

The Same for Us Today



The First Church (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'm going to continue and complete the theme we've been studying this week, "The First Church."

In my talks this week, we've taken a quick trip back in time to have a look at our spiritual roots. That is, the first church, as described in the New Testament. I've pointed out four distinctive features which were characteristic of that first church. First, they were witnesses to all men. They weren't all preachers, but they were all witnesses. They all spoke from personal experience of what Jesus meant to them, what He had done for them. Second, they were permeated by supernatural power in every area of their lives—their praying, their preaching, everything about them was supernatural. Third, they proclaimed a King and a kingdom. They were heralds of a kingdom, an unshakable and eternal kingdom which they declared was coming to earth. And fourth, they were always expecting the return of the King. And this shaped their lives, it motivated their actions. It gave them a different viewpoint from the people around them. They represented an age to come. Something that gave them hope for the future.

In my closing talk today, I'm going to deal with a very important practical question, which naturally arises out of my previous talks. The question is: How can we experience this kind of Christianity today? I'm going to suggest to you four things which are necessary if we want to enter in to a Christianity of the same kind and I must tell you that from my part, I do. I am not satisfied with anything less.

First of all, we need to recognize that that kind of Christianity is still for today. God has never changed His specifications. He's never withdrawn the ark, the first church and said it's out of date and now I've got a more up-to-date version. It was right the first time, it was right when it was launched and it's still better than any of the substitutes which are being offered today.

It's still for us today for many reasons. Let me give you one primary reason: God doesn't change. It says with Him there is no variableness, no shadow of change. Hebrews 13:8 tells us Jesus Christ is the same "yesterday, and today and forever." Still the same. Hebrews 9:14 tells us that the Holy Spirit is "the eternal Spirit." He doesn't change with time. So that the great central elements of that New Testament first church

are still the same today.

The second thing that's important and necessary is that you receive personally individually the supernatural infilling of the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended in person and took up His residence in the collective body of Christ, the church. But we also read, both then and later on through the Book of Acts it was an individual experience for each Christian to present his body individually to the Holy Spirit as a temple. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended and filled the collective area where they were sitting but each of them was also individually filled with the Holy Spirit, each of them individually began to speak in a new language given to him by the Holy Spirit. It was never merely a collective experience. It was both collective and individual and it's the same today and it's still the will of God for God's people today.

Paul states this rather vividly in Ephesians 5, verses 17 and 18. He says:

> "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. [And I want to suggest to you that it's foolish not to understand what the Lord's will is. That's why He says, 'Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.' And the next verse tells us what the Lord's will is. It says:] Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."

Now in that verse there are two commandments. The first is negative, the second is positive. The negative commandment is do not get drunk with wine. The great majority of Christians would certainly agree that's still valid today. But it's not the end. The positive commandment is, "Instead, be filled with the [Holy] Spirit." Logic demands that that is still equally valid for all Christians today. It's the alternative in a certain sense. Don't get drunk with wine. Instead, give that kind of thing up, but instead, be filled with the Spirit. And you remember that when the Holy Spirit descended on the early church on the Day of Pentecost and they were all filled, they behaved actually like drunk persons. So, there's a special reason for saying, "Be sure you get drunk with the right Spirit." I want you to know that there's a heavenly kind of inebriation which is very much in order. It's not being drunk with wine, absolutely not. But there's something corresponding in the spiritual realm which liberates you, which sets you free from human opinions, your own limitations, which gives you boldness, which gives you freedom of speech. And that's what's a commandment, not an option.

The second thing that matters is be filled with the Holy Spirit just the same way as they were filled in the first church.

And then, the third requirement is make an unreserved personal commitment to the King, to King Jesus. That is absolutely essential. You can have the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit but if you don't make the unreserved commitment it'll never do in your life what God intends.

There's a Scripture in the Book of Psalms that's very vivid to me. Psalm 110, verse 3, and I was just giving part of this. I'm taking it from the New American Standard version, the marginal reading. The psalmist is speaking to the Lord Jesus Christ as God's appointed King, and he says to Him:

> "Thy people will be freewill offerings in the day of thy army…"

"Thy people will be freewill offerings." It's not, "Thy people will bring freewill offerings"—"Thy people will be freewill offerings." God doesn't want us to give Him something, He wants us to give Him ourselves and the army that the Lord is preparing for this final great spiritual conflict is going to usher in the kingdom is made up of people who are freewill offerings. They don't give God their money, their time or their talents—they give God themselves. And that's what's going to be required of you if you're going to be a part of a church that's like the first church.

