

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG282 – My Resolution for the New Year

Hello and welcome to another podcast of *Growing in God*. I am pleased that you are with me today, and I thank you for participating. I ask you to please share with your friends and people on social media these messages; and I hope that you would also give us a rating or a comment on your podcast provider's website, so that others can find us and be a part of what the Lord is speaking to our hearts.

This is the first podcast for the New Year, and I want to talk about my New Year's resolution. I know that is a little tongue in cheek, but everybody makes New Year's resolutions during this time, right? And so I thought, "What do I really want to see happen for me, for the body of Christ, in this year?" I know that in a previous podcast I spoke about *Trusting God – But What About the Refrigerator?* That was part of my belief and drive for this new year – do we really trust God for the simple things in our lives and for everything that we are needing? That trust of God, and working that deeply within our hearts until we really do trust the Lord with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding, is one of the drives for me, personally, going into this new year. But there is another real concern that I have, and it regards our relationship with the Holy Spirit, and our being filled with and endued with power from on high by the Holy Spirit. So I want to talk about that in this podcast.

The way this unfolded to me in my own heart, as I was reading the Word and studying the Scriptures, is the fact that we talk about being in the Church Age. Now I know that we tend to relate to the Scriptures and to God's moving in terms of ages, or dispensations. Seeing that we are human, which I know we all are, we are creatures of time and space; and it is a natural tendency for us to relate to things around us by virtue of a breakdown of time. So it is really no surprise that we feel a need to put a label on the time period that we are in, which is the time period from the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ to the present hour. And I think the term most widely used to identify the years since the Ascension of Christ till now is the Church Age. We relate to ourselves as being in the Church Age. That is a way that scholars relate to it, and generally, people who are believers relate to this time period as the Church Age.

My concern is that this label, I think, misdirects the focus of our faith in this generation in which we live. My issue with this terminology is that in the Scriptures, when Christ was preparing the disciples for His departure from the earth and giving them instructions about how to proceed in their relationship to Himself and the Father while He would be absent from us, absent from the earth, nowhere does He instruct His disciples or His followers about the church. Instead, He taught them about the Holy Spirit that was to come, about being witnesses in all the world and making disciples of those who believe. But before anything else, they were directed to wait until they were filled with the Holy Spirit of promise and they were endued with power from on high. These were the admonitions of the Lord to His disciples and to His followers.

Now to begin with, and this is really by way of introduction, we have to understand this terminology of *church* as it was used by Yeshua, by Jesus, and how He referred to it. When He used the term church, which He did in only a few verses of the New Testament, He was referring to the assembly of those who by the Holy Spirit would hear from the Father as Peter had heard. Yeshua was speaking, as always, from

a Jewish biblical perspective, and He was speaking to those who were hearing through a Jewish biblical perspective. The word *qahal*, which in Hebrew means “assembly” or “congregation,” is the word *ecclesia* that we find in Greek. When we read this word in the English translation in Matthew, when Yeshua says “church,” it is clear that He was speaking about this term *qahal*; and the term in the Greek Scriptures of Matthew is *ecclesia* – the lemma of the word is *ecclesia*. And so, we need to reach in to see what it was that Yeshua, that Jesus, was saying, and how the people that were there around Him and listening to Him were understanding what He was saying to them.

When we look at the terminology, one of the things that we have to do is to compare it to the Septuagint; and it becomes very clear when we do this. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. When we look at this term in the Septuagint, this Greek term *ecclesia*, we find out where the meaning really lays. One example of a verse would be Deuteronomy 23:3. I will read it to you in English: “No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord.” We find assembly used twice in this verse 3; and each time when we look at the Septuagint, the word used is a form of *ecclesia*, *ecclesiam*, and it has that meaning very simply of assembly. When we read it here, it is saying very clearly “the assembly of the Lord” in both instances. So it is the assembly of the Lord, it is the assembly of Israel, because that is what the Hebrew Scriptures are addressing – the Hebrew people and their gathering together, them being the people of God; the God, the Creator of the universe, that we worship in our Christian faith. And so, if we look at this terminology in the Septuagint, both occurrences of the English word “assembly” are this word *ecclesiam*. Some form of *ecclesia* is likewise used in the Septuagint approximately 97 times; and in these verses of the Septuagint, we find that they are all referring to the gathering or the assembly of Israel – the term is used when referring to the assembly of the Lord, or the assembly of Israel, or the assembly of God's people. So that is the mindset that we look to find.

In Matthew 16:15-18, it says,

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

This is one of the few references, the few verses, where Yeshua, where Jesus, uses the term church in English. In Greek, He was saying *ecclesia*, and in the Hebrew – assuming He was speaking here to the disciples and was speaking to them in Hebrew – He would have said *qahal*. We have to recognize that He was looking to evoke a certain understanding. So how might Peter and those standing around listening to Him understand what He was saying? Here is a possible interpretation of verse 18 with this mindset, with the Hebrew mindset that these people would have had and that Jesus would have had: “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My assembly of Israel; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” The emphasis, then, in what He is getting across, is that it is an assembly of those who by the Holy Spirit are taught and led by the Father. So that is exactly what He was referring to when He addressed Simon Peter.

