

2015-04-25

In the Present & Presence #1

Hi all,

Earlier this year the Lord visited me, told me something, and suggested I study it out for more revelation. It was His gentle way of redirecting me, a bit short of a reprimand, but clear enough to redirect my focus.

What He said

"I AM. Therefore I am always present. So, to be in my presence you must be in the present." When I asked for more He simply said: "Think about it, study it out, and you'll receive more revelation."

So much of modern church culture is fixated on the future - from prophecy to blood moons to cycles of debt and release, to trying to figure out who the anti-Christ is - we'll gladly spend time and money searching these things out while ignoring the present - Family life, finances, thoughts, emotions and habits in order and more Christ-like. It is SO much more fun to speculate about future events than to deal with the here and now.

And part of the body of Christ is fixated on the past. Looking over their shoulders at events that happened when they were x years old, or what demons have followed the family line to make their lives miserable, or just needing that 1 touch from the Lord for their 'inner healing'. Should we live in the past, present, or future?

The culture of ancient Egypt was like our culture in many ways

Ancient Egypt was obsessed with both the past and the future. From their tombs we see a painted history of that person's life on the walls while also burying them with items needed in the afterlife. Moses and the future nation of Israel was surrounded by a culture that worshipped the past while making sacrifices to appease the gods for blessing on future crops, livestock, business transactions, and life after death.

And around the region at that time various gods and goddesses kept other nations focused on both the past and future as well in a never ending cycle of honoring or worshipping the dead while making sacrifices to the gods and goddesses for a favorable future. No culture was focused on living in the here and now.

This cycle of the gods kept people from being accountable for their lives as they could always blame their behavior or emotional trauma on spirits from dead relatives or their failure in life on the gods not blessing them.

They could excuse why they had done something wrong on the gods - I can't pay my taxes because the gods sent a fire that burned part of my crop, rather than admitting they were asleep at home that night rather than on their watch, so they slept through the fire that was ravaging the fields.

Today a Christian might say they can't enter into healing or their call and destiny in Christ because x spirit from grandpa or grandma went to dad and mom and then to them and has hindered them their whole life. They might also be in constant fear about the future because they feed on web sites with spirits of fear attached or are just plain goofy.

God made Israel live in the present

When the Lord gave Moses the 10 Commandments it was the first time a god (God) had ever issued absolute commands. Other cultures had elements of the 10 Commandments, but no god had ever issued 10 absolute rules before. And consider this; No other god had ever told his subjects to take a day off from work. This was not a merciless god, but one with empathy, the very nature of including a day off in an absolute Command demonstrating He was compassionate and living in the here and now.

The 10 Commandments and law of Moses brought into the open the fact that the past was the past and could not be changed, but could be repented of and forgiven, and the future was in God's hands. Therefore man cannot change the past nor control the future - but the 10 Commandments said man can control his actions in the present. No god had ever treated his people that way before.

The 10 Commandments brought the focus to the here and now, the present, which is where God is at I AM - ever present that we may deal with the issues before us.

If someone stole a sheep from their neighbor, there was no blaming a god like "Baal demanded a sacrifice, but my flocks are grazing far away so I had to steal your sheep to have an animal to offer in order to appease him." God said 'Do not steal' - period. Deal with your character issues right now in the moment!

What God did in the 10 Commandments was make everyone accountable right now, at this place and at this time, for their lives, forcing a person to deal with their heart, their soul, their body - in the NOW.

When He commanded NOT to have sexual relations with the neighbor's wife, it empowered the individual to decide right then, 'Do I go over to her while her husband is in the fields, or not?' He was telling individuals to deal with their lust right now - no blame on a family god, no blame on an unknown future so have fun while you can. By issuing 10 Commands God empowered each Israelite to live in the moment.

His commands made them live in the present. Isn't it amazing how far from living in the present so much of church culture has become?

Why so vague?

While there are a total of 613 laws in the Law of Moses, most of them had to do with rules relating to the priests and how to make a sacrifice, or dietary and sanitary laws. When talking about 'the law' in the New Testament the authors are usually talking about the relatively few moral laws, which were surprisingly lacking in detail.

For instance, when He said in Exodus 20:8-11 to take the Sabbath off from work, He gave no instructions other than to make it clear that everything from work animals to employees to sons and daughters were not to work on that 1 day each week.

