

Drunk in the Spirit?
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*These men are NOT drunk as you suppose seeing that it is only the third hour of the day.
- Acts 2:15*

As faithful believers prayed in an upper room in the city of Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke with other tongues as He gave them understanding (Acts 2:4). Trumpeted by a miracle unlike anything seen before, the promised Comforter had come! The Holy Spirit filled men and women, granting them authority to witness to others the saving Gospel of Christ (Acts 1:8).

Upon the arrival of the Holy Spirit, the group that had been praying and tarrying in the upper room departed the gathering place . Crowds began to form and watched in amazement as simple Jews from Galilee proclaimed the good news of Christ in languages they could not have possibly know! The crowd was amazed!

And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?" And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?" - Acts 2:6-8

Undoubtedly the crowd witnessed an authentic outpouring of the Spirit of God. They all heard, in each of their own respective languages, the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11).

Finally, two responses were garnered from the astonished crowd. One group asked, “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:12) and another group mocked the messengers of God as drunkards (Acts 2:13). Interestingly enough, these same responses are seen every time a Gospel message is delivered. Some will ask “What must I do to be saved?” Others will dismiss the message as well as the messenger. However, the Apostle Peter was not going to allow questions to go unanswered. Furthermore, he was not going to allow Satan the opportunity to distort the beautiful workings of God by comparing it to the sinful debauchery of drunken partying.

Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, stood and proclaimed with the fervor of heaven in his voice, “These men are NOT drunk! It’s only 9:00 in the morning!” (Acts 2:15). Peter went on to inform the crowd that this miracle was part of the prophetic fulfillment of Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh, Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men will dream dreams. And on my menservants and on my maidservants will I pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall all prophesy.” - Acts 2:17-18

Peter continues to address the crowd concerning Jesus Christ, the Holy One whom they crucified (Acts 2:36). The climax of the sermon ends with the final Gospel appeal: “REPENT and be converted!” (Acts 2:38). By the close of the day, more than three thousand new souls were added to the kingdom of God!

Disturbingly, many Charismatic preachers would have the world believe this event to be something likened to a Christian orgy of “spiritual drunkenness.” Rodney Howard-

Browne, controversial “Holy” Laughter Revivalist, calls himself the “Holy Ghost Bartender” and believes he can pour out “new wine” (spiritual drunkenness) by laying his hands on people. Victims experience drunken states, slurred speech, and other characteristics of pure carnal intoxication. When asked to produce Scriptural foundation for this practice, Charismatic preachers immediately go to Acts chapter Two and Ephesians 5:18. Let us examine each passage in depth.

The Story of Pentecost was discussed earlier in this writing. However, for the sake of clarity, let us discuss the charge made by certain men in the crowd that those who were filled with the Holy Ghost were drunk. First of all, Peter absolutely dismissed the claim! How much more clearly could he have said, “They are not drunk!” Notice also that after Peter refuted the claim, it never came up again, not at all! The charge of drunkenness was an attack of Satan in an attempt to thwart the purposes of Christ. It failed miserably!

Most Americans, unfortunately, have seen drunkards on television, or at family events (God forbid!). Drunkards are never taken seriously! Remember, most of the crowd, after hearing the works of God spoken in their own language, wanted to learn more! To even think that three thousand devout, law keeping, Jews (Acts 2:5) would heed the call of Repentance and Conversion to Christ from a gaggle of Spirit-induced drunkards is completely absurd!

The other Charismatic “proof-text” for being drunk in the Spirit is Ephesians 5:18 which reads: “And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

John Wimber, late founder of the Vineyard Association of Churches, ended a preaching series entitled, “Spiritual Phenomenon” by recounting the story of how in one of his meetings a man by the name of “Lonnie” was praying for some women:

They became so intoxicated- they had their arms around each other - they had their arms around each other - they became so intoxicated they began falling... They began dancing around the room and people were just sort of enjoying them, you, know? And one young lady walked up to me and she said, “What’s that?” Now I said, “I perceive you disapprove of that?” And she said, “What rational basis can there be for that kind of behavior?” And I said “Be not drunk with wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.

While that explanation may sound “scriptural,” John Wimber has taken this passage completely out of context. A reading of the entire passage reveals Paul’s strategy of comparing sinful behavior with the exact opposite Christ-like behavior. Consider the following passage from Ephesians 5:15-17:

See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Notice the usage of opposites in the verses directly prior to the “proof text.” If in fact Ephesians 5:18 is a proof text for Spiritual drunkenness, then verse 15 should have said, “don’t walk as fools in the world, walk as fools in the Spirit.” How plainly foolish!

John MacArthur comments on Ephesians 5:18:

Although Scripture consistently condemns all drunkenness, the context suggests that Paul is here speaking especially about the drunken orgies commonly associated with many pagan worship ceremonies of that day. They were supposed to induce some ecstatic communion with the deities. Paul refers to such as “the cup of Demons” (I Corinthians 10:21:21).

Concerning the second half of Ephesians 5:18, MacArthur sheds additional light on what it means to be “filled with the Spirit”:

True communion with God is not induced by drunkenness, but by the Holy Spirit. The command is for believers to live continually under the influence of the Spirit by letting the Word control them (Col. 3:16), pursuing pure lives, confessing all sin, dying to self, surrendering to God’s will, and depending on His power in all things.

There is no evidence found in Scripture that Christians are to seek, ask, pray for, or condone this “Drunkenness in the spirit.” The scripture condemns all drunkenness (Proverbs 23:20,21,29-35; 31:4,5; Isaiah 5:11,12,28- cf. I Corinthians 5:11; I Peter 4:3).

Moreover, the call of the Scripture is to be soberly minded:

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience (Titus 2:1,2).

Understandably, those who have experienced this drunkenness manifestation may say, “I

experienced it! I know its true!” However, experience is not a valid test of truth! Jesus said to the Father while in prayer, “Sanctify them through Your Truth, Thy Word is Truth!” (John 17:17) The only thing you know is that you’ve had an experience... one that isn’t mentioned anywhere in the Bible, but is written about at length in the writings of Eastern mystics and gurus. If you can not read about it in the only complete revelation of God, the Bible, then why in the world would you want it?

Noted Charismatic and Brownsville Assembly of God Youth Pastor Richard Crisco makes a sad statement concerning the depth of Scriptural error he is willing to embrace:

If a Changed life is the end result, I don't care if He shakes them or throws them through a wall.

Changed lives do not occur because of esoteric manifestations but rather through an encounter with the Gospel of Christ:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Paul never prayed drunkenness down on anyone. He was content to “know nothing among you, but Christ, and Him Crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Perhaps the real question is this: Is God’s Word the supreme guiding force in Christian life? The truth is clear: Spiritual Drunkenness is a diversionary tool of the enemy, keeping the church occupied with fleshly displays and subjective experiences instead of the Gospel message and the in-depth study of the infallible Word of the Living God. Jesus isn’t glorified, believers aren’t edified, and the church is left stupefied.