

BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE – Part XII

His Revelatory Word (c)



For quite some time now we have looked at the principles that God employs when He desires to build up a group of people to be a house fit for His dwelling. These last few months we have looked at the aspect of God's revelatory word within the confines of Him dwelling in His own house. A house should be a place of safety and security. It is a place where you are comfortable to come home to. It's not so much what furniture you can or cannot afford, but the atmosphere of peace and prosperity that you leave in it. I have seen people make homes out of tents, caves, million dollar mansions as well as

everything in between. With some experience I feel confident to say that neither the modesty nor opulence of a dwelling was what made it special, but rather whether or not the Spirit of the Lord felt comfortable in it. This is what made it a place you enjoyed going to. Such is also the case with churches. Many people desire to go to a church for its outward appearances. And while cleanliness and new flooring is always nice, I have walked into the most humble of church structures where the glory and presence of God overwhelmed you. I don't mean this to be a statistical or scientific study, but my own meager experience has shown me that in those places where God's revelatory word was prophesied, preached and received in faith, love and humility were the places where I personally felt the presence of God the strongest. This might sound strange, but I have been in places where people hit the floor like pancakes under the glory of God, yet felt no overwhelming presence of God. On the other hand I have been in places where such occurrences were rare, yet God was in residence in an awe-inspiring manner. The only constant observation that I have to explain this phenomena, is that the revelatory word was widely accepted in one place and minimally accepted, even contained in those places where I did not feel His presence.

You could accurately say that 'feeling' God's presence has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not He is in residence, and I would absolutely agree with you from a theological standpoint. Again, I speak from

personal observations only. I even noticed that this experience was not limited to active churches. I can recount many occasions of walking into centuries-old mainline churches only to sense a wellspring of prophetic and revelatory promises of God that had gone forth hundreds of years before, even though the congregation had either vacated the structure or their numbers were reduced to a mere fraction of what it had been. I've often wondered whether this can explain the 'new building' problem that happens in some churches. Probably about five to ten times over the last 25 years I have had a leader or congregant complain about the fact that when they moved into their new church building the presence of God wasn't the same as in their old church building. Sometimes this can be explained by the people's comfort level in a new building; in other words, they're just not used to it. Once they get accustomed to it, things return to normal for them. I have quite often wondered whether or not this has to do with the sowing of the word of the Lord into their new structure. Just to be clear, I am not saying that the building is the church. The church is the people---the souls dedicated to Jesus---but that's my point. Could it be that some folks just sow more word into their own personal lives than others, thereby making it easier for them to be flexible so that they can worship and pray anywhere? For those of us who have to be able to worship and pray anywhere, this is a habit. But for people that stay in the same church for lifetimes, it must become one.

How does this happen? Well for one thing, if you're used to reading the word of the Lord anywhere, that helps. Next step is to be able to pray anywhere. Finally, if you're used to hearing God in the most unlikely of places, you are flexible enough to be able to worship anywhere the Lord tells you to. Paul and Silas worshiped in jail, so much so that the place shook (Acts 16:24-26). Daniel prayed as he did even though it meant death (Daniel 6:1-10). Esther received an answer from fasting prayer, even though that answer meant approaching the king in violation of the law of the land (Esther 4:16). Some would say that this is too spiritual of an exercise and you might be looked at as a nut case. While I certainly am not espousing 'acting like a nut,' it might help to demystify the prophetic word of the Lord by defining some aspects of it. Anytime God speaks, whether we are reading His word or listening to Him, it carries prophetic purpose for us. What I mean by this is that it is always revelatory and most often carries a promise with it. What I mean by revelatory is that it reveals something we did not know and can, quite often, have future ramifications for us, as well as present or future promises. This is why some churches define the prophetic word as revelatory and others define it as the promises of God, and still others recognize both of these aspects of God's word. But there is an aspect that we often forget and that is what it means for God (as always, anything that means something for God always has an impact on us). Remember that over the last few months as we studied this topic we looked at God's eternal purposes concerning His word, and

that is what we will try to look at now as we also try to define different aspects of His word; whether past, present or in the future. Remember that Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus Christ (the word made flesh in John 1) is said to be the same yesterday, today and forever. So what aspect of God's word would carry such weight for God as to affect our yesterdays, our to-days and our forever's? It is the creative aspect of God's word that does so. Whether God is speaking His word to make something out of nothing to create the world (which is also one very literal translation of the Hebrew word *davar*--see the archive for February 2004) or speaking a promise to your heart, He is creating a new reality for us all, which falls in line with His eternal being and nature as well as His eternal plans and purposes.

