

Supernatural Power



The First Church (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for this week: "The First Church": a theme which takes us back to our spiritual roots.

In my introductory talk yesterday, I compared the first church to the ark built by Noah. Each was the only place of salvation in its day; each had to be built; each was built by a carpenter, the first carpenter was Noah, the carpenter who built the second church was Jesus; and each was absolutely right the first time. It never had to be recalled for modification, it never needed a trial run, it was right when God set it into being.

I also used the analogy of describing an elephant as a way of indicating how we can look at some identifying marks of the first church. I said if we want to tell somebody how to recognize an elephant, we might single out four conspicuous features: first the trunk; second, the tusks; third, the large ears; and fourth, the small tail. That's not a scientific analysis, but it's sufficient to identify an elephant.

In my talks this week, I'm doing something analogous in relation to the first church—I'm pointing out four conspicuous features which serve to identify it.

The first such feature, which I dealt with yesterday, was: witnesses to all men. The Early Christians in the first church were witnesses to all men. They were not all preachers but they were witnesses; they spoke from personal experience of what had happened in their lives, particularly in relationship to Jesus, the Scriptures, and the resurrection of Jesus.

Today I'm going to speak about the second distinctive feature; which I call supernatural power. This supernatural power was manifested really in every area of the life of the first church but I will pick out, by way of illustration, four main areas: their praying, their preaching, the way they were directed, and the way their message was attested. I could also add a fifth area which was that even their transportation at times, was supernatural.

For this second feature of supernatural power, we can return to the same Scripture which was our starting point also for the first feature, that was witnessing: Acts 1:8, where Jesus said:

> "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

So we see that He set them out in motion, as it were, with supernatural power. He didn't permit them to go out and to start serving Him, or even witnessing, until they'd received this supernatural power and after that the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit was really manifested in every area of their lives.

Let's consider, first of all, the praying of the Early Church, bearing in mind that prayer is the generator of a church. Prayer is where the power is generated that is needed to keep all the operations going. A church that has no prayer life has no generator. It may have a lot of functions, but there's nothing to make the functions work, to make them effective. Let's look at how this "prayer generator" operated in the Early Church. We need to go back to the first chapter of Acts and read what the early Christians, disciples of Jesus, did before the Day of Pentecost. It says in Acts 1:14:

> "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."

And then in Acts 2, verses 1 through 4, the description of the events on the Day of Pentecost, we have the outcome of this praying, what it lead to. Acts 2:1–4:

> "When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

We see that the coming of the Holy Spirit released a completely new and supernatural form of utterance and of praying, praying in an unknown tongue. And this was kind of, in a sense, the way in which the church was first manifested, and first came into full-scale operation on the earth. And a little later they ran into opposition, and had to go back to prayer again, and this is how it's described in Acts 4:31:

> "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God, with boldness."

Notice again, a supernatural release of power, the power of the Holy Spirit, through their prayer that actually shook the physical building where they were gathered. You might wonder if that kind of thing can happen today, but I want to tell you from personal experience, I know that it can. It's not gone out of date.

And then let's look at the account of their preaching. And we look here at what Peter says in his first epistle chapter 1, verse 12. He's speaking about the truth that was revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament, and how this truth was not fulfilled in them but only in the Church and the believers in Jesus, and this is what he says, 1 Peter 1:12:

> "It was revealed to them [that's the Old Testament Prophets] that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

So Peter says that the preaching of the Gospel to the early Christians was by the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven. The preaching of these first preachers was not simply a matter of eloquence or of learning or of reasoning or of argument or even of choosing the right illustration, or having good sermon outlines. There was a totally supernatural element to it. It was by the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven. And the results were so exciting that the apostle Peter says even the angels longed to look into that. And then, we can look at the testimony of Paul, about his own preaching, as he gives it in 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. He says:

> "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith should no rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

Notice Paul did not rely on philosophy or argument or theology but he relied on demonstrating, in a form that could be sensibly perceived, the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. And he did that because he wanted the faith of the believers not to be founded on the wisdom of men but on the power of God. So all through, there's this theme of supernatural power.

