

EARNEST EXPECTATION

May 28th, 2005

A Morning Walk With the Lord.

On Friday, the 27th of May, 2005, I was taking my morning walk, during which time I routinely talk with the Lord. I generally start these conversations by saying, “*Good Morning, Lord.*” And, He usually replies, “*Good Morning, John.*”

Friday, something struck me, as we repeated this routine. I have always carried a little (residual) pre-faith doubt that both sides of the conversation in my head might be me talking to myself. (Or me talking to a spirit who is not Jesus.) On this particular morning, questioning who was speaking, I blurted out, “*Is this you or me.*” The answer came instantly, “*You.*”

Now, it was a strange question, one turned in on itself. If it was me, then who was I questioning? If Him, then the expected answer would be, “*Me.*” But, the answer, “*You,*” turned the whole question upside down. In the sense of Information Theory, this turn of conversation was a wholly unlikely event. Thus, its occurrence carried a lot of information with it.

I immediately questioned Him about the meaning of that answer.

My questioning was in the context of the ‘enabling doctrine,’ which holds that Jesus must stay in heaven until the times of restoration, when Jesus’ forerunner, the end-times ‘Elijah’ becomes active. [Acts 3:21], [Mat. 17:11]. What I asked was whether an enabling action was required on my part, for Him to answer. That is, was it indeed me who ‘triggered’ His answering.

His answer to this question was, “*Yes.*”

As we walked on a few paces, He rapidly filled me in, not in English, but with a ‘down-loaded understanding’ that what I did to enable His verbal responses to me was to anticipate them, to expect them. I understood that this anticipation is in the sense of any act of faith. Apparently that means that any act of faith, large or small, requires the believer’s anticipation for the act to be implemented. And, that’s because acts of faith are really implemented by God in heaven. Then He said to me, “*Anticipation is a part of faith.*”

As I walked on, I mulled this over in my mind. I didn’t recall ever seeing the English word, “*anticipation,*” in the Bible. As I was thinking this, He gave me a synonym. It was “*expectation.*” Then He added a modifier to it, as “*earnest expectation.*” That sounded familiar, but I didn’t recall the biblical usage. So, when I got home, I wrote it on the blackboard, for later lookup. And, that ‘later’ is now, this time of writing.

A quick trip to my computerized Bible provided [Rom. 8:19] and [Php. 1:20] as results of a search for “*earnest expectation.*” The latter was a personal comment of Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi. But, the former scripture was a specific theological doctrine of great weight. And, in fact, I had just read that scripture a few days before, in reviewing a letter from someone.

[Rom. 8:19] says that all of God's Creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. And the Greek for "creature" is "ktisis," which includes both the product and the act itself, of God's creation. And Creation is waiting in "earnest expectation" for this revealing. There is a single compound Greek word, "*apokaradokia*," that is translated into the two English words. It literally means "watching with the head up."

So, I've learned a valuable lesson. And, that is that Jesus' verbal responses to me are enabled by my earnest expectations of those responses. An interesting question is whether or not this idea can be extended beyond verbal communication with God, to all my or anyone else's "acts of faith?" Was that, in fact, the point of the morning walk event?

About Faith.

My wife advises that I should follow this with some fundamentals about the Will of God. This is because an entire 'movement' in modern Protestant Christianity has been founded upon the idea of always obtaining the result of prayer through faith. That is, if one just has sufficient faith, then one can obtain whatever is asked for in prayer. This movement has been popularly referred to as the "Name It and Claim It" movement.

The Gospel of Mark, Chapter 4, reports Jesus as saying,

"Have faith in God. ²³For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. ²⁴Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."
[Mark 11:21-24].

That word, "believe" is the Greek verb, "*pisteuo*," coming from the noun, "*pistis*," which is the English "faith." So, we have Jesus saying that whatever you ask in faith you shall have, provided there's no doubt in your heart. (The "Name It and Claim It" movement has this as their foundation scripture.)

On the other hand, we have James, Jesus' brother, saying ...

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." [James 4:3].

These two scriptures would seem to be in contradiction. However, that can't be, so they must reconcile in some manner.

The reconciliation of those two verses lies in the motivation for asking. Asking amiss means asking "badly," because of the reason you are asking. The word, "desire," in Mark 11, being "*aiteo*," is also translated as "ask" or "require," in the sense of prayer. And, it is in the context of need, not just want. [Mat. 6:8] says that God already knows what you need, before you ask (*desire*).

It comes down to the difference in asking for your "need," versus asking for your "want." Your "want" is not always your "need." And, God supplies our need in Jesus Christ [Php. 4:19]. Concerning asking God, James uses the word "*lusts*," being the Greek "*hedone*," which means sensual delight. So, asking for something that delights you (like a Cadillac) is not necessarily asking for something you need.