The Pharisee initiated tradition of gathering on Saturday to worship first started in home gatherings* in about 200 BC. Down through the years this vagueness has led to numerous religious laws to the point that today in modern Israel on the Sabbath, elevators stop at every floor because pushing a button to stop at your floor is considered work. *(Hebrew for 'gathering' is synagogue).

By Jesus' time leaders had decided the distance of what became known as a Sabbath's Day Walk, which is mentioned in Acts 1:12 - a distance of roughly 3/4 of a mile (1.2km) - any walking up to that distance was okay, but if you go over that distance, well, that is work and is forbidden!

Why would God be so vague to Israel about these all important 10 Commandments? Because by being vague it required each person to walk with Him in daily life, in the here and now, to understand the spirit behind the command. To remove the relationship from the Commands leaves only rules and regulations resulting in not being able to push an elevator button on the Sabbath for fear of offending God.

What Jesus commanded

And that is why when Jesus said in John 15:12: "This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you."

He didn't tell us how to do that - He just said do it. Why? Because He must be found in the vagueness of the command. He must be found in the intensity of the moment. To be clear: When someone lies about you and you are reminded to love one another as He loves us, the past nor future mean anything. He must be found in that moment in time. Not as a 'now I pick up my relationship with you and run to you for help', but as a continuation of fellowship you've been having together, as a friend who never leaves and is always there to give wise guidance to apply the vague command to love one another.

Jesus told me to be in His presence I had to be present in such a vague way to make the exact point I'm making here - He wanted me to search out the deeper meaning WITH HIM, receiving revelation from Him via the Holy Spirit - not as a command 'to be present' but He was purposely being vague that I might seek Him and find Him...and that's where we'll pick it up next week. Until then, blessings,

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

2015-05-02

In the Present & Presence #2 (Freezer)

Hi all,

I don't understand Barb's freezer organization though I admire her organizational skills. But I am just a man so this is normal. This particular morning I was hungry for bacon, the item I think should be one of the 6 basic food groups: Fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy, grains, bacon. Maybe cheese should have its own category too. If I were a dinosaur I'd be a meat-o-saurus. Barb however would be a carbohydrate-o-saurus. We balance each other.

Carbohydrates is nearly all I found that morning in the freezer - rolls, tortillas, rye bread, whole grain loaves of breads, ice cream, gelato, frozen sacks of flour of various kinds...but no bacon, no hamburger for we were on the low side of the supply cycle. Normally there is a small meat section but we needed to restock.

Barb is amazing in the way she preserves past meals as well. There were last Thanksgiving dinners and dinners from Christmas, and even this year's Easter dinners all waiting to be pulled from the icy depths to be heated and relished once again. I love that about her, holiday meals in our house never truly end, they just get frozen in place to be enjoyed at a future time.

Frozen in time

My thoughts drifted that morning to how a freezer full of food was like our prayer life. We have leftover memories from the past, some better than others, some that haven't been fully consumed, frozen in time packaged for no one to see, though we would truly love to empty that freezer and be done with it!

Like a big meal in which we finally push the plate away and say 'I've had enough' and cart it off to the freezer, so too are memories we've had enough of, again some better than others. Some we haven't worked through all the elements of - the injustice, the loss, the pain inflicted on ourselves and others, the 'why?' to it all.

We all have a history

Some histories are prettier than others, but human nature wants to do the impossible; Make the past fit all neat and orderly, dealt with and organized until all issues have been resolved and it doesn't hurt anymore. Then those reconciled memories could be labeled 'resolved' and stored away forever.

I've been talking about how the Lord told me earlier this year: "I AM. Therefore I am always present. So, to be in my presence you must be in the present."

I shared last week how, when the Lord came out of eternity to give Moses the 10 Commandments they caused Israel to live in the present. By issuing commands not suggestions, He empowered each person to take responsibility for their own decisions in life, to be accountable for each moment in time.

In the present

When for instance it says, 'Do not lie' (bear false witness) there is no wiggle room to justify a lie by bringing up a past experience where they were hurt, to make it okay to lie in the present situation. Nor could they lie to gain a better future - "Yes sir, this chariot has very low mileage, owned by a grandma who only used it to collect manna each morning" when they knew it was a war chariot used in many battles by the Egyptian army. Each Israelite had to live in the present and walk with God in the present.

