

New-Covenant Churches

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes that the true mark of a new-covenant church is the transformative presence of God and the call for believers to embody His teachings through holy living.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:24

Topics: "Presence of God", "New-Covenant Church"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that the defining characteristic of a new-covenant church is the tangible presence of God among its members. He explains that when God's spirit is active, it leads to genuine acknowledgment of His presence, resulting in transformed lives and a deep longing for holiness. Poonen warns that without a spirit of humility and brokenness, a church cannot truly reflect the new covenant, as it is through this poverty of spirit that God's fire ignites hearts. He also highlights the importance of living examples of faith over mere preaching, asserting that true discipleship involves inviting others to follow our example. Ultimately, Poonen challenges the notion that Jesus is present in churches where lives remain unchanged, urging believers to seek a deeper, transformative relationship with Him.

Transcript

The one identifying mark of a new-covenant church is the presence of God in its midst. When the spirit of prophecy is powerfully present in a church meeting, those coming to that meeting will fall on their faces and "acknowledge that God is there" (1 Cor. 14:24, 25). When Jesus speaks prophetically in the church, our hearts will burn, just like the hearts of the two disciples burned on the way to Emmaus, when Jesus spoke to them (Luke. 24:32).

God is a consuming fire. When God came down into the bush through which He spoke to Moses, and the bush burned, no worm could survive in that bush. In exactly the same way, no sin can remain hidden or unexposed where the powerful, burning presence of God is found today. Such a church alone is a new-covenant church. The eyes of Jesus are like a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14) and He is constantly searching and exposing sin and human traditions and Phariseeism in all the churches which he is building.

The master key to the kingdom of heaven is poverty of spirit (Matt. 5:3). Without this, we will not be able to build a new-covenant church. To be poor in spirit is to be broken before God constantly with a sense of our own need, because we have a great and intense longing to be perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect. "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted" (Psa. 34:18). And when He is near, His presence brings the fire of heaven into our hearts and through us to others wherever we go.

In a new-covenant church, many will get offended with the preaching of the Word and leave the church. It is written of the church at Jerusalem, that "many people didn't dare join them" (Acts 5:13).

When the presence of Jesus is powerfully present in a church, the disciples therein will be taken up with seeing His glory. The proof that we have indeed seen the glory of the risen Lord will be that the things of earth (like comfort and honour and wealth) will have become dim in our eyes, and will no longer have the attraction that they once had for us.

In a new-covenant church, there won't be just powerful preaching of the Word but powerful, living examples of the Word too. It is not new doctrines that make an impact on others for God, but holy lives. New-covenant servants don't just preach to others, they invite others to follow their example too (1 Cor. 11:1). We should weep when our example is not a worthy one. We should hang our heads in shame when we bore people with dry, un-anointed messages. It is impossible to become cold or Pharisaical if we follow Jesus. We are far away from Jesus if we have only dreams and visions to talk about, but no word from the Lord to feed the people with. It is impossible to bore people, when we ourselves are on fire for the Lord.

Jesus was raised from the dead so that He might have the first place in everything (Col. 1:18). God fully backs all those who have this as their ambition. What this means is that we give up our own plans and rights and let Jesus tell us what we are to do, how we are to spend our money and time etc. If this is your only ambition in life, you can be certain that God will use you to build a new-covenant church in your locality.

Many claim that Jesus is in their midst just because they quote His Name (Matt. 18:20). But they are deceiving themselves. If He is really present in their midst, then why are the meetings so boring? Why is it that lives are not being transformed? Even a short time spent in the company of a truly godly man makes a deep impact upon us such that, it even changes the course of our lives. How much more of an impact there should be upon our lives if we have spent even a short time with Jesus Himself. So if lives are not being transformed through the church-meetings, then we have to admit that the Lord's presence is not there in our meetings. Then we are NOT a new-covenant church.

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