

The Holy Spirit and Holy Scripture

Did Jesus promise “revelations” would continue?

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, **he will guide you into all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and **he will shew you things to come**.” Jesus to His Disciple/Apostles, John 16:12-13, KJV, Emphasis added.

The New Apostolic Reformation (i.e., NAR), a charismatic movement within evangelicalism’s “big tent,” believes that just as the Holy Spirit guides Christians into “all truth,” He also reveals new truths—i.e., “things to come.” In their belief, not only does the Spirit bear witness to the Bible He inspired (which He does, 1 Corinthians 2:6-15), but He also anoints contemporary apostle/prophets and apostlette/prophetesses to receive and reveal authoritative new revelations. These latter-day and latter-rain seers argue that Jesus’ promise to His disciples authorizes their reception of new revelations. (See above citation.)

Continuing Revelation

For instance, Sandi Freed tells her followers she believes “in anointed times and seasons.” Then after citing John 16:12, she comments that for “King’s Kids” engaging in spiritual warfare, “This is an amazing passage—it explains why we receive revelation at specific times.” [1] Again, another advocate of latter-day-latter-rain revelations tells readers,

Throughout the world millions recognize this present day as the consummation of the ages and God’s grand finale with latter rain truth. The Scriptures tell us that [John 16:13] the Spirit of Truth is promised as our heritage to guide us into all truth and to show us things to come. [2]

He then explains: “The Lord is standing at the door knocking with a personal invitation for profound fellowship and the unveiling of latter rain revelation.” [3] He tells followers that they must “soar with” the Holy Spirit so that He will give them revelations like the one the Spirit gave him; which revelation was, “Go deep in order to go high!” [4] But using John 16:12 to endorse reception of “new revelations” is not restricted to Charismatic Christians. Cults and other religions have hitchhiked on Jesus’ words to validate their extra-biblical revelations.

The Unification Church and Baha’i Faith

The Unification Church thinks that Jesus pre-authorized the revelations received by Reverend Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012). As Rhodes states, “Unificationists believe that the words Jesus uttered [John 16:12] are presently being revealed through the Holy Spirit as ‘new truth,’ that is, through Moon’s revelations.” [5] Baha’ism, the 18th century offshoot of Mohammedanism, also believes Jesus’ words authenticate revelations given to their messianic founder Baha’u’llah (1817-1892), whose writings Baha’i believers revere as Scripture. [6] Were we to dig further, we would find that others use Jesus’ words to validate that their personal dreams, visions,

impressions, whispers and “Christ encounters” are “revelations” from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, they argue, continues to show us “things to come,” and has done so since Jesus’ ascension until the present day, and will continue until He comes again.

Question

From Jesus’ promise to His disciples, a question arises: Did the Lord teach that the Holy Spirit would continue to bring new revelations to Christian believers throughout the age; that is, the time period between His Resurrection/Ascension and Second Coming? As this article documents, the NAR uses Jesus’ words to authenticate that the Spirit continues to give new revelations to new apostle/prophets. So Bible believers need to understand what Jesus promised His original disciple/apostles in the past so that they will be able to discern what He does not promise believers in the present. The remainder of this writing will look at John’s narrative to see what Jesus told His disciples. We begin with the context.

Jesus’ Impending Death

In the Upper Room, Jesus and His disciple/apostles gathered together to celebrate the Passover Feast. But Jesus interrupted the celebration. First, He announced that one of the disciples would betray Him and to a few of the disciples, identified Judas as the betrayer (John 13:21, 26). Then Jesus continued to inform His disciples that He was about to be separated from them. “Where I am going, you cannot come,” He told them (John 13:33; Compare John 16:5, 16-22). The prospect of Jesus’ imminent departure grieved these grown men. Jesus was their leader. So Jesus attempted to comfort their troubled hearts (John 14:1 ff.). [7] Then abruptly ending the celebration, Jesus told His disciples, “Arise, let us go from here [from the Upper Room]” (John 14:31, NASB).