Another aspect of the supernatural power in the early church was the way in which they were led, or directed. This is

summed up by Paul in Romans 8:14:

> "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

They did not depend on merely human planning, but they depended on the supernatural leading of the Holy Spirit. This is brought out clearly in the account in Acts, chapter 16 of Paul's second journey with the gospel. In verses 6 through 10, we read how the Holy Spirit stopped them going to some places, directed them to other places they would not otherwise have gone to:

> "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. [The Holy Spirit said, 'Don't go and preach in Asia.'] When they came to the border of Mysia, [another area] they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. [Again the Holy Spirit said, 'No.'] So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

We see their direction was on a supernatural level. The Holy Spirit stopped them going some directions, supernaturally, by a vision in the night; directed them to go the place He wanted them to be, which was not on their original plan at all, which was Macedonia.

Now let's look at the supernatural attestation that they enjoyed. Mark 16, verse 20 says this:

> "Then the disciples went out [that was after Jesus had been taken up to heaven] they went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it."

They did not rely merely on their eloquence or their arguments but there was a supernatural attestation to their message. And this is expressed again, by the writer of Hebrews, in Hebrews chapter 2, verses 3 and 4:

> "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it, by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

One great reason why the gospel made such an impact, was that God Himself bore supernatural testimony to its truth. And then let's look for a moment even at this case of supernatural transportation. In Acts 8, Philip had baptized the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza, and as they came up out of the water, something miraculous happened. Acts 8, verses 39 and 40:

> "And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. [Philip just disappeared, then it says:] But Philip found himself at Azotus..."

I like that translation, Philip found himself, he opened his eyes, and there he was many miles away. You say, "Well, could that happen today?" Yes! I have a friend, a minister friend of mine, a godly respected man, he came out of a meeting in a big city, and he was due at that very time to be at another meeting, and he knew he was going to be late, there was a tremendous traffic jam, he didn't know how he was going to get to the other meeting, so outside the first meeting, he paused on the sidewalk, bowed his head, closed his eyes and prayed. When he opened his eyes, he was outside the church where he had to speak next.

Well our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be focusing on the third distinctive mark of the first church.

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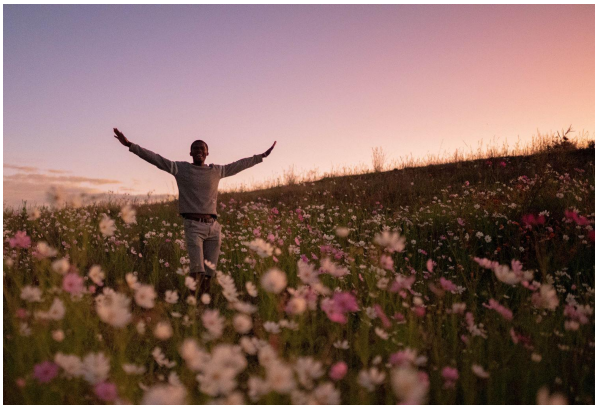

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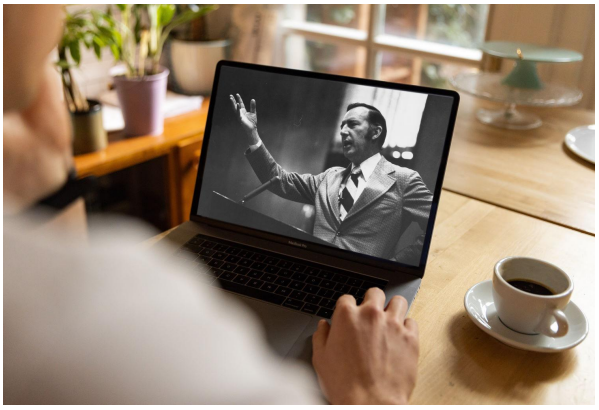

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