**BMi SALTS COURSE**

**THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Supernatural Manifestations**

In this section we explore the relevance of supernatural manifestations as a part of Christian life and worship. Although God is a supernatural being there are schools of thought within Christendom that reject the idea of the supernatural in Christianity today. Such believe the supernatural was present in the first century as a means of establishing the church. When the canon of scripture was complete in approximately 70 AD, the need for such manifestation ceased, because the full revelation of God was to be found in the Scriptures.

As a Pentecostal fellowship we reject such an idea, choosing to believe that God has not changed the way He operates. Thus we are open to supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit and indeed believe to see them in our midst, whilst being aware that there is inherent danger should we choose to chase after such manifestations through ignorance or falsehood.

**Current Thinking**

Today the term Supernatural Manifestations is used more broadly to include deliverances, healings or any other...visible, practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the Spirits, powers, or false gods worshiped or feared by the members of a given people group”

 Peter Wagner “How to have a Healing Ministry’ 1988 p 152

 John Wimber “Power Evangelism” 1985 pp 29-32

**Christ’s Ministry**

Jesus confronted Satan at every turn in establishing the Kingdom of God. He also commissioned his disciples, the 70 (or 72) and all of His followers to extend His Kingdom through His authority. Luke 9:1 & 10:17 and Matthew 28:18-20

It is unfortunate that someone has commented, probably truly that, *“…most of the world’s people are power-orientated and respond to Christ most readily through power demonstrations”.*

In fact, wherever the Church is growing rapidly, manifestations are being witnessed in growing ­numbers. e.g. Asia, the Muslim World, South America, Eastern Europe, Oceania, etc.

**Historical**

Many missionaries over the last 200 years have ministered without power manifestations, seeing many hundreds of people come to the Lord. Their emphasis has been on the proclamation of the Word of God. It is also probably true that they would have seen more fruit if they had also embraced the power of God through supernatural manifestations.

The power of God releases people from satanic captivity, whilst the Word results in a manifestation of truth releasing people from erroneous thinking and bringing light to their minds through the Gospel.

Unfortunately, amongst people groups which worship other gods, converts may indicate a commitment to Christianity without giving up the pre-Christian commitment and spiritual practices. This indicates a lack of understanding of the sovereignty of God often in the manner in which the Gospel is proclaimed. This can result in a syncretistic faith that embraces a bit from here and a bit from there. We cannot assume that a demonstration of power alone will automatically turn people to Christ.

**Jesus’ Ministry**

He appealed for commitment to himself or the Father. His power manifestations were usually openers and His teaching was for those already committed. He made appeals for commitment. cf. Luke 5:1-11 and 5:27-28 after significant manifestation. Often he would practice healing and deliverance from demons soon after entering a new area (Luke 4, 5, 6) and commended His followers to do likewise. (Luke 9 & 10). However, Jesus refused to perform miracles for miracles’ sake, because He had more in mind than just a power demonstration and He did use a manifestation of power on occasion to demonstrate his authority.

He showed God’s love (John 14:9) and grace (Luke 17:1 1-19). He wanted to lead people to a commitment to God. cf. Matthew 12:41

**In the Disciples’ Ministry:**

The day of Pentecost was one of supernatural manifestation for the 3,000 people who were converted in Acts 2. Paul also used power and truth to lead to conversion. Acts 13:6-12.

**The Nature and Aims of the Manifestations**

In scripture, knowledge is grounded in relationship and experience, it is not simply philosophical and academic. The truth is personal and experiential not merely words and head knowledge. A power manifestation has little significance unless it is related to truth.

**Manifestations Work Together**

We need freedom from Satan to open our minds to truth 2 Corinthians 4:4 and commit ourselves to God. Jesus carefully related power and authority to witness, cf. Matt 28:19-20 Mark 16:15-18 & Acts 1:8.