Words on the Way

After they exited the Upper Room and walked together, Jesus continued to teach His disciple/apostles. He told them that He was the Vine and they were the branches (John 15:1-11). He admonished them to love one another (John 15:12-17). He alerted them that the world would hate them just as it hated Him (John 15:18-16:4). Then in view of His imminent departure, He told the disciple/apostles that help was on the way. “When the Helper comes,” Jesus told His disciples, “whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, **He will bear witness of Me** [Greek, *martureo*], **and you will bear witness also** [Greek, *martureo*], *because you have been with Me from the beginning*” (Emphasis added, John 15:26-27, NASB. Jesus informed them about the Holy Spirit’s future convicting ministry to the world (“they”) generally (John 16:8-11), and His communicative ministry to them (“you”) especially (John 16:12-15). Again He affirmed His soon departure and separation from them (John 16:16-22). As they neared Gethsemane, Jesus ended His teaching by telling His disciple/apostles about praying to both the Father and Him during His absence (John 16:23-24, 26). He reminded the apostolic band of where He had come from and where He was going (John 16:27-29), He challenged them to faith (John 16:30-31), and He promised them His peace in coping with a hostile world. When they arrived at Gethsemane, He separated Himself from them to pray to His Father for them and the future church (John 17:1 ff.).

Note: John chapters fifteen thru sixteen records the ministry of Jesus to the eleven disciple/apostles as they walked together at night from the Upper Room to Gethsemane. As

they traversed between the two locations, Jesus shared intimate and personal words with the men who as He put it, had been with Him from “the beginning” (John 16:4; 15:27). During the course of His ministry, Jesus had spoken *many words* and done *many wonderful works*. (See John 21:25.) So Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would help them to remember and record all He said and did (John 14:26; John 2:22). He told them that the Holy Spirit would “guide” them “into all the truth” and “disclose” to them “what is to come” (John 16:13). To them (*not to us*) Jesus said:

“He [the Spirit of truth] will guide **you** into all the truth” (16:13a)

“He will disclose to **you** what is to come” (16:13b)

“He . . . shall disclose it to **you**.” (16:14)

“He . . . will disclose it to **you**.” (16:15) **[8]**

Jesus’ promises to His disciple/apostles then provide *no endorsement* for prophets and prophetesses now. As regarding the question of ongoing revelation, D.A. Carson comments that “under God *these disciples alone* mediate the transition in salvation-historical developments.” **[9]** This is what the narrative in John’s Gospel both teaches and implies. Any other understanding distorts Jesus’ words and imports a meaning foreign to John’s narrative.

Conclusion

During His absence, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come alongside the disciple/apostles to be His proxy-presence (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit would come to be with and in them and enable them to minister in exceptional ways (John 14:16; 16:12-15; 17:20; 20:22). Because He personally chose them, enabled them, and because they had been with Him from the beginning—something that is not true of today’s false apostle/prophets and apostlette/prophetesses—they would, as aided by the Holy Spirit, bear authentic witness to what Jesus both said and did for future generations (Matthew 10:1-5; John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; 20:30-31; 21:24-25). As John later wrote in his first letter:

“We [the apostolic “we”] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6, KJV; Compare 1 Corinthians 14:37.).

When apostolic authority is looked at through the promise Jesus made to His original disciples, the men He had personally called, one can only look askance at the contemporary self-proclaimed apostle/prophets who were not with the Lord 2,000 years ago at “the beginning” and ask, “Who do they think they are?” Jeremiah tells us who they are. In words equally applicable to the prophetic charlatans of our day, He recorded an authentic word from Yahweh:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord’” (Jeremiah 23:16, NASB).