The difference is God's Will. And this is the part that Name It and Claim It doesn't cover. Recall that Jesus labeled miraculous 'good works' as iniquity, if He didn't know the workers [Mat. 7:21-23]. That is, some 'good works' are apparently not God's Will. From those scriptures, the key to that differentiation is seen to be whether or not Jesus knows you. How could He not know those doing good works in His Name?

About Deception.

How do you know it is Jesus, speaking?

Praying is one thing. That's one-way. Everybody can pray. But, talking with Jesus, conversationally, is controversial in Christianity. Personal experience of it is often taken figuratively, not literally. So, if there is a little voice in your head, do you have a mental condition, or is it Jesus? Or, is it someone else? Or, is it just you?

The Old Testament is full of instances of people conversing with God. That's what prophets did. The first reference to conversation with a "voice" is the "still small voice" of God that came to Elijah in the cave [1 Ki. 19:12]. And the Septuagint Greek (3 Ki.) for the "voice" was "*phone*." It was a phonetic voice.

In the New Testament, when Paul was discussing tongues, he said, "*There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world (kosmos), and none of them is without signification.*" [1 Cor. 14:10]. Here, "voices" is again derived from the Greek, "*phone*." So, the case for phonetic voices as a means of spiritual communication is well established, biblically.

Given the existence of a still small voice, is it necessarily Jesus, speaking? The biblical answer is "No." There are other spirits who speak. And, these are the so-called unclean spirits. These are also known as "*devils*," for which the Greek is "*demon*" [Mark 1:34]. In cases of demonic possession, these unclean spirits speak through those they possess [Mark 1:23-26]. There are instances less than outright possession, where the person is harassed (vexed) by an unclean spirit [Luke 6:18]. Spiritual "uncleanness" (defilement) is marked by what comes out, rather than what goes in [Mark 7:20].

One purpose of demonic spirits harassing Christians is to deceive and mislead [1 Tim. 4:1-2]. For this reason, Christians are cautioned to be careful about spiritual communication. We are not to believe just any spirit, but to test them, to see if they are of God [1 John 4:1-3]. And, that scripture gives the specific test that is to be applied. Spirits that fail the test are labeled as spirits of antichrist, or opponents of Jesus.

I have used this test on occasion. And, once in a while it turns up a deceiving spirit, which I then dispatch in Jesus' name.

Personal Relationship and Communication.

Let's get back to the morning walk event. Its prime result was that an earnest expectation of hearing Jesus' voice was what enabled the conversation. That hearing is tied directly to Jesus knowing His followers.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." [John 10:27].

How is it that sheep follow a shepherd? By hearing his voice. And, the shepherd knows his sheep by that.

It follows that if Christian workers follow Jesus by hearing His voice, then the works they do are not iniquity, but the Will of God. Hearing Jesus' voice is a key to staying within the Will of God. First ask, then receive. First seek and then find. First knock, then open [Mat. 7:7]. Hearing is necessary, but it is not sufficient (as the mathematicians would say), because of man's choice. That is, man can choose not to obey Jesus' voice. We might say that choice follows voice. Man can even choose not to hear Jesus' voice. And, God's Will provides for that eventuality, also.

“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, [8] Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:” [Hebrews 3:7-8]

In verse 7, the English “*will*” is not there, in the Greek. So, this verse says that if you do hear Jesus' voice, don't harden your hearts (against it), like the ancient Israelites did. For, as Jesus said, hard hearts go along with dull hearing:

“For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” [Matthew 13:15].

Recall that when God spoke to the Israelites, from the top of Mount Sinai, they backed off. They told Moses, “*You speak to us and we will hear. But, don't let God speak to us, or we'll die*” [Ex. 20:19]. That is, they were afraid to hear God, directly.

It is true that hearing God is associated with a Christian dying. But, our death is to the flesh, so that we can live in the Spirit [Rom. 8:13], [1 Pet. 3:18]. With this understanding, then talking with Jesus is not frightening. So, He identifies His sheep as those who hear Him ... not requiring an intermediary prophet, as in the Old Church. What that means is that in Jesus' Church, prophecy must be commonplace, as every follower is in a position to hear His voice. It's just a matter of a believer recognizing that voice. In the recorded Acts of the early Church, prophecy was indeed commonplace. It wasn't a big deal, at all.

“To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” [John 10:3]

Jesus does not just know His sheep corporately, as a flock, but individually, because He calls them by name. That is, following Jesus implies a personal relationship. Such a personal relationship requires communication. And, communication is based on hearing His voice. The Greek is “*akous ema phone*.” Acoustically hearing His phonetic voice ... in English, if that is your language.

So, the morning walk event was about a personal relationship. And, it was about that aspect of the relationship involving communication with Jesus. The lesson was that to hear Jesus requires the “earnest expectation” of that hearing. And, by the meaning of the Greek word, that attitude is one of alert, heads-up, watching. That is, be on the lookout for it.

Thank you, Lord.