

THE FATAL FLAWS OF CHARISMANIA – Addendum to Fatal Flaw #7 (An Attempt to Answer the Questions Posed in the Conclusion to Part Eight of Eight)

For those interested in a response to those questions posed in last week's study, I believe the comprehensive answer to all of them is "NO." In other words, "NO," the apostle Paul did not experience the baptism of John when he was still the Pharisee Saul and "NO," Gentile converts to Christ beyond the realm of Cornelius and his household did not find their way to the Jordan River in order to be baptized by John. Nevertheless, I believe those answers can be best explained by appealing to the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD in fulfilling His redemptive plan and purpose during that monumental time of transition in the building of Christ's Church.

In light of the animosity which the Pharisee Saul expressed toward the Christian faith prior to his conversion (Acts 8:3), it is hard to imagine his submission to the baptism of John in the Jordan River. Even after his conversion, the vast majority of believers in the early church did not trust Paul, thinking that his profession of faith was a pretense for gaining access to them, so that he could persecute them more thoroughly. This is supported by what we read in Acts 9:26-27 –

“When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.”

Prior to that time in Jerusalem, when Paul was recovering from his encounter with Jesus in Damascus, Ananias initially refused to go to Paul due to his reputation as a persecutor of the church (Acts 9:10-14). But notice the response of Jesus to Ananias as recorded in Acts 9:15-16 –

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a CHOSEN (emphasis added) instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.’”

This very same sovereign purpose of God was on display through the spiritual sign gifts which were being manifested by the Holy Spirit in the Gentile churches of that time. Some were given the gift of tongues to confirm the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel for rejecting their Messiah, serving as an outreach, an evangelistic witness (Acts 2:37-41); to the many Jews who had been dispersed within several of those regions. Paul confirms this with his discourse on the importance of spiritual gifts, recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:1-10, where he describes the essential role of the Holy Spirit throughout; ending with an emphasis on the Spirit's sovereignty, in v11 –

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just AS HE WILL.” (emphasis added)

The apostolic era may have seemed to be a chaotic period in the early church, filled with events that on the surface, appeared to be random and without a clear pattern of development. But in reality, the opposite was true. God was in control of the entire process, fulfilling His redemptive purpose in Christ, in order to systematically reach the world with His plan of salvation. It is truly unfortunate that Pentecostals and Charismatics have taken advantage of what took place during the book of Acts, in order to create a belief system that does not harmonize with what actually occurred. My hope and prayer would be that our rather lengthy study into this particular issue, has helped many of you to better understand these Biblical truths, so as not to be victimized by **Fatal Flaw #7** of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. On to **Fatal Flaw #8**, next week.