Some make this aspect to the word of God an ethereal mist-like supernatural event. Frankly, God's purpose is far more grounded with a working-man's function in mind. We just don't do God or His word justice when we spiritualize everything He does as if it has no bearing on our more mundane, day-to-day events. In the Old Testament we see that God's word, in the form of the Holy Spirit, came upon the craftsmen in the temple to do their building work (Exodus 28:3; 1 Chronicles 22). We also see that God blessed the sons of Issachar with a prophetic gift to know the times and the seasons (1 Chronicles 7:1-5 & 12:32). Obviously this had more practical purposes than just to gaze up at the stars. To have this knowledge would be to understand planting, harvesting, and war-time trends of

the neighboring countries, including other administrative duties to be performed, which would certainly have bearing on their own survival. Because the Old Testament makes it clear that it was a generational or familial gift (1 Chronicles 4:14, 22, 23; 5:19-22), I don't believe these prophetic blessings for craftsmanship and wisdom in administration stopped with just the Old Testament era. In America many of our great doctors and scientists, as well as those knowledgeable with new technologies are from Jewish descent. Many of the promises given to the Jews were also given to us as Christians. So it would stand to reason that you would also see these gifts evident and passed onto many from Christian homes. All this flowed from God's revelatory and prophetic word, and oddly enough, there is one aspect of this in the New Testament that is not just given to believers, but to all mankind. We will look at this in detail shortly. But before we do, how can we ever forget God's word to Elisha that preceded the evident miracles for the purification of water (2 Kings 2:19-22); the multiplication of food (2 Kings 4:42-44); and the unlikely discovery of a farming, as well as workman's tool of the day; namely, an axe head, by having it float in the water to which it was lost (2 Kings 6:1-7). You might say this is a bit over the top for God to 'waste' His word on such a miracle. Well, that's my point. It doesn't seem to be a waste for God to help a workman, who believes Jehovah for his daily expenses, to find a borrowed tool. From all Scriptural evidence it seems that because it was borrowed this man would have had to make restitution for this item, and obviously from

the text, he did not have the ability to do so. So he asked God, by way of the prophet, for God's word to deliver him.

For those of you who work with your hands, as well as many of you who have more white-collar jobs, this should be a great comfort to know that Jesus will bless your work and help you succeed, all because of His word. Again, this is not limited to the Old Testament saints. We see Jesus performing many signs and wonders as well as the disciples who were left after He went up to heaven. (See the four Gospels and the Book of Acts). Yet it doesn't stop with them. The epistles have an amazing promise in four distinct areas concerning God's word and its ability to undertake for us in our lives, especially in creative gifts. The first area that we see is one we often take for granted. In Revelation 19: 10 the Apostle John, caught up in the moment of having the Revelation of Jesus Christ downloaded, as it were, to him in transporting vision form, made a faux pas and went to bow before an angel. This angel's response is telling. He says this to John, "See thou do it not; I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." For those of us who have had an experience of saving faith because of our belief in Jesus Christ to deliver us on so many levels, we have a testimony or a word of revelation to mankind concerning Jesus that is the very heart and spirit of prophecy. It puts us on a level in which we are 'fellow servants' of God with the angels. It would seem from a perusal of the book of

Revelation that this testimony also gives us the ability to prophesy and/or preach to people and nations, even rulers and kings (Revelation 10:8-11; see also 12:11). It would also seem that the power to overcome the enemy and his hordes also comes from the blood of the Lamb as well as the word of our testimony in Jesus. It is a powerful thing to experience persecution and misunderstanding, in some countries to the point of death. So it would stand to reason that Jesus would give us something more powerful than even death itself. This testimony is prophetic in that it saves us in the here and now, as well as in our future and our eternity.

While this area of the prophetic word is given to all believers, and all believers experience this in some way or another, the next two areas are not always received by every believer. They can be and are offered to them. But for one reason or another they are either ignored or minimized. The first area is seen in 1 Corinthians 12-14. These are termed the gifts of the Holy Spirit and are spiritual gifts given to believers in Jesus Christ, who also receive the Holy Spirit as God and the Father as God. They did not die with the first century apostles as some would claim, for there is no Scriptural evidence that God stopped His word and limited His promises to the first century saints only. In 1 Corinthians 12 nine gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed. Of those nine, five are directly associated with a word; namely, a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, different tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy. Theologically, you could

