

There are few things as confused in the Church as the concept of anointing with oil and the prayer of faith for the sick. I'm a Charismatic Christian who still believes that the context of a Scripture verse matters. Sometimes it seems like it's becoming a small universe. We can't fish the Scriptures and pull out any old verse we find, make it into any old thing we want, and apply it any old way we want under the guise of a "new wineskin revelation." It's unfortunately the norm in my circles. Accuracy, education, or context are sometimes viewed as a nuisance or a necessary evil to be put up with. I believe context is critical to understanding and applying James 5 accurately.

I once had a conversation with an influential so-called apostle in the so-called apostolic movement who had responsibility for oversight of an international network of churches. He admitted to me with laughter that he *never studied* the Scriptures before He preached because He taught by "revelation." According to him, too much study "blocked the flow." He said that after he preaches he goes back to the Scriptures looking for confirmation of what he preached to make sure that what he taught was biblical. Of course, he always finds what he is looking for one way or the other.

I know of another so-called apostle (also the head of a multi-national network of churches) who believes God revealed to Him in a dream the new apostolic governmental order of covering. That is, apostles supposedly serve as the "spiritual covering" for the Body of Christ. They protect the Body and broker the blessings of heaven to the believers. Allegedly, without a relationship to a covering apostle the individual believer is in grave spiritual jeopardy and cut off from the full blessing of Christ.

This man teaches that the apostles spiritually link believers to Christ the Head. He teaches that divine blessing flows from the Head, to the apostle, to the subordinated believer. He says that God "revealed" to him that he was just such a covering for his people. This is a new revelation? Our Protestant forefathers gave their lives at the stake to do away with such thinking. Revealed in a dream? Since when do we establish doctrine and practice from dreams and visions?ⁱ Jesus Christ is God's final Word to humanity. God has spoken once, in these last days, in, through, and by the Son (literally, in a sonly way).ⁱⁱ We have the substance we don't teach the shadow. The Holy Spirit may give insight into the Scripture, but there is no new revelation to be had.

So how is what this gentleman teaches any different from what the cults teach? It's not. If this man's dream is good enough to establish a doctrine, why isn't Joseph Smith's, or yours, or mine or anybody's? Crack the lid on Pandora's Box of Gnosticism and all the screaming meemies will come flying out.

These types of issues are epidemic in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Those who believe them and things like them, will end up in the ditch just like every other person over the last 100 years who has embraced the same sort of error. Regrettably, some of these individuals are responsible for steering the Charismatic Church ship on the world stage. In the fog of their minds they are steering it right toward an appointment with the iceberg of God's chastising discipline.

ⁱ Personal edification, guidance, insight, etc., are one thing; formal doctrine to which others are to conform their lives is another.

ⁱⁱ Hebrews 1:1-2.