attendance at meetings, giving of finances, time in the prayer rooms, doing evangelism, washing in the Ganges, attending Mecca . . . (Fill in the duty of your choice). Some of these things may be good things in themselves, but when they become behaviours that bring recognition, rewards, and approbation, they become problems.

Most Protestants can see this in the Catholic system, but have difficulty seeing it in their own. The point is that we can do all the good things for all the wrong reasons. We can do all those things simply to impress others and to make ourselves feel better, or maybe just less guilty. For example, people are brought up feeling it is the right thing to attend religious services. They feel guilty if they do not. They feel good if they do. The leaders ascribe that good feeling to the presence of the Deity in the building (the corporate anointing) but it is simply conditioning around false guilt and its alleviation.

Only the Holy Spirit can show us Jesus and break the power of the tree of knowledge of good and evil over our hearts. What is the power of that tree? Knowing good and evil, and doing the right thing, leaves me in control. It leaves me as god in my own little world. That is one reason we are so quick to judge. Every self-righteous person has their own little list of sins and righteous acts by which they judge themselves and others. We tend to adjust our list to the things that we can do by nature or nurture and we judge others accordingly. That makes us feel less guilty, more righteous, and more in control.

It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to give me a vision of the Righteous One that breaks my pride, my self-sufficiency, my lust for control, and which allows me to simply trust Him to be my righteousness. Once in His embrace, all acts of service to others and all disciplines of knowing Him are simply expressions of that embrace. We will actually rejoice in the fact that nothing we can do can make Him love us more, and nothing we can do can make Him love us less. All that we receive from Him, we receive as sons by inheritance. Nothing that we receive is the wage of a slave.

“OF JUDGMENT BECAUSE THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD IS JUDGED” - John 16:11

In the legalistic mindset we are judged, the guilty are judged, and sinners are judged. The accuser does a great job of making sure we feel judged. That is his job description. He does not need the help of the Holy Spirit to judge, condemn, and spread guilt.

The reason the Holy Spirit convicts the world of judgement is because Satan has been judged! It takes the power of God by the Holy Spirit to convince us, to cause us to firmly believe, that Satan has been judged and that therefore, mankind is free!

Here is the crux of the matter: What do we believe was “finished” on the cross? Do we believe Colossians 2:14-15 and Hebrews 2:14-15? Was the power of the writing, the commandment against us, broken? Was the power of death and fear broken? Has God judged humanity in Christ and committed all judgement to the Son?

In many charismatic systems, it is evident that we do not believe these verses. Many charismatic organizations have

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Spiritual, emotional, money.

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accepted new age principles whereby sin and the powers of darkness are dealt with through various “spiritual techniques” such as “generational blood line cleansing.”³ In this technique, the practitioner claims to be able to discern your family tree back many generations. From this alleged revelation, he or she then tells you what sins of your forefathers you need to confess in order for you to be truly free. If confessing generational sins is where freedom lies, you would need to go all the way back to Adam! (That’s a lot of confessing!) But wait! Someone has already gone all the way back to Adam and dealt with sin, and His name is Jesus! Do you have a new inheritance in Christ, or do you not? Is the man of sin dead because of the cross or not?

This trust in spiritual techniques in regard to our personal freedom transfers across to the big picture of how people think about natural disasters. One of the main draws of all spiritual techniques is the feeling that one is in control, that one is controlling God. In the macro that translates to: “Do good and God blesses the nation. Do bad things, and God judges the nation.” God does not need to do that. That is called the moral law of reaping and sowing. It is active at all times, like the law of gravity.

We desperately need to receive revelation from the Holy Spirit that the man of sin and our accuser has been judged. God has committed all judgement to the Son, and God has judged all in the Son. Therefore, by faith and grace, we are free to love, to serve, and to be in the Father with the Son.

Thus, in the Son we see natural disasters and man-made disasters as birth pangs of the Kingdom. They are opportunities to bring the Kingdom to others by serving in Jesus’ name, not opportunities to condemn them for their sins.

Let us renew our minds as to the convicting and convincing work of the Holy Spirit, and move in that spirit toward the nations. He will convict the world of the one sin, of the Righteous One, and of the judgement that has already taken place!

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If you want to have a ministry in the charismatic world, just invent another technique to work out personal freedom, get the blessing of God, release the favour of God, find your destiny in God, secure your personal wealth, etc., and you will have a “ministry.”