Let's go back to verse 16: “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock’” – talking about

this rock of revelation and understanding that came to Peter via the Holy Spirit from the Father, He said, “On this rock I will build My church.” The emphasis is not some revelation about church. The emphasis is about those who, like Peter, would have the Holy Spirit begin to reveal the teaching of the Father and the leading and understanding from the Father that Peter had just received. That is what Yeshua was addressing. It is not a lesson about church. When He refers to church, He is just saying “My assembly” – those who will be gathered, who move like you just moved, Peter, with this level of connection with the Father.

So again, I think that we have to be careful when we make the emphasis of what is being said to be “church”; and I believe that we have done that. We do refer to this as the Church Age, and therefore, our thinking brings us always back to the fact that the emphasis of the timeframe that we are in is the church, and we should focus on the church, and we should be developing around the church. I feel like the church is secondary to the fact that what He is really addressing are those who were going to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be able to be taught and led by the Holy Spirit. Now, eventually, those who had this experience would, I believe, be drawn together to assemble together. But their assembling together would be secondary to their individual experience of being filled, endued with power, having this promise of the Holy Spirit resting upon them.

I think that we have tended to lose this emphasis in these years that we have seen behind us, whether that be fifty years, or eighty years, whatever it is; the emphasis has become the church. What’s important? What’s important is to go to church. What’s important is to be a part of the church. What’s important is what is being said and taught by the church. What’s important is the authorities of the church. And I think what Christ was referring to and was trying to impart to those disciples in the last moments that He had on the earth was the importance of the Holy Spirit, and the relationship that they would have with Himself and the Father by virtue of being filled with the Holy Spirit and endued with power from on high, to function as believers.

I believe that the gathering together that they experienced, even in the book of Acts, was secondary to their experience. They were gathered together before the Holy Spirit fell upon them. He told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait; and they did wait. But what was necessary, and what He had promised them, was the Holy Spirit, not church. And I think that sometimes now we get the cart before the horse, and we emphasize the church. Wouldn’t it be interesting to go back to the manner in which Christ laid it out to them? He said, “You are going to have church. But first, before you let somebody in the church, they need to go and wait upon the Lord until they are filled with the Holy Spirit and endued with power. Then you can let them into the assembly.” See, the assembly was supposed to be that group of people, and made up of that group of people; and it was supposed to be initiated by virtue of the experience they had in being filled with the Holy Spirit and endued with the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby the Father and Christ could go on and teach them and unveil to them the things that were to come, and to lead them into all of the truth. So, assembly comes after this experience. We are to represent those who are filled and endued with the power.

I will read the other example where Christ uses the terminology of church, which is really ecclesia. In Matthew 18:15-17, He says,

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the

church [what is He saying? tell it to the assembly]; and if he refuses to listen even to the church [or the assembly], let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

Reading these verses, it is easy to see that Yeshua can simply be referring to the gathering, like the gathering of the elders, or the gathering of the tribes of Israel; because really, in the parable He is talking about, it is much like the order of Israel that was established under Moses. There were leaders of the tens and the hundreds and the thousands, and people would go through a process of correction and discipline. So really what Yeshua is saying is, “take it to the gathering.” But the gathering is defined in the previous verse, where He is discussing what Peter had experienced. He is talking about those who are filled with the Holy Spirit of promise, endued with power from on high, and enabled to be taught and directed by the Father. So we see that this is what Christ directed the disciples to do as the first step of their new walk, where He is no longer with them on a physical plane.

We have this in the verses of Acts 1:6-8:

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Here was a great opportunity, where just before the Resurrection, Christ could have said, “Look, now you are to go to Jerusalem and you are to start the church. You are to emphasize this assembling of people who believe in Me, and gather everybody together, and do this and do that, create the divine order of elders and apostles and prophets, and whatever.” And He did not do that. He did not mention or give any emphasis to the assembly or the method of assembly. He said, “You are to go, and you are to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses then.” Once the Holy Spirit comes, what is the emphasis? to start church? to have church meetings? No, it was to be witnesses of the Gospel in Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth. That is what He was encouraging them to do. And this follows along with what we see in the Gospel of John before the crucifixion, when Christ was speaking to His disciples. A good example of this is found in John 14:16-20. Verses 16-18 say, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

See, He is not going to leave us as orphans. He is leaving, He is going to the right hand of the Father, and He tells the disciples, “Listen, you should be glad for Me because I am going to the Father.” (Verse 28.) And we in this generation should still be glad for Christ, that He is seated at the right hand of the Father. We should also know that we are not orphans. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, who shall be with us and abide in us. This is what He left for us. This is what His emphasis was. And I fear that in many ways we have lost this emphasis within the church, because our focus is on the church as an entity rather than being an assembly of people who are filled with the Holy Spirit; so that the Holy Spirit is surrounding us and in us, and we are endued with power, and we are hearing by revelation and by the Holy Spirit, who teaches us and leads us, the things of the Father and the things to come. I think that we have lost this in a way. And like I said, if this is my New Year's resolution, then I want to have a release of a new infilling with the Holy Spirit, an enduing of the power of this Holy Spirit within me. I want this to

be my first emphasis, Him filling me, being in me. That is what I want to be driven to see in this new year to come.

