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Is it Supernatural or Superficial?

By Melvin E. Barnett

Picture this: You've prayed for months that your neighbors would take you up on your invitation to attend church with you. One Sunday morning you get a call to let you know that their family will meet you there. You are very excited, and you pray that their hearts will be open to receive the Gospel. The service is powerful, and you see that they are absorbing all that is said. Right at the end of this fantastic service, a visitor sitting a few rows ahead of you looks back and sees your neighbor, who is deep in thought. All of a sudden, the stranger is in the face of your neighbor and his wife with a "word" from the Lord. Your neighbors, being new to church, are very confused and intimidated. So, instead of discussing the plan of salvation and God's perfect love over lunch as planned, you end up trying to explain what this stranger did to them and why.

It really means a lot when God singles someone out to talk with. None of us can even begin to comprehend how God maintains a communication system with potentially every person and angel at any one time. We all can conclude, though, that He does speak and that He can minister and reveal Himself to us at any given time.

I personally take great interest in anyone who comes up to me and says "God said..." In fact, if you want my undivided attention, tell me what God is saying; and I will hush and listen with great concentration. You see, the last thing I want to do is miss what God is saying to me and what He is speaking concerning my interests and the ones I love.

While I must admit I need to read the Bible more than I do, when I do read it I pay close attention to what it is saying as well as what it is not saying. I ask myself questions about what each word is saying. I clearly define the pronouns and direct objects and so on. One of my faults is being overly analytical -- I can't see the forest because of all the trees. When it comes to Bible study we should hold to each and every word, slowly extracting each and every iota of meaning.

I hold the opinion that the Word of God is the absolute, Holy Ghost inspired, written authority of God and that it is inerrant and infallible. Now, with that said, we should examine the assertion, "God said." If God said, then it will come to pass. If God said, it is Truth.

Numbers 23: 19(KJV) God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? The New Living Translation interprets this scripture as follows: God is not a man, that he should lie. He is not a human, that he should change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

What a powerful Scripture! This is one of my favorite Scriptures in the entire Bible. When I am in doubt about what I know the Word has promised me, over the reality or quagmire I may find myself in, I know that I am the head not the tail. I know that I am a child of the King and an heir to the Kingdom (Romans 8:17). I know that no weapon formed against me shall prosper (Isaiah 54:7a). In short, when "God says" I take it very seriously and literally.

I like to use the word "prophetic" when describing what God said outside of the Old and New Testament Scriptures (canon). I see a lot of billboards describing evangelists who are bringing a prophetic word or something of that note. Sometimes you see advertisements that Brother John Doe is coming and will have a "word" for each one or perhaps for the church itself. I have attended services that were focused on the afore-mentioned areas. I have enjoyed some of them, but there were times I left and had more questions than when I arrived.

I have had ministers who, for the most part, I thought were good men, honest men, and men of integrity to say to me that God was getting ready to do "This" or "That" in my life. Some ministers have even been so bold as to give timelines. Unfortunately, there have been more times than not after the preface "God said..." that it did not come to pass. While I know others who have let this false type of word affect their relationship with God, or their trust in the church, I have rebounded without a scratch.

Personally, I just view this as a lot of over-zealous men (and women) attempting to do what they honestly feel is right in the sight of the Lord. Many of them feel that they hold this or that gift from the Lord. Moreover, many of these so called "prophets" have been taught that they had this gift imparted by a word or prayer of another. Then, to add insult to injury, there are the "prophetic groupies" who follow after men instead of seeking their own spiritual gifts to edify the church.

Yes, God speaks to people in many ways. We should never be so arrogant to believe that God hasn't sent a prophet, or even an angel, (Heb 13:2) to visit us and

declare God's Word. From visions, dreams and even face to face encounters, God can speak to anyone he chooses at any time.

Numbers 12: 6-8a And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. ⁷My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. ⁸With him will I speak mouth to mouth.

Now comes the hard part -- separating what I will call the wheat (What God said) from the chaff (what man thinks He is saying) without doing more harm than good. There will be times that making an accusation that one is a false prophet should be handled very cautiously, especially when weak, newly saved Christians are involved. The Bible gives us clear direction on determining if the Prophet has spoken on behalf of the Lord or has made up his own word in an effort to get ahead of God.

Deut 18:21-22 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? ²²When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

God's Word is very powerful. The Word brings about supernatural changes or events in all things. Apparently, there are many that seek after ministering to others by way of prophesies. Some just tell you what they think when they meet you for the first time. Others attempt to look deep into your soul and try to read you like a tea leaf. The very look of desperation and hopelessness at an altar can send would-be prophets into an instant charge against demons and spiritual strongholds that are binding, while promising a better tomorrow - often with some financial benefit to boot.

I want a Word from the Lord. I want God to use a person to speak life, hope, direction and even finances into my life. I want the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost to be manifested. I do not want a superficial word that, while intended to do good and thought to be inspired, is often presumptuous and even just rhetoric.

Good-intentioned but often over-zealous saints should be honest with others and tell them what they think or believe they heard from God, rather than making a declaration that incriminates them as a false prophet. Each born-again child of God should be zealous to do the work of the Lord and to function in as many gifts as possible while separating what we know that God said from what we feel He would have us say.

Since when do we have to meet together and swap a "word" with each other anyway? The early church doesn't seem to have indulged itself in this practice. I can't find supportive scripture to lend to the proponents of the "word" craze. Why don't we just focus on giving a helping hand to those in need, visiting the sick and widows, feeding the hungry and visiting the imprisoned? (Matthew 25:35-46). Perhaps we should be so bold as to go out and evangelize our communities with the Gospel. After all, this is much closer to fulfilling the Great Commission (Mark 15:16).

A superficial attempt to accomplish the supernatural is fraudulent in my book. We should pray that we be used in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. If we haven't severally (1 Cor 12:11) been given a particular gift, than don't "fake it 'til you make it". This brings a dark blight on the church; and, more importantly, it causes even more people to see Christians as a group of flakes. God is a Mighty God! He can take care of the Supernatural, and He doesn't need a fortune teller at church. Toss out the lion tamers, clowns and high-wire stunts. Let's have REAL church, and let the Holy Ghost move on His own.

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