I've said that if you want to enjoy the kind of Christianity they enjoyed in the first church, I've mentioned three things that it's important for you to do.

First, recognize it's still for today.

Second, receive the supernatural infilling of the Holy Spirit individually, the way they did in the first church.

Third, make unreserved personal commitment to the King. Make yourself a freewill offering in His army.

And then the fourth goes very closely with that but it's also important: Identify yourself with the coming of His kingdom.

You see, that's the great purpose that's been worked out on earth today by God. It's the coming of God's kingdom under King Jesus. But we will never be fully aligned with the purposes of God until we make that our individual priority. Jesus taught His disciples in what we call "The Lord's Prayer" to pray this way, in Matthew 6:10, He said, "Pray like this to God:

> "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

So, if you're ever going to be fully lined up with the will of God on earth you have to start by saying, "Thy kingdom come." And that's not just an empty form of words, that means, "God, here I am. The coming of your kingdom becomes my #1 priority in my life from now on. Whatever it takes in my life to promote the coming of your kingdom, that's what you can count on me to do." It's identifying yourself with the supreme and ultimate purpose of God for this earth and for this age, the coming of God's kingdom.

Now, as I've been speaking on this theme this week, I trust that the Holy Spirit has touched your heart. I trust that somehow you've got a vision of something that excited you and that you got this impression that somehow God wanted you much more involved than you have been until now. And so, as I come to the close of this final message of this week on "The First Church," I want to close with a personal challenge to you. As you've been listening, the Holy Spirit has been dealing with you. If your heart has been touched and you've begun to vibrate inside with the realization and the vision that's much more and you're not satisfied where you are. I want to invite you right now wherever you are to make a commitment. Make yourself a freewill offering in that army. And by a decision of your will, identify yourself with the supreme purpose of God at this hour, the coming of God's kingdom. Say, "God, thy kingdom come. And you can count on me to do my part." And then, if you've made a commitment like that, why don't you write in and let me know and we'll make it our business here to pray for you in a very special way.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you on another rich and exciting theme from the Word of God. My special offer this week is my book, The Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This book will place in your hand the vital scriptural key to enjoying the same kind of supernatural power that was the secret of the success of the first church. My book will show you just how you can receive it. Also my complete series of talks this week on "The First Church" is available in a single, carefully-edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

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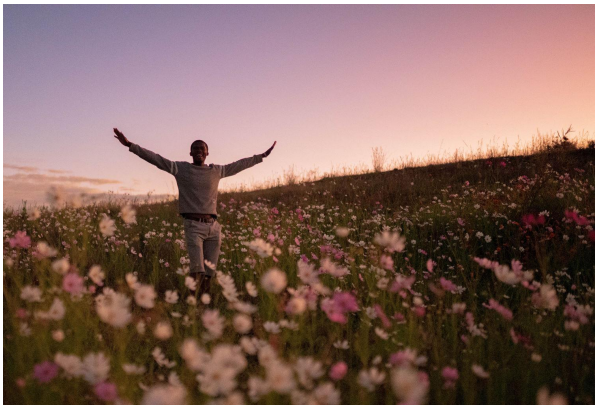

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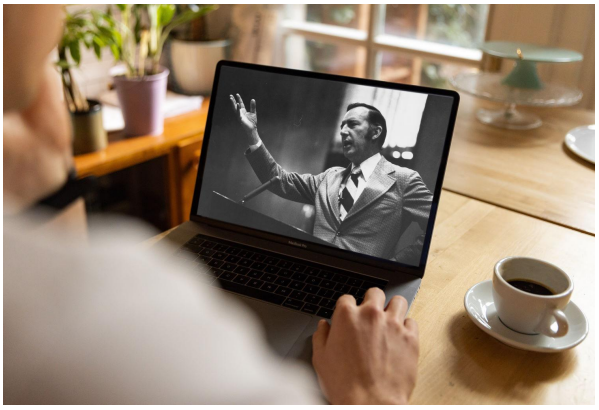

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