

Presidential Perspectives

Corporate Identity and God's Blessing

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Church membership and leadership must unite to receive latter rain

Luke tells us twice that the disciples were of one accord as they prepared for the outpouring of the early rain (Acts 1:14; 2:1). The fact that he would mention it twice suggests that unity within the church is a very important step in preparation for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There is an aspect to unity presented throughout Scripture that is seldom recognized or addressed in our church -- the role of corporate identity.

First of all, look at an example of corporate identification and then at two aspects of this phenomenon, which are crucial in the preparation for the latter rain:

First, the example: God made it absolutely clear that the Israelites were not to take any spoils for themselves in Jericho's fall and that the silver, gold, and the bronze and iron vessels were consecrated to the Lord (Joshua 6:18, 19). But Achan stole 200 shekels of silver, a wedge of gold and a Babylonian garment (Joshua 7:21). God's anger burned against Israel, and in the next military engagement, Israel lost 36 men and suffered a shameful defeat. When Joshua cried out, "Why, Lord?" the answer was short and to the point: "Israel has sinned" (Joshua 7:11). The whole nation suffered and men lost their lives because one Israelite disobeyed -- corporate identity.

Now, two illustrations that impact directly upon our plea for the latter rain:

First, when the 12 spies returned to give their report about the promised land, Caleb and Joshua were positive and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it" (Number 13:30). However, the 10 spies said they could not take the land because there were giants in it and they felt like grasshoppers. The nation believed the 10 and turned against their leaders who were positive that God would fulfill His promise and give the land to them. God's response? Back into the wilderness for 40 years. Moses, Aaron, Caleb, Joshua, and those who supported them had to return to the wilderness because of those who refused to believe God's Word -- corporate identity.

The second illustration takes us to the time of Jesus. Now the roles are reversed. The common people of Israel were flocking to see and hear Jesus. They were bringing their sick to be healed. There was a growing belief among them that Jesus was the promised Messiah but not so among the leaders. They were jealous of Him and plotted His death. During His trial, Pilate asked, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests responded, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

Concerning the priests' attitude, Ellen White says, "Thus by choosing a heathen ruler, the Jewish nation had withdrawn from the theocracy. They had rejected God as their king. Henceforth, they had no deliverer. They had no king but Caesar. To this the priests and teachers had led the people. For this, with the fearful results that followed, they were responsible. A nation's sin and a nation's ruin were due to the religious leaders" (DA, pp. 737-738) -- corporate identity.

In the first illustration the leaders suffered because of the rebellion

of the people. In the second illustration the people suffered because of the rebellion of the leaders. God deals with us individually when it comes to our own salvation. But God deals with His people as a corporate group when it comes to carrying out His instructions for the advancement of His work.

What is the lesson to be learned?

God deals with His church today as a corporate body. If we are to receive the latter rain power of the Holy Spirit today, the body and the leadership must be on the same page. God has been ready for years to give His people the latter rain. He has been waiting for us to get ourselves together. If we would only press together in seeking the promised power, pray for each other and stand united, shoulder to shoulder, the power would be given, the work would be finished quickly and we would enter the kingdom soon. It will happen and the glory will be given to God alone.

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