

Privilege and Responsibility of New Testament Believers

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There is some confusion within the body of Christ as to some of the prophecies of the OT. The prophets looked forward to a day when things would be different from their experience. By the Spirit they told of a day when the heart of stone that is within man would be replaced with an undivided heart, a heart of flesh. Ez 11:16-20 36:23-28 These prophecies speak of a return to the Promised Land, of being cleansed, of being filled with God's Spirit. That reminds us of Joel's prophecy 2:28-32. All of these prophecies blend both the first and second coming of Jesus. As the prophets looked forward in time, these two great mountain peaks of history looked like one. We know now they are at least two thousand years apart.

The return to Israel that the captives would experience was not far off. A greater fulfillment of that would be seen in 1948. And yet I believe there is a spiritual fulfillment of that in us. The Land of Promise is not heaven but as the author of Hebrews describes it, 'a place of rest'. Heb 12:22 We have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God. Not in the future but currently, right now as we speak.

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost quoted Joel 2 as being fulfilled, yet we do not see those end time events that he spoke of. What we do know is that upon conversion we become a citizen of the heavenly city. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. We are considered saints of the living God because of the blood of Jesus. We become priests unto God who intercede for the people. The heart of stone is changed to a heart of flesh. The peace of God can umpire what our hearts are contemplating. The Spirit of God resides in us. This part is not some future event. There is not a day coming when God will pour out his Spirit, He already has.

So what is different from the OT days and the New is that in the OT we were given men that had the anointing to be God's representative. Men like Moses and Joshua and David all were types of a man to come. Since the Spirit did not reside in the hearts of men, but came upon them temporarily for prophetic purposes only those men who had that anointing spoke God's words to the people. Today we have the Holy Spirit residing in us. We no longer need these Prophets to be the go between. Lk 16:16 1Tim 2:5 We are a kingdom of priests with Jesus as our head, the Great High Priest. Heb 10:19-22 The way that he made into the Holy of Holies demonstrates we no longer need a man for we have The Man Christ Jesus. He is the one mediator between God and man. We as priests unto God, now can draw near to God ourselves.

No wonder in 1Co 14 everyone wanted to display all the gifts --- they understood that once they were not the special priests of God but now were. They went a

bit overboard and it became a free for all – but today... 1 Cor 14:29-31 All can prophesy – the one speaking should stop when a revelation comes to another!? That is impossible to imagine in our churches today. “I’ve worked on this message all week. Don’t you dare interrupt it!” Yet that is exactly what Paul is saying. All the believers can have a word from the Lord and unlike tongues and interpretation that is limited to two or three there is no limit on how many can share a revelation. I long for the day that church goes all day because the saints walk with Jesus and have a mountain of revelation to share. If it is fresh and alive it is always delicious. We often hear something that was once exciting long ago but has lost its luster through time and dulling of our senses.

Get the picture? No special theologically trained Pastor that knows all the truth! Just people walking with Jesus who have revelation of the Holy Spirit and the confirmation of the Word. During the dark ages the Church was stifled by the educated clergy that could read the Latin Bible. The reformation was largely brought about by people getting the Scriptures in their own languages so they could read the word for themselves. The power slipped away from the clergy to the people where it was suppose to be all along. The problem is we always end up back with a man to lead us.

Just as the Children of Israel longed for a king, which broke the heart of God, we long for a man to lead us. It takes the responsibility off our back. 1Sam 8:6,7 It doesn’t take faith to worship visible man. But who is it that we are rejecting!? It is the Lord himself and his leadership. Can you see how the church has done the same thing? “Give us a Senior Pastor”. Every time I talk to men about plurality of elders they have some Scriptural excuse. The latest one I heard was the church in Antioch did not have elder rule. Who are the men listed in verse one of Acts 13? If these men were not equal leader elders what were they? The other excuse is plurality of elder rule churches do not become large. Since when is obedience to God’s explicit word, “assign elders in every city” voided by our standards of success?

So here is what I am saying, “It is not my responsibility to walk with God for you, to hear from God for you. I am called to lead as an equal elder within a group of elders. I am praying for those men to be brought forward. It is your responsibility to walk with God through out the week and from the overflow of that you will have something to share. We will have no king but king Jesus. Rey de Reyes! We all have a responsibility to come into his presence and live before him as priests unto God.” No wonder the early church was so powerful – everyone was expected to walk with God. Where did we get this picture of one man presenting the message from God? That is Old Testament style.

Numbers 27:15 God answered this prayer once and for all! May God appoint a man – “As you come to Jesus, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by

God and precious to him" over this community – "He is the head of the church" to go out and come in before them (Into the Tent of Meeting) - "There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" who will lead them out – "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." And bring them in – "whoever enters through me will be saved" so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd. "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." The Lord told Moses, "Take Joshua (Jesus)...a man in whom is the Spirit." "All the fullness of the godhead resides in him bodily."

But we would rather have the shadow than the reality. We have abdicated our privileges and responsibilities to a paid pulpiteer that we set up as king! Rise up church, and be what God intended you to be! Walk with Him daily. Share what God is showing you. Expect to hear from Him and watch for what He wants you to share.

Heb 8:5-10 Joshua was a shadow of Jesus. Now his laws are in our minds and hearts. We are HIS people. Oh what a travesty when we say Mr. So and So's church. It is Jesus' church and He is a jealous husband. Can you imagine a man calling your wife his? Watch out. It is sometimes merely a colloquialism but we should watch our words. They betray an attitude of idolatry.

It is a lot easier to sit in a pew and be an observer. If one is a part of a small group where there is accountability then Sunday may be a good time to go and hear from a gifted man, but certainly in a congregation of 50 or more we have more than one man that can share God's word. If not, it is a very unhealthy congregation. One man using his gifts during most of the service week after week and eventually we begin to look at that man as the head of the church regardless of what he preaches. By insisting on one main speaker we are saying he is so gifted that no one else compares. Isn't that our description of Jesus.

I know part of the problem is our expectation of quality. WE want the best. But fresh living encounters with Jesus from everyday people are the best, and maybe if we think a pro is better, we are missing the real substance.

I want to challenge us all again, to walk with Jesus, and as you do hang on to what He teaches you so it can live in your life but also so that you can share them with us. It can be a one minute praise report or a twenty minute testimony of victory. It may not be every week but I hope it is often. It is evidence that you are walking in relationship with Him.

Remember why the author of Hebrews says we gather? To exhort one another. Let's do that more and more.