

Driving Intellectual Elitism Out of the Prophetic

“Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” –Matthew 13:52, NASB

Some become disciples of other men; some become disciples of a certain movement, denomination or doctrinal emphasis. In the verse we have been studying about the scribes who become disciples, Jesus specified that these would become disciples of “the kingdom of heaven.” He was obviously emphasizing that they were not to become disciples of those on earth, or earthly things, but of His heavenly kingdom.

The apostle Paul is a good example of a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. He was one of the most learned men of his time. He had been a disciple of one of the most respected teachers of Israel, Gamaliel. He was an intellectual elite. For a time, this led him into direct conflict with the God he thought he was serving and led him to become a vehement persecutor of God’s truth. That is where being a disciple of men or of a specific sect will lead you. Then, by possibly the most famous and dramatic of all conversions, Paul becomes one of the most powerful contenders for the gospel he had recently tried to destroy. How did this happen?

Of course, the Lord appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, which will not happen to everyone. Even so, there is an aspect of Paul’s conversion that must happen to everyone who would become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven: Paul had to be struck blind in the natural so that he could see spiritually.

This is not a statement against learning or even learning from a natural perspective. Some of Paul’s previous learning, even in philosophy and other disciplines, later helped him to both

understand and promote the gospel. However, he first had to learn to see natural things through spiritual eyes, rather than see spiritual things through natural eyes. This is the key to being a disciple of the kingdom of heaven.

Seeing the natural through spiritual eyes instead of trying to see the spiritual through natural eyes is crucial, as we are told in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15:

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.”

One of the primary blocks to any Christian growing up into Christ is this one factor. Few have, much less understand, the need for the kind of transformation Paul experienced so that they can see from the perspective of the kingdom of heaven, not from an earthly, natural perspective. So, how do we get this transformation?

It took God knocking Paul off his horse to break through what was truly blinding him. It takes God to do this for all of us, but it does not have to be as dramatic as Paul's experience to get the final result. It may be better the way most do it who attain to this: They humble themselves instead of having the Lord humble them. We are told that we can judge ourselves, and the Lord won't have to do it.

Paul did not get spiritual vision immediately after he received his natural vision back. By his own testimony, we know that he went away into the wilderness for between 11 and 14 years. Then, after he was commissioned to the apostolic ministry, the transformation continued. We can see a great and continuing change in him over the span of his ministry. It will likely be a lifelong process for all, and this is why we must remain disciples of the kingdom of heaven our whole

lives.

Paul, who was so steeped in natural knowledge and training, may have taken a bigger jolt and more severe discipline than others to go through this transformation. Some seem to have a much more “natural” tendency to be spiritual and adapt to seeing from a spiritual perspective. The main point here is that we must have this transformation, and presently very few do. This is why we must become “disciples of the kingdom of heaven,” not disciples of the earthly.

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