
Subject: Where have all the people gone...
Posted by [william](#) on Fri, 09 Mar 2012 21:56:28 GMT
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Maybe we've been approaching the lack of signs and wonders in the wrong way.

Jman has rightly asked the question --Where are the 'signs' of the apostles?

We could go further and ask where are the 'signs following' the rest of the valid ministries of God? (Mark 16)

What about the pastor/teacher, the prophets, the evangelists? Are we to conclude that all ministries lacking the supernatural signs found in the pages of the NT, are false ministries?

Why stop with the so-called ministries? Mark 16 indicates that all believers will have these 'signs following'. Why not question the validity of all so-called believers if the signs aren't evident?

You all know that I have presented a case against the commonly held position that the ministries listed in Eph 4 are 'offices'. I think they are ministry gifts--not 'offices'.

Quote:Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

...

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Did He give 'offices' to men or did He give them ministry gifts ..."For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" (Eph 4:12)?

'Offices' are for occupying and 'gifts' are for using!

If the 'signs' go with the 'office', then a pretty good case could be made that we have no apostles, no prophets, no evangelists, and no pastor/teachers (or very, very, few.)

On the other hand, there are those who establish local Churches, speak for God, spread the Word, shepherd and feed the flock, using the gifts that they have been given, and who have various manifestations of the Holy Spirit working in and through their lives.

These ministers may not, in every case, have results as dramatic as we see in the book of Acts but however lacking they may seem, Churches are still being established, people are still hearing

the Word of God, the gospel is still being preached, teachers are still teaching and the flock is still being cared for by pastors.

I'm no historian but according to various writers who claim they are, the restoration of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (or the restoration of the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit') to the Church is not much more than a century old. The Topeka KS, and Azusa Street, revivals purported to be the beginning and precursor to the whole modern-day Pentecostal phenomena.

If we view these events as preparation for the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ and look back to the ministry of John the Baptist who ushered in the 1st coming of Jesus, there are some remarkable contrasts. John, who did no miracle, was nonetheless a prophet. He focused upon preparing the people for the coming of the Saviour. All true ministers of this dispensation are saddled with the same sort of ministry. With or without the remarkable signs and wonders, we are all called to prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ.

We can lament the lack of signs but this should not be a deterrent to our mission to prepare the way for the Lord's return.

We are deterred to the extent that we are waiting for things to happen that are effectively out of our control.

I do believe that there will be (and to some extent already are) an increase in the sign-gifts because the Holy Spirit has been given to us, but does that mean we should not at the very least be proclaiming the Word of God that we know to be true?

Do you have a gift? Do you believe that Jesus heals and preach that to the masses? If there are no signs following your proclamation does it mean that the Word is not true, or that it shouldn't be preached? (Same goes for the proclamation of the gospel of salvation, etc..)

Maybe it is a lack of faith that hinders the 'signs following'; if so, that is one thing but if we are faithful to proclaim the message --in proportion to our faith and grace-- (Rom 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; ...) and leave the confirming signs to the One who gave us the gifts in the first place, we might find there are reasons that we have yet to understand for that part of the equation.

We hear the oft-quoted verse that even non-charismatic's love to quote that says that there should never be tongues in a Church unless they be accompanied by an interpretation. It must be a verse that is taught in Vacation Bible School cause everyone quotes it as some kind of immutable law of Scripture.

The circumstances of Paul's admonition in 1Cor14 are quite different than the circumstances of

today. If a person in today's church, against all odds, finally overcomes his natural inclination to sit quietly and begins to speak out in tongues, he hasn't committed the unpardonable sin; maybe the person with the interpretation hasn't the nerve yet. Who knows? Now if we had the same situation that prevailed at Corinth, with so many willing participants, it might be necessary to regulate it a bit, but this isn't the case in most places I've attended!

That's not the greatest analogy (for obvious reasons) but my point is this: If God has given you a gift, and you, against all odds, step out and attempt to use this gift in proportion to your present faith, don't be discouraged if great signs and wonders don't immediately follow. (Even Jesus had a tough time on occasions where unbelief was thick enough to cut!<grin>).

When someone who has been sent (like an apostle?) to go into an area to establish a Church, based upon the Word of Jesus Christ, let's not be too hasty if that person can't point to a cadre of signs & wonders to validate his mission.

Same is true of those other ministries mentioned in Eph 4.

Sorry for the long-winded post... I haven't even covered some of the things I've been thinking about, but maybe it will generate some discussion anyway.

Date night begins right now, so I've got to run!

Blessings,
William