The fact that contemporary evangelicals seek “fresh” revelations from God indicates that they no longer consider Holy Scripture to be sufficient and authoritative in matters of faith (Contra 2 Timothy 3:16.). This seeking is Gnostic and mystic. Harvie Conn (1933-1999), a former missionary in Korea, noted that the “central feature” of mystical religion is its “belief in special revelation outside the Bible.” [10] Yet if the Bible is no longer considered sufficient, the coming of “new revelations” raises the following conundrum. I repeat it.

If added revelations repeat what’s in the Bible, they are *unnecessary*. If new revelations contradict the Word of God, they are *heresy*. And if they supplement God’s Word, then the new revelations imply Scripture’s *insufficiency*, and about this Proverbs warns: “Add thou not unto his [God’s] words, lest he [God] reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6, KJV).

Almost twenty years ago the Van der Merwes observed this trend. They wrote:

By all appearances, Christians are knowingly or unknowingly dabbling in eastern mysticism and the spirit world. . . . Deeper spiritual understanding seems to be the motivation behind it all. The problem is that Christians are no longer satisfied with the literal Word of God. They are looking for experiences “beyond the sacred page”. The Bread of Heaven, according to their inner “sacred feelings”, has become stale and outmoded. [11]

Jesus told His disciple/apostles: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, **He will testify about Me**, and **you will testify** [about Me] **also**, because **you have been with Me from the beginning**” (Emphasis added, John 15:26-27, NASB).

All testimony was to be Christ centric; that is about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would coordinate their and His testimony to be about Him, period! That is what He said. Yet one inane “revelation” given to a contemporary apostle/prophet was, “Go deep in order to go high!” [12] What, it must be asked, does such a Gnostic-mystic revelation (and contemporary prophets and prophetesses utter many revelations just like this one) have to do with Jesus Christ? One must ask the same question about the Koran which though acknowledging Jesus was a prophet, denies He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16). And if revelations have nothing to do with or even deny Him, then assuredly, they are not of the Holy Spirit! (See 1 Corinthians 12:3.) And further, if revelations are not about Christ, then by implication they are antichrist, for the Scripture says:

“Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it was coming, and now it is already in the world” (1 John 4:3, NASB).

Endnotes

- [1] Sandie Freed, "Accessing Riches," *The Elijah List*, June 22, 2012 (<http://www.elijahlist.com/words/html/textonly-062212-Freed.html>).
- [2] Emphasis added, Paul Keith Davis, "Experiential Truth: 'Go Deep in Order to Go High!'", *The Elijah List*, August 3, 2012 (<http://www.elijahlist.com/words/html/textonly-080312-Davis.html>).
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Ron Rhodes, "The Unification Church," *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions: The Essential Guide to Their History, Their Doctrine, and Our Response* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001): 197.
- [6] Rhodes, "The Baha'i Faith," *The Challenge of the Cults*, 212-229.
- [7] Kruse remarks: "The long passage 13:31—16:33 constitutes Jesus' farewell discourse in which he prepared his disciples for life without him." See Colin G. Kruse, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003): 291.
- [8] Milne observes: "In view of subsequent claims to the Spirit's revelation through church tradition and the like it needs to be clearly recognized that this promise applies primarily and uniquely to the apostles. The 'you' of 14:26, as here at 16:13, refers to that special inspiration of the apostles which enabled the composition of the books of the New Testament, not the least this Gospel of John." See Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here is your King!* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993): 232.
- [9] D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991): 542. Milton Terry (1840-1914) affirms: "Thus it is evident from the Acts of the Apostles that what Jesus began to do and teach (Acts i, 1) was carried into completion by those whom he chose to be the authoritative expounders of his word." See Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (New York, NY: Eaton & Mains, 1890): 446.
- [10] Harvie M. Conn, *Contemporary World Theology: A Layman's Guidebook* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973): 94.
- [11] Travers and Jewel Van der Merwe, *Strange Fire: the Rise of Gnosticism in the Church* (Lafayette, IN: Discernment Ministries, 1995): 21. Available online: <http://discernment-ministries.org/StrangeFire.pdf>.
- [12] Davis, "Experiential Truth."