

Did Martin Luther Have a Third-Heaven Experience?

One of Martin Luther's first biographers, Johann Mathesius, mentions various prophecies spoken by him, which were fulfilled, and then remarks, "With many sure prophecies he confirmed his doctrine." Indeed, many of Luther's early followers believed him to be a prophet. Even Melanchthon at one point referred to Luther as Elijah, saying, "Thus the Holy Spirit prophesied of this third Elijah, Dr. Martin Luther," as I quote in my book *The Charismatic Luther*.

In his book, *Luther and the Mystics*, Professor Bengt Hoffman, of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, tells of a conversation in which Johann Cochelus asked Luther if he had received special revelations. Luther was silent for a moment and then replied, "'*Est mihi revelatum*,' yes, he had had revelations." According to Bengt, it seems that one of these was similar to Paul's experience of being caught up to the third heaven.

Like Paul, Luther was not hesitant on insisting that he had received his gospel from heaven. In his book, *The Babylon Captivity of the Church*, he assured his readers of the truth he was presenting: "I have learned under the Spirit's guidance." And when the German prince, Frederick the Wise, expressed concern for his safety after his condemnation as a heretic, Luther wrote to him that he had nothing to fear, and then said, "Your Grace knows, if not, I make known to you, that I have the gospel, not from men, but from heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Souer's work in German, *A History of the Christian Church*, describes Luther as "a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues and interpreter, in one person, endowed with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit." And in the fourth stanza of his great hymn,

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Luther wrote, "The Spirit and gifts are ours."

Luther's boldness seems to stem from personal encounters with the Almighty. I vividly recall my first reading of Luther's own writings and the impact it produced. As I read *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, I was amazed at the clear, concise and bold nature of his message and said to myself, "Luther is speaking with apostolic authority."

However, whatever Luther's personal experiences may have been, these were never the subject of his preaching. He lived and breathed the Scriptures and found in them the ultimate source of his confidence and courage. When in later life he was asked how he, a simple monk and teacher, had been able to have such an impact when opposed by both the pope and emperor, he replied: "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. The Word so weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all." {eoa}

This article was derived from Dr. Eddie Hyatt's latest book, The Charismatic Luther, available from Amazon in both paperback and Kindle and from his website at .