

The Voice of the Bridegroom

By Pete Beck, Jr.

Dear Brethren:

In my travels to churches I have noticed something that bothers me quite a little in my spirit and prompts me to write this second vision letter.

In the book of Revelation there is a description of the Babylonian Church. This is found in Revelation 18:22 and following verses.

"The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore."

There is a parallel scripture in Jeremiah 25:10 where the Lord is threatening to send Nebuchadnezzar and strip away these very same blessings from the Jews as a part of His punishment and judgement on them for their idolatry.

Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.."

I have used these scriptures for many years in teaching some of the attributes of a healthy church. One can easily show through scripture that the musicians represent praise and worship; the craftsmen represent sound government; the millstone, teaching; the light, the revelation that should go with sound teaching and exhortation as well as the general revelation that should be the very heart of the ongoing building of the church. After all, the church is supernatural, and if we lose sight of this and begin to think only as executives and business men, we are totally off the path and out of order.

Since the gifts of the Spirit are revelatory in nature, the case can be made that the absence of gifts is part and parcel of the Babylonian church.

The voice of the bridegroom and the bride have always symbolized to me prophecy and worship. The Bridegroom is always saying, "I love you" to the bride. Prophecy is the Lord speaking to the church, "edifying" or building and encouraging her for the coming wedding. In the midst of all the horror and darkness in the world today, we need the voice of the Bridegroom more than ever. Yet, as I travel, I hear very little, if any, prophecy in the churches. I see very little of the revelatory gifts operating.

Are we so sensitive to the unsaved and what they might think that we are tending to quench the spiritual gifts and discourage prophecy?

My bible says:

"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." 1 Cor. 14:1. Verses 24 and 25 indicate that unbelievers will be "supernaturally" spoken to by true prophecy. Verse 39 urges us "Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues."

Brethren, with all the emphasis on "church growth" and being "user friendly", and in seeing the success that is obviously being achieved by some of the large evangelical churches who oppose the display of the Spirit's gifts, including prophecy, let's not forget for one moment that we want to build according to the "pattern". The pattern is set out pretty clearly in 1 Corinthians 14.

I think one problem is that we have not taught properly on the use of the gifts. I would be the first to agree that when the flesh is exhibited in the church it is very damaging. Prophecy must be judged constantly by church government and false prophecy or fleshly prophecy must be dealt with. You might all want to purchase Jim and Carolyn Murphy's book on prophesying if you haven't already done so and use it as a basic primer in your churches.

But just because there is an occasional embarrassment is no reason to let the Gifts of Christ dwindle in the church at this crucial moment of history when we certainly need all the supernatural help we can get. There will always be some "mess" where the oxen are laboring or where we are training the young ones. But this is the risk we take when we walk in the Spirit. I personally believe that the Holy Spirit is watching over the church with a far greater jealousy than either you or I can possibly muster. I believe that if we do things His way and keep our hearts right, that He will clean up after us.

I certainly want to end this by saying that I am not against using wisdom, common sense, good decorum, proper dignity and good administrative practices in operating the church from Sunday to Sunday. But, I do think we need to teach on and properly encourage the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially prophecy.

The word "sophisticated" means "characterized by a lack of simplicity or naturalness; refined to the point of artificiality; hence, worldly wise." (Webster) WE NEED TO SEEK FOR AND GRAB FOR EVERY SUPERNATURAL AID WE CAN FIND TO HELP US IN THIS BATTLE. IF WE ARE BECOME SO SOPHISTICATED THAT WE ARE DECIDING AND REFINING WHAT IT WILL TAKE OR NOT TAKE TO BUILD THE CHURCH, then we are in trouble indeed.

Evaluate your own church honestly before the Lord. When is the last time you heard a real quickened prophecy? When is the last time you heard tongues and interpretation, a word of knowledge? Are people praying for the sick? If you are afraid of wild fire or strange fire, start teaching your elders and your people how to handle it and evaluate it. A well taught people can handle almost anything. A wild horse can be tamed easier than a dead one can be resurrected.

I pray that this little exhortation will have a positive effect toward bringing the Voice of the Bridegroom back into our churches.

Much love in Christ
Pete