

Psalm 98, Acts 10:44-48
God is Teaching Us a New Song
May 5, 2024

How much new shall we expect from God going forward?

We can relate to the disciples following Christ around Galilee and Israel during His life, but we especially can understand these days after Christ's death and resurrection. The disciples had been raised in the Hebrew Scriptures and in Christ encountered the need to step forward in faith beyond their training. They were uncertain about going beyond what they had been taught. They trusted Jesus, yet the new circumstances were disorientating.

God is still speaking. Is that right? Or is it all settled?

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the coming of the Messiah was to be restoration of Israel as a nation. Here was a Man claiming to be the Son of Man and Son of God. It surely was blasphemous to believe that a man could be the One Living Creator God?

The Canon of the OT was closed 400 years before Christ. The NT Canon was closed during the centuries after Christ. (Continued revelation beyond the NT claimed by Book of Mormon, Quran- "God has not begotten a son")

"What is believed by the churches in every place and every time." This was the guideline for orthodox faith put forward by Vincent of Lerins, 5th C. monk.

The struggle to understanding who Jesus is, Divine and human, and describe the Trinity took about 300 years of discussions by the Church Fathers. Formulations were different in East/West churches.

Continued study of the Scriptures has led to wider consensus of the Church in the following areas. Attitudes toward slavery: Equality of all humans before God clear in Bible, but slavery accepted as part of economic and political reality in the Bible. As a result of the vicious chattel slavery in the US (Racial, Permanent, practiced claim to be justified by Christian faith) almost universal rejection of slavery as against the will of Creator God.

Growing acceptance of leadership by men and women. *Acts 2:17,18; Joel 2:28-32* Women have been used by God as leaders throughout the Bible although men have usually been the leaders. Building on the teaching that God uses men and women, young and old, churches are not disbaring women from routinely becoming leaders.

In the case of Sexual ethics, faithfulness in marriage has been the only common teaching of all churches in every time and place. Marriage has always been recognized as between men and women. Holiness in Levitical code teaches no mixing of fibers, seeds in the field, men and women's clothing and sexuality. Deuteronomy 22.5, 9-11. "They have a common table but not a common bed. " (Epistle to Diognetus. 130 AD, during persecution.) Homosexual behavior, especially male but also female, was widely practiced in the Roman Empire and in every society, but there is no history of the Christian church teaching God's acceptance or endorsement.

So, unlike church teachings on slavery and women's leadership, which build on examples from Scripture, acceptance of homosexual marriage would be a new teaching based only generally on principals of equality and acceptance.

Christ said he came *Not to destroy the law or prophets but to fulfill. Matthew 5:17-18*

We have an old song we love. We have experienced God's guidance.

We base our faith on the Apostolic teaching once received. *2 Timothy 1:13,14* Knowing and believing the story.

There is a continuous renewed song when we follow the Lord.

Abiding in Christ means being made new every morning in Christ. *John 15:4-9* Not simply following guidelines.

Is the new song only our inner renewal or is God doing something new?

Is the Filling with the Holy Spirit a restoration of the original purposes of God for human beings *Genesis 2:7*, or a special gift for those who are leaders of the people *Exodus 33* ? The Israelites at Sinai wanted God's presence to go with them, but God cannot live with disobedience. Moses met with God as a friend face to face, the amazing privilege that the lowliest Christian enjoys through the Holy Spirit.

Troubles and uncertainties do not necessarily mean that God is not with you, nor can you assume on the other hand that you are the righteous facing persecution. We measure and test what is happening to us by Scripture. *2 Timothy 3:12-17*

How wide will God open the doors of God's kingdom?

Reading the whole of the Bible, we can believe that God pursues each and every person God created. We read that when Christ is revealed as Judge, all the people of earth shall mourn because of Him, realizing that they did not acknowledge His glory and authority. *Revelation 1:8, Daniel 7:13.*

We also read that *Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess Jesus is Lord. Philippians 2:10,11; Romans 14:11*. There is no one who will not acknowledge the Lord Jesus. People are chosen from every nation to sing the new song of thanksgiving for God's choice. *Revelation 5:9,10*. All creatures will sing praise to God. *Revelation 5:13*

As Paul wrestled in *Romans* and elsewhere with the truth that God chose Israel over every nation on earth and the truth that God had opened the door for the Gentiles, every person, in Christ, so we must read the whole Bible and consider all of God's Word.

Christ spoke clearly of the difference between the narrow way and the wide way. *Matthew 7:13,14* He spoke often of Judgment after death, of Hell. He did not teach a squishy general acceptance, and yet the message goes out to Judaea, Jerusalem, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. *Acts 1:8* and elsewhere.

Jewish Christians accompanying Peter were amazed that the Gentiles spoke with tongues just as they did. The tongues were boldness given by the Holy Spirit to speak of Christ with those of another background and language, not a private praise language.

The Bible counts it rebellion to yield to evil. God hates calling evil good and good evil. *Isaiah 5:20, 22; Matthew 24:23-25; 2 Timothy 3:1-5* We know that *We can do nothing against the truth but only for. 2 Corinthians 13:8* As the wise Pharisee Gamaliel advised the Sanhedrin in the puzzling over the testimony of Peter and the other apostles concerning the salvation of Gentiles, we can trust God's authority over human affairs. *"Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."* *Acts 5:38, 39*

Where is the name of Christ moving with power among people we do not expect? Where do we see power and grace among people who hear the Gospel? There is the new song which we are singing, accepting them with praise to God.

Peter didn't just keep the Gentile filling with the Holy Spirit in mind, he and the others moved immediately to give them water baptism. This was a public acceptance. Almost more telling is Peter eating with the Gentile believers and staying with them in their home.

We keep looking to God to give us a new song every morning, being faithful to all we have received of Christ. These are puzzling days, as the accepted norms of society are shifting around us. God's truth does not shift, but as Peter found, our understanding may widen. God will make a way for us to be faithful to all that God brings to us.

Acknowledgements

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