He told His disciples to wait for power to witness (Luke 24:49 & Acts 1:4) just as He had done (Luke 3:21-22). John 4:4, Col. 2:15 and Eph 6:11-20 teach our authority over Satan. We need to learn how to utilise the manifestations of God for the propagation of the Gospel.

**The Prophetic Ministry**

**The Prophet**

Apostles and prophets are often known as ‘foundation ­ministries’ because they lay the foundations of local church life:

*‘You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members to God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone’.* Ephesians 2:19-20

1. Prophets are men and women enabled by the Spirit to perceive the mind of God for the times.

2. There are schools of thought that believe the supernatural enablements ceased with the filling of the canon of scripture. We believe these ministries continue today.

Christ gave both apostles and prophets *‘until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ’*. Ephesians 4:11-13.

Since that process is still going on, apostles and prophets are still a vital part of the church.

A present-day prophet does not in any way add to the Scripture or cast doubts upon its sufficiency. Everything he speaks forth must be in accordance with the Word of God. Paul says, *‘Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*’ 1 Corinthians 14:29.

**The Marks of a True Prophet**

1. Has a deep personal sense of knowing God;

2. will speak as the oracle of God. He will have God’s word in his mouth. Deut 18:18-19, 1 Pet 4: 11, Ex 7:12

**The Marks of a False Prophet**

1. Speaks out of the soul and not the Spirit - *“They speak a vision of their own imagination”* Jeremiah 23:16;

2. flatter the people - Jeremiah 23:17;

3. do not hear and heed the word of the Lord - Jeremiah 23:18;

4. prophecy for their own purposes - Jeremiah 23:21, and

5. prophecy with intention of getting people to look to them rather than to the Lord - Jeremiah 23:25-27.

**Summary**

There will always be an element of risk when human beings operate supernatural gifts; that is why these gifts must not be elevated to the level of the scriptures.

**Tests for the True Prophet**

Both the Old Testament and New Testament abound with warnings against false prophets. There are more warnings in the Bible concerning false prophets than any other ministries. However, these warnings are applicable to all. (Matthew 24:11,24; Jeremiah 5:30,3 1; I John 4:1-2; Mark 13:22).

Twelve tests of prophets.

1. Test of Spirit - 1 John 4:1-3. Is it the Holy Spirit, the human spirit or an evil spirit that is giving the utterance? Read 1 Kings 22 for examples of these three sources of utterances that have to be tested.

2. Test of Fulfilment - Deut. 18:22. Does the prophetic word come to pass or not?

3. Test of Worship - Deut 13:1-5. Does the prophetic word lead us to worship God?

4. Test of Doctrine - 1 John 4:1-6; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Isaiah 8:19-20. Do the prophets speak according to God’s Word?

5. Test of Fruit - Matthew 7:15-23. What is the fruit of the prophet’s lifestyle?

6. Test of Covetousness - Micah 3: 1 1; 2 Peter 2:1-3. Are these prophets making merchandise of the people of God? You will know them by their love of money.

7. Test of Ministry to the People - Jeremiah 23:18-23. Do these prophets turn the people from their sinful lifestyle to God? Without holiness of life none shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:7-14).

8. Test of Humility - I Corinthians 8:1. Does the prophetic word produce humility or pride in the heart? Does it exalt the person or Christ in you?

9. Test of Value. Do we value the infallible Word of God above the personal prophetic words?

10. Test of Confirmation. Is the prophetic utterance confirmation to your spirit?

11. Test of Control. Prophets are not to use their giftings to manipulate, intimidate and control the people to whom they minister.

12. Test of Acceptability - Matthew 12:34-37. To whom is the prophet accountable? Where is his home church? Does he have apostolic or other covering? Is he willing to take responsibility for his prophecies? All N. T. prophets ­belonged to and were under the authority of some local church.

**Bible Safeguards:**

1 We must elevate the written Word above all gifts.

2 We must respect the local church under the leadership of pastors and elders as the appropriate place for the prophetic ministry.