accurately state that all nine extend from the word, Jesus, made flesh because the Holy Spirit reveals the things of heaven, the word and Jesus to us (John 14; 15:26 & 27; 16:7-16). So without Jesus, or the word made flesh, the Holy Spirit would not have descended from heaven and would not have given us these gifts. In chapter 14, Paul goes into the gift of prophecy and tongues a little further. He makes the statement that prophecy is given to edify, exhort and comfort the believers (1 Corinthians 14:3). In chapter 12 we also see the gift of faith, miracles and/or signs, healings and the discernment of spirits. In some of the above gifts it is obvious that creative miracles can take place. In others the enablement to understand what kind of spiritual forces you are dealing with is given. While going through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, all of this is possible because of the word of God. But there is one aspect to the three chapters that I mentioned that we sometimes forget as the most creative and powerful of the areas of the prophetic and revelatory word of God and that is seen in chapter 13. It is the LOVE chapter. We sometimes forget that it was through the word of God that God's love for us and His creation became known. Without the revelatory word of God, His love for us never would have been revealed. For me, this chapter is the best poetry ever written by the hand of God to, for and through mankind. The Old English in the KJV translates the word love as charity and is far more poetic, but the modern English in the NIV reads this way: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a

resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13)

I have always felt if every religion the world over, including Christianity followed this chapter people could be spared, marriages saved and wars averted. Even though this is the greatest gift given to us from the revelatory word of God, there are two more groups of gifts directly associated with His revelatory word. The next one is more a gift of a leader given to the body of Christ. It is

seen in Ephesians 4. It is here that we see listed five gifts given as individuals to a specific congregation or Christians in a specific region or country. The five gifts listed are apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist. All five live, move and exist because of the revelatory word of God. Of course those individuals given as prophets would move more frequently in the prophetic word than the other four. While that might be a common practice, it is not a rule written in stone, since all five must function positively in God’s revelatory word. What has always struck me concerning these five individuals given as gifts is that God created these people from the womb to bless a specific group of people. In our modern world, they should be the best example of Christ to those people. If you will review Ephesians 4 you will see that they have specific mandates to grow and mature the body of Christ to become like Jesus and thus extend His hand to the rest of the world. That in and of itself is a creative miracle! How comforting to know that God prepared a group of individuals to help us grow and mature into everything that God promised us we could be through His revelatory word!

The last group of gifts is really not given to believers only, but to the people of the world. I realize that not every Christian will agree with this. Some place this next group of gifts as redundant or the same as other gifts seen in the New Testament. But there are those Christians that believe that these are a separate category of gifts altogether. I belong to this group. This category of gifts

has been loosely termed as motivational gifts. Some have called them gifts of grace. Their primary purpose is to motivate and help others and they are given as a result of the grace of God. They are seen in Romans 12. There are seven of them. There is good evidence in both camps for placing these gifts as given solely to believers and good evidence for believing that they can be given to anyone. I’m not stuck in the mud in either case, but I find it intriguing that Paul is discussing the backsliding of Israel concerning their unbelief. He says plainly in Romans 11:29 that even in their unbelief that the gifts and call of God are irrevocable. In other words, just because they no longer believe, their gifts and call are not taken away. In light of this fact Paul exhorts these believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices and not to conform to the pattern of the world. As I read this, these believers are not exactly seasoned believers. They are probably new to the faith, and as such, able to easily backslide. He talks to them of gifts given by God according to the grace afforded each person. They are not the same as we see in either 1 Corinthians 12 or Ephesians 4. These gifts have a more worldly value. One of them is prophetic, but the rest could easily be seen in a self-help conference (serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership and mercy). As you read them you can think of many people, well known and little known, who are not necessarily Christians, but have these gifts in a profound way. Even the prophetic gift is mentioned as prophesying according to one’s faith. How many of us have seen these guru-type motivational speakers that literally

‘prophesy’ or preach their particular message in such a passionate way that you wonder what they would be like if they actually believed in Jesus and followed the Bible’s teaching. Their gift of ‘faithful’ gab is undeniable. Where did they get it from? Well, I believe that it was a gift given to them from the womb or as children, according to God’s grace. They may have believed in Jesus at some point or not, but the gifts and call of God are not taken away from them. While the gift is no longer used in a pure and undefiled way, it is still with them. I think this is the reason for Paul’s exhortation to present ourselves as living sacrifices and also his other exhortations in the same chapter for love and honesty. Without such things these gifts can still be in operation, but they become polluted, no longer kept holy by the indwelling Holy Spirit. You may disagree with the concept of these gifts remaining in the hands of unbelievers, but that they are gifts given by the revelatory word of God to motivate and bless others is obvious and undeniable. God’s revelatory word desires to create a wholesome and healthy environment for us in every level of our lives.

I hope this month’s installment of God’s prophetic word has stretched your vision a bit to believe God in creative areas of His word that you may not have asked Him for before. Whether you desire to learn how to play an instrument, paint a picture or solve a construction or technology dilemma that you’re experiencing, the answer is only a prayer away from the word of God. Ask and believe for big things. After all, we have a

very BIG God. Log on next month for more.....

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