I do trust in the Lord that He will do this, because Christ said in the parable, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask of Him?" So I am going to ask and trust that He is going to fill me, and, I believe, the body of Christ, in a new, greater way. Why a greater way? Because we have a greater focus and emphasis. Because we are asking and are driven to be filled with the Holy Spirit in a way that maybe we have become a little lazy. Maybe we have depended on other things to lead us and guide us.

Are you looking for your church leaders to lead you? Are you looking for them to teach you? Remember the prophecy of the new covenant out of Jeremiah 31:31-34, that we would all be taught of the Lord, and no man would teach his brother or his neighbor saying, 'Know the Lord,' but all would know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. Why? Because His Spirit was poured out upon us. Is that what we see as a result of the covenant Christ has given to us – that we are no longer taught? No, I think church is all about being taught, being led by others, being confirmed by others. And I question whether we have just grown into a wrong emphasis. I am not trying to do away with church. I am not trying to do away with the assembling of ourselves together. The Scriptures are clear: We are to assemble together, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. But I do not think we are to assemble together like a social club. I do not think we are just to be some gathering like any other gathering. This is not some societal manifestation of people getting together. That is not what it was to be about, and it is not what church should be. We should be the assembly of the Lord. We should be the gathering of God's people. And to qualify for that in this day and age, it means that we are those who are filled with His Spirit, and endued with His power and His anointing.

John 14:26 says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." This is what the Holy Spirit was to be to us. See, Christ was getting ready to leave, and He was telling them how they were going to live following His departure. I believe that is the age we are in. This is not the Church Age, this is the Age of the Holy Spirit. If you are going to call it "dispensation," this is not a dispensation of the Church, this is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. It is the time when Christ has gone to the right hand of the Father and He has asked the Father to pour out upon us His Spirit. And the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and He is to teach us all things and testify about the Lord. In John 15:26, He says, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me." How do we learn about Christ? How do we know Christ? How do we understand Christ? By the Holy Spirit that comes to us.

John 16:6-15 says, "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away." I think that is still hard for us in this age to think that Christ being gone from us in a physical way, and at the right hand of the Father, is to our advantage. But I believe it does not seem like it is to our advantage because we have not really been filled with the Holy Spirit as we need to be. He says,

"It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me [see, there is an element of righteousness and sanctification in the fact that we no longer see Him, yet we are

able to walk with Him and relate to Him by virtue of the Holy Spirit]; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."

What an amazing, amazing promise that we are to have! What a walk with God we are to have in this generation in which we live. We are to know the Lord. We are to be taught of the Lord. We are to hear His voice. We are to be directed in all things by Him. We are to receive all that the Father has, and all that He has given to Christ should be disclosed to us.

So many of these areas, when we read the Gospels, if we are honest in our own hearts we say, "I don't think I really have that, certainly not to a fullness." I just wonder how much we are depending on somebody or the church to provide that for us, when Christ has already provided it for us through the Holy Spirit; and what we need to be doing is seeking the Lord, seeking the Father, for the fullness of the outpouring of that Spirit. In John 7:37-39, it says,

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So we see that upon His glorification, we were to receive it; and out of our bellies, out of our being, would flow the Word of God. In that, and by that, we are to speak to the nations, we are to make disciples of all the nations. I think that we need to refocus our emphasis in this time, and that is what I want to do. For me in this year, I want to focus myself on being filled with the Holy Spirit, not dependent on others, not dependent on something that is not provided by God the Father, by Christ to me through the Holy Spirit. And I believe for us all that we can receive this.

There is so much more, and maybe I will do another teaching about the things of the Holy Spirit. But when we read about the Holy Spirit and what is provided, it says, "He has provided all things pertaining to life and godliness for us." It talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we are to receive. It talks about the fruit of the Holy Spirit that is to be in our life. There is so much, it is endless what the Lord gave to us when He gave us the Holy Spirit upon His departure, and I do not want to make it secondary to anything else. I want to say that when He was preparing to leave, He did not instruct the disciples about church, He instructed them about the Holy Spirit. He said, "This is why you will not be orphaned, because you will have the Holy Spirit. This is how you will be taught, and why you will be taught, because you have the Holy Spirit. This is how you will know what is true from what is false, through the infilling of the Holy Spirit." I believe that we have it to a measure, but we are to have it in its fullness. And I say, "Father, as we begin this year, in the name of Yeshua, fill us anew with the Holy Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit be our guide, let it be the anointing, let it be the power of Your Word in our lives. Let us walk in this new year in a new way, directed by and filled with Your Holy Spirit."

We ask in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach.

Amen.