3 Remember that “in a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom”. We need two or three witnesses for confirmation, not two or three prophecies.

**Spiritual Gifts**

Spiritual gifts are supernatural empowerments that are available to Christians. Our biblical understanding of these *charismata* comes from 1 Corinthians 12.

It is our contention that the three lists of ‘gifts’, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, and Romans 12 refer to 3 different aspects of God’s equipping of His people.

Ephesians 4 lists the five ascension gifts of Christ; these gifts are resident within the person.

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,*

 Ephesians 4:11

1 Corinthians lists 9 gifts which are occasional gifts (lit. spirituals) given to individuals for a specific purpose and then withdrawn. This does not discount that individual may regularly function in one particular gift.

*...for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.* 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

Romans 12 lists 7 gifts which speak of the giftings to function in life for God.

*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.* Romans 12:6-8

**History**

There are those who would insist that the three lists be put together to see what gifts God has given man, which tends to diminish the supernatural element of the giftings of God. The *Spirituals* of 1 Corinthians are supernatural and cannot be explained any other way.

Whilst these gifts diminished toward the end of the first century they have always been present in the church and seem to enjoy times of renewed interest and practice. For example, the twentieth century saw a major increase in the operation and recognition of spiritual gifts. In the past twenty years or so there has been a notable decrease in the operation of these gifts in Pentecostal churches in Australia as the church has become more entertainment oriented.

**Purpose**

1. To manifest the Body of Christ on earth. These gifts were designed to be operational in the body of Christ to demonstrate that it is a living organism indwelt by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14, 27.

2. To aid the propagation of the Gospel. Mark 16:15-18. It is the supernatural manifestation of God’s power that so often draws people to the Lord as they confirm the proclamation of the Gospel.

3. To edify the Church. Many of the gifts have particular application in the worship service of edification. 1 Corinthians 14 has much to say about order in the operation of the gifts.

**Nine Gifts of the Spirit**

The gifts fall into three classifications;

**Revelation Gifts**

**1. Word of Wisdom** An impartation of a portion of God’s wisdom.

**2. Word of Knowledge** An impartation of knowledge that is beyond the recipient’s scope and natural knowledge.

**3. Discerning of Spirits** Probably limited to the ministry of deliverance in discerning the nature, etc. of evil spirits and understanding how to deal with a particular situation.

**Power Gifts**

**4. Faith** A special gift of faith for a special purpose.

**5. Gifts of Healings** A special gift to enable the impartation of God’s healing power.

**6. Working of Miracles** Acts of power beyond natural ability and power.

**Inspired Utterances**

**7. Tongues** The supernatural ability to speak in languages not learned or understood by the speaker.

**8. Interpretation** A twin of the gift of tongues, and provides, supernaturally, the meaning of the tongue. It is not a translation of the tongue as the interpreter does not understand the tongue.

**9. Prophecy** An inspired utterance in the language of the hearers.

The gifts are not sharply defined, but often merge into one another. Whilst supernatural, the gifts are under the control of the believer, 1 Corinthians 14:32. They are operated by faith and it takes a significant amount of faith to step out in the operation of the gifts. Tragically, too few Christians make good use of the gifts.

A major goal of this subject is to see Chrisstians operating freely in the gifts of the Spirit.

**Practical Considerations**

1. The gifts are given to all believers and all should seek to operate gifts, 1 Corinthians 12 :7.

2. Covet the gifts—earnest desire when fostered gives rise to faith. We are to have a positive expectation with regard to the personal operation of gifts.

3. The gifts are distributed as God wills, although we are to earnestly desire them. 1 Corinthians 12:11.

4. Because the gifts of the Holy Spirit are subjective they are open to abuse. The inexperienced often make mistakes, but I would not classify a mistake as abuse. We must, nevertheless, be constantly judging the functioning of the gifts to ensure they are as untainted as possible.