Personal empowerment

The 10 Commandments were purposely vague with few details other than with some basic guidelines in some cases, but not to the point He was trying to issue a command for every possible situation in life. By being vague it meant each person had to walk with Him, to know Him, that they might receive fresh revelation for each particular situation on how to apply His command. If you take relationship away from the Commands you end up with religious exercises never quite sure with what God is pleased or displeased.

What the Ugandans said

When I was a Bible school Director I had a couple from Uganda speak to the students during chapel. If memory serves, the husband was child 29 of 34 children as his father had 4 wives. His wife came from a home with 3 wives and she was something like child 13 out of 19 children.

The Ugandan couple told the students that in the 1800's European missionaries did great harm to the tribal and social structure of Uganda, harm felt all the way into modern times. The Europeans would convert some husbands and some wives to Christianity, then they required these new believers to divorce their non-Christian mates, which tore apart families, tribes, and the whole nation.

What we told the students that morning is that it is our job to obey God and make disciples by letting them observe in us what Jesus told us to do - and it is up to the Holy Spirit in them to walk through life with Him and with Him figure out how to apply God's ways into their culture. Walking in love means walking with Him in the present to discover His wisdom for each situation we encounter.

It is the same for us today

When we read Jesus' command: "Love one another as I have loved you", we automatically think of the cross, but that is NOT what He said.

In John 15 the disciples still did not understand Jesus was about to go to the cross. That was still future. Jesus said 'as I have loved you', meaning the last 3 1/2 years of their time together - from the start of His ministry when John the Baptist was still alive up to that moment He made the statement.

Jesus was talking about how over 3 1/2 years in daily life, camping out, staying in homes, teaching the public and then sharing in private, cookouts and long walks as they observed Him in every aspect of life - to love one another as He had loved them during that time. When He commanded them to love each other as He had loved them, He was talking about daily life they'd shared the last 3 1/2 years.

In this instance Jesus DID ask them to remember the past. These past memories included many things still unresolved for the disciples. Teachings they did not understand, actions and statements critical of the religious leaders and culture they had grown up with, miracles they'd not yet taken time to digest.

When Jesus asked them to remember the past it wasn't to bring up the past to dwell on what they did not understand or what still confused them, but rather to remember the love they saw, to remember the good times together, the example of His life that they could apply to their own lives. He wasn't asking them to tie the past neatly in a bow and pronounce each issue resolved, but instead to choose to remember the overall example of love, to draw on what they did understand, to find love in the midst of the unresolved issues.

THAT is what we can do, to live in the here and now and in this instance, to choose to walk in love, to remember through the eyes of love, with assurance that in the ages to come the Father will continue to show the riches of His love and kindness towards us in Christ. (Ephesians 2:7)

Continuing next week...blessings!

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

2015-05-09

In the Present & Presence #3 (Titanic)

Hi all,

On April 10, 1912 the Titanic, the largest and most luxurious ocean liner up to that time, left port for its maiden voyage. It was decorated with the latest and greatest of all things; it had the new wireless telegraph which provided passengers the unheard of ability to communicate with people thousands of miles away, ornately decorated staterooms in first class, and for safety, advanced watertight compartments.

One of the most luxurious if not THE most luxurious appointment on the ship was the 'Grand Staircase', reserved for use by first class passengers. Above was a large glass dome letting in natural light, and the staircase and surrounding woodwork were ornately carved.

The flooring around the Grand Staircase was also the most modern and luxurious of the time, using a newer process that was all the rage in which linseed oil was solidified and mixed with pine rosin and wood dust with coloring to form a tile flooring. Yes, the flooring around the base of that Grand Staircase, that most luxurious appointment on the most luxurious ocean liner ever built, was...linoleum.

In their day linoleum was the 'in' thing, the most luxurious flooring money could buy, but in our day it is among the least expensive and most common of flooring.

What is now the 'in' thing, will one day be the old thing. In the world people proclaim things like 'this is what Paris is wearing' or 'all the stars are wearing these', but next year the stars will be wearing something different and Paris models will be showing off new styles on the runways.

God doing a new thing?

In church circles whatever is the latest and greatest is often labeled 'This is a new thing the Lord is doing'. But in the book of Acts, which covers over 30 years, and the rest of the New Testament which covers a total of about 70 years, we don't see the authors saying that God is doing anything new other than the work of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in man. The New Testament IS the new thing.

Consider that - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James - authors of the New Testament, pillars of the faith, chosen by the Lord to live and die in that time in history, over the course of 70 years of their faith, never wrote anywhere the Lord is doing something new other than Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Of course someone new to the Lord will rightly exclaim it is a new life for them, but in terms of what heaven is doing their salvation and baptism with the Holy Spirit is what He has been doing the last 2,000 years. It is only new to us while He remains the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Same old stuff for me to work on

I can't speak for you, but for me, He is still working on things in me He started when I was first born again as a 16 year old. He has never stopped working on me, fine tuning, changing things in me that I can trace back over decades in my life. I don't need a 'new thing' until and unless I first mature in the old things.

The family in Colorado Springs - love the world?

I was teaching a class in Colorado Springs and after the day's session 4 of us went out to eat. As we walked to our booth I noticed a large family in the middle of the room who had pushed together several tables - there were about 10 or 14 people, with the kids at one end and adults at the other.

I also immediately saw angels standing behind some of the people, and there was one angel clearly in charge. It isn't unusual for the Lord to open my eyes to see His realm while I also see the natural world but I did wonder why that was happening at a restaurant.

As the 4 of us ordered our meal I kept a running conversation going with my friends, while also turning to my left to talk to the angel standing a few feet away. In the natural it looked like I was just looking to my left for a glance at that large group, but in the Spirit I was talking with the angel. The first thing I asked was 'Are these people believers?' to which he replied they were.

Then he added; "But they love this world with the toys and distractions in it. They go to church, but only when it is convenient with their plans, and rarely read the Bible or even talk of the Lord at home." I asked what it was like to guard them and he surprised me saying: "It's more fun to guard people like you." I told him I thought they'd be busier with carnal Christians, but he responded:

"No. Because of their love for this world and the things in it they have shut the Lord out of their lives in those many areas. If a person is walking with Him they are more sensitive to His direction, but when they are doing their own thing they have tuned Him out, making them insensitive to the things of the Spirit and preventing us from protecting them or even warning them of things to come."

I took that as a hint, so I turned my attention to a boy about age 12 sitting at the far end, all alone, and an angel standing right behind him. The angel seemed rather subdued in his mood - quiet, somber, looking at the boy. There was a heaviness about the whole family, and I was still wondering why I was seeing them.

So I asked the angel about the boy, and then I learned why my eyes were opened to see them: "As it stands now, this boy will die in an ATV (all terrain vehicle) accident when he is about 15." With that, suddenly a large scene like on a TV appeared in the air next to the angel above the boy as he was seated at the table. I saw this family in the woods and somehow I knew it was a Sunday and they should have been in church but chose to take their 4 wheelers into the mountains that day.

They had made a ramp of dirt and were jumping their vehicles over it, flying a good distance, and then I saw this boy, older now, jump his vehicle and somehow it tilted back like he was trying a backwards flip but didn't make it. The scene froze as his vehicle with him on the seat was upside down with his head about to touch the ground and the whole thing falling on him - and then it disappeared.

At that point I interrupted the conversation my 3 friends were having, and told them what I just told you. I realized my eyes had been opened to see and talk to the angels so that we could intercede and stop that horrible accident from taking that boy's life 3 years in the future, and that this family would return to their first love. We prayed right there, and when I looked back at the angels - the lead one smiled as did the one standing behind the boy, and they disappeared.

My host that night then observed, "This explains something that I've experienced from time to time through the years. I'll be somewhere and see a person and feel grieved and sad in my spirit, almost to the point if I let myself go, I could stop and weep right there. It has happened in airports or just when out and about in a normal routine - I'll see someone among the hundreds and feel this deep sorrow - and I felt that when we

walked in and I saw that family, but I didn't know why. Now I know I am sensing the Holy Spirit's sadness over someone's walk with the Lord, that they aren't walking with Him as they should, maybe they love the world rather than putting all their love on Him."

We cannot live in the present in Him if we have also given our heart to the world and the things therein. His presence requires being in the present - leaving all love of the world, all people, all the past and future at the door - to be wholly and completely devoted to Him. Amazingly, He isn't ignorant of our needs or desires, and as Solomon asked for wisdom rather than riches or victory over enemies*, because (at that point in his life) he was completely in the present when he asked for wisdom, the Lord gave him the things he didn't ask for.

*I Kings 3:5-14

May we live come before His presence with thanksgiving and praise, focused on the present, focused on Who we are worshipping, Who we are exalting, wholly and completely focused on Him. If we do so, the rest will be provided and fall into place in our lives.

New subject next week, blessings,

John Fenn

www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com