

# When Heaven invades Earth - A Review of Bill Johnson's Book

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## 1 When heaven invades earth - A practical guide to a life of miracles, by Bill Johnson

### 1.1 The background of the author Bill Johnson

Bill Johnson (born July 18, 1951) was pastor of Mountain Chapel in Weaverville, California from 1978 to 1996. Then he moved back to Bethel Church in Redding, California.

This book of Johnson was born out of a hunger for revival. "The quest described in this book began in me many years ago. I needed to see the gospel in life as it is in print."<sup>1</sup>

Any given reader thumbing through this book will soon realize that the author had a full life, full of experiences, miracles, challenges, passion, hunger for revival and hunger satisfied. The author puts into his hand a guide, a challenge to live by faith, to burn by faith in the fire of the Holy Spirit.

### 1.2 My own background as the writer of this review

Many things have been written about Bill Johnson and about this book. What I would like to do is go through it and look at it from my own personal perspective. I do this as a Bible teacher without signs and wonders, a non-Pentecostal, a non-speaking in tongues former missionary who has served the Lord for 18 years in Pakistan. I am not a cessationist when it comes to the general gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1 Cor 12-14 or Romans 12. With regard to the apostles of Christ I think that this gift was part of God's laying the foundation of the church in the first century (Eph 2,19-22; 4,11; Rev 21,14) and that we do not have apostles today.

Now back in Germany again since June 2017, I am seeing how the landscape in my country has changed. The name of Bill Johnson is known even in the rural area where I live an hours drive away from Cologne.

1. Bill Johnson, When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles. Expanded Edition (Kindle edition, 2013), 293. The place in the book is given here according to the kindle location number, because the page numbers were not really correct. For example page 4 was still given even after 29 percent of the book had been read already.

The way I would like to digest this book and give my perspective is by collecting things I have noticed while going through it related to certain topics which seem to be important for the author and also interesting for any reader of my review.

It relates to certain things Johnson teaches about Jesus, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, about salvation and about eschatology (or the absence of a future eschatology in favor of a present realization of the kingdom of God in power now). At the same time it is also crucial how Bill Johnson uses his Bible, what he quotes and what he does not quote.

If I encounter any teaching beyond my own horizon which seems to be important or influential, I like to see first what they say about the one person who changed my life, who bought me with his blood, who died for me at the cross and has risen and is very much alive, the Son of God, God incarnate himself, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the one who has poured out the Spirit on all flesh at Pentecost which he had received from God the Father when he was invited to sit at the right hand of God.

## 2 Johnson about Jesus

### 2.1 Johnson: Jesus performed his miracles as man, not as God.

(Loc 368):

Jesus Christ said of Himself, “The Son can do nothing” (John 5:19) ... He had *no* supernatural capabilities whatsoever! While He is 100 percent God, He chose to live with the same limitations that man would face once he was redeemed ... Jesus became the model for all who would embrace the invitation to invade the impossible in His name. He performed *miracles, wonders, and signs* as a man in right relationship to God ... not as God. If He performed miracles because He was God, then they would be unattainable for us. But if He did them as man, I am responsible to pursue His lifestyle. Recapturing this simple truth changes everything ... and makes possible a full restoration of the ministry of Jesus in His Church.

### 2.2 Johnson: Jesus laid his divinity aside.

In Loc 423 we read:

Jesus, who would shed His blood to redeem mankind, emptied Himself of His rights as God and took upon Himself the limitations of man. Satan was defeated by a man - the Son of Man - who was rightly related to God. Now, as people receive the work of Christ on the cross for salvation, they become grafted into that victory.

In chapter 7 “THE ANOINTING AND THE ANTICHRIST SPIRIT” Johnson states (Loc. 1270-1284):

*Christ is not Jesus' last name. The word Christ means “Anointed One” or “Messiah”. It is a title that points to an experience ... The WORD anointing means “to smear.” The Holy Spirit is the oil of God that was smeared all over Jesus at His water baptism (see Luke 3:21-22). The name Jesus Christ implies that Jesus is the One smeared with the Holy Spirit. But there is another spirit that works to ambush the Church in every age. This power was identified by the apostle John when he said, “Even now many antichrists have come” (1 John 2:18). The nature of the antichrist spirit is found in its name: *anti*, “against”; *Christ*, “Anointed One”.*

Jesus lived His earthly life with human limitations. He laid His divinity aside (see Phil. 2:5-7) as He sought to fulfill the assignment given to Him by the Father: to live life as a man without sin, and then die in the place of mankind for sin ... The sacrifice that could atone for sin had to be a lamb (powerless), and had to be spotless (without sin). The anointing Jesus received was the

equipment necessary, given by the Father, to make it possible for Him to live beyond human limitations ... The anointing is what linked Jesus, the man, to the divine, enabling Him to destroy the works of the devil.

### 2.3 My comments about Johnson's christology.

In normal orthodox explanations of who Jesus was and is, certain phrases of Johnson would be avoided, because they would not agree with a biblical teaching of the Trinity. See for example Grudem about the Kenosis Theory to which Johnson hints with Phil 2,5-7, that Jesus emptied himself of his divinity.<sup>2</sup> When Johnson says that Jesus “laid his divinity aside” this sounds as if he was not 100 percent God while being on earth. Similarly the idea that “the anointment is what linked Jesus, the man, to the divine”. I do not think that Johnson really cares whether people acknowledge him to be orthodox or not. But for me it is important.

For me christology is core, is central, is the foundation of true Christianity. As the Bible affirms the divinity and the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of God, the Word of God that became flesh, I cannot ignore the potential heresy in what Johnson says.

In my reading of John 5,19 I see an affirmation of his divinity in the context (John 5,16-24 ESV):

16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” 18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

19 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. 22 For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

If you look at the context, the issue was that Jesus had healed the invalid on the Sabbath. What Jesus says is, that God the Father himself works all days, otherwise the world would cease to exist. And Jesus works all the time watching what the Father shows him to do. This includes divine judgment of all mankind and resurrecting all people. The Jews wanted to kill Jesus because he was “making himself equal with God”. This is only one of many examples I have found in Johnson’s book where he takes one verse out of context and affirms the opposite of what the chapter says (see 7.5).

### 2.4 Johnson: The work and the goal of the antichrist spirit.

In addition to what we have heard about the antichrist above (Loc. 1270-1284) we read about the spirit of the antichrist in Loc. 1315:

The spirit of the antichrist is at work today, attempting to influence believers to reject everything that has to do with the Holy Spirit’s anointing. This rejection takes on many religious forms, but basically it boils down to this: we reject what we can’t control. That spirit has worked to reduce the gospel to a mere intellectual message, rather than a supernatural God encounter. It tolerates the

2. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), p. 549-552.

mention of power if it's in the past ... It is the antichrist spirit that has given rise to religious spirits. A religious spirit is a demonic presence that works to get us to substitute being led by our intellect instead of the Spirit of God.

Johnson explains "The goal of the antichrist spirit" in Loc 1386:

The antichrist spirit has a goal for the Church - embrace Jesus apart from the anointing. Without the anointing.

## 2.5 My comments about Johnson's teaching about the "antichrist spirit".

As we have seen above in the quotes, Johnson understands the antichrist as someone who opposes the work of the Holy Spirit and the antichrist spirit is a spirit opposing the work of the Holy Spirit. He quotes 1 John 2:18 above, but he takes no help from John in defining the antichrist or the spirit of the antichrist.

John is the only author