

## Spiritual Communications

A few weeks ago I received a revelation from God. Well, it was a second-hand revelation. A fellow sent me a lengthy email explaining that he had received a revelation from God. This spiritual communication revealed that President Bush would not be re-elected, mainly because he has not eliminated abortion, as though he could exercise executive power and outlaw abortion. Was I disrespectful to God when I deleted the email before reading all of his message?

Let me make some things clear at the start. God does not need my permission or witness, or even my faith, to do what he wants to do. He can do what he wishes but does not do all I may wish. He has power to accomplish what pleases him, though I think what he does is for the good of man rather than to express despotic authority. As I have expressed in previous lessons, I am convinced that no person has the same powers that were given the apostles in initiating the spiritual kingdom. No person has power to raise the dead, restore a severed limb, or perform any visible, demonstrable miracle. That does not mean, however, that God's Spirit does not work in our lives or that he no longer answers prayers, but those actions do not depend on any spiritual gift of empowerment in humans.

Now, back to the "revelation" about the election. If it is a true revelation, then I should have passed it along to you and as many as I can reach, for you and I would be opposing God in favoring, campaigning for, or voting for President Bush. We would be ignoring God's will and fighting against his intentions. That sin would be about as big as they get! What should you do about it? Do you take other person's claims seriously?

If so, what about all the sincere disciples who, considering George Bush's courageous personal testimony and Christian behavior, feel that God has put it in their hearts to vote for him? Which "testimony" are you going to believe? I suspect that it will depend upon the political party with which you are affiliated! Such supposed messages accommodate the desire and are efforts to give authenticity to preconceived notions. Equally spiritual persons on each side can claim authenticity in such a manner. I doubt if any one of you agree with all I write. Would it change your opinion if I claimed specific guidance in each essay? You do not judge my teachings by my claims or lack of claims but on your understanding of the Scriptures. Right? Then why try to make your views authoritative by claims of special spiritual communications?

If you trust such supposed spiritual communications, how will you know which one to trust? The election will prove who is right, you say? If you will not know until the votes are counted, then pray tell us what value the "revelation" offered! Actually, the vote count will prove neither side to be right, for no such spiritual communication was given in the first place. I believe that George Bush will be re-elected. The man who claims to have received the revelation and I each have a fifty-fifty chance of predicting the correct outcome, and I do not have to claim divinely given information.

We should give God credit and glory for all things, you say? If I am proven wrong, I will not have to blame God for misdirecting me like the preacher will. If George Bush wins, how is God glorified by the claim of a revelation which proved to be false?

As I have indicated previously, the God-in-me and me-in-God relationship is a matter of consciousness of God's ever-presence in our lives rather than the Spirit being in a bodily location like the brain, physical heart, or entire body. I live with this consciousness, yet it is not dependent upon certain feelings, intuitions, voices, mystical communications, nudges, dreams, visions, or revelations. I give God credit for all the good that comes my way, if it reflects on the goodness and glory of God. But I have to judge this by the outcome rather than by some mystical feeling or communication.

If I survived an auto accident and were in critical condition in the emergency room, should I praise God that my life was spared or question why he let the accident happen? I would hardly glorify God by praising him for sparing my life if my wife and infant died in the crash. As we sing, "God is so good; he is so good to me," I think of those who do not have it so good. My mind envisions the millions of starving children and destitute people on the earth. If I were singing those words in their presence instead of secluded in our "holy house of worship," could I really glorify God by that praise? Do you suppose they would join in our praise? Would I not better glorify him by earning money and caring for their desperate needs?

How could I praise him for his goodness for saving me if I believed that he elected me for salvation before the world began and predestined my wife or one of my children for damnation? It would indicate that he chose to dwell in me spiritually but would refuse to indwell others of my family for no guilt of their own.

I do not wish to disprove what God has done for you. I have no means of disproving claims except, for example, if George Bush is elected in November, that will prove that this man received no revelation to the contrary. Time has proved many who set dates for Jesus' return to be teaching falsehood. I have heard many speakers declare a message attributed to the Spirit or put in their hearts by the Spirit when their very messages were contrary to teaching of the Bible. None of them glorify God by making those claims. So if we lose confidence in the messengers, of what value is a valid revelation, if such there be?

Have you heard some preacher tell how he studied all week on his chosen lesson, but on Sunday morning, God laid a different message on his heart to deliver? To such claims, I always want to ask if his God is capricious. Would he allow him, thinking he was being led by the Spirit, to waste a week's time and energy and then give him a lesson for which he did not have to study? I, too, have changed horses on Saturday night, but that did not mean that I rode out on a faster horse with a more authentic message the next morning!

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Yes, it is great to give God credit for his provisions. Though I am sounding negative, my point is positive. It has become the "in thing" to attribute all things to God's intervention.

But guidance and revelation are claimed by persons promoting a wide spectrum of diverse and conflicting beliefs and practices, each giving authenticity to the particular sectarian party the claimant represents. The party spirit is a work of the flesh. The Spirit leads to unity in one body, not divisions. God is not the author of confusion but of peace. So, should we give God the credit for all the confusion? How can we know which witness to believe? Are we not forced to rely on measuring them by the Scriptures?

Our minds can play tricks on us enabling us to see what we want to see. Here is a suggestion. Each time you think you receive some special guidance or communication, jot it down. Make and keep a list. Then from time to time go over that list and check to see how many proved to be true and how many were untrue. That should give you greater assurance as to how God works in your life.

We walk by faith, not by sight. Though I do not see constant undeniable demonstrations of the work of God's Spirit in my life, I doubt that any of you live with greater assurance than I do. As you might have already discovered, life is filled with mystery that evades our understanding. All that happens is not an expression of the positive will of God. Someone much wiser than I has written:

*"I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all"* (Ecc. 9:11). []

(Cecil Hook; April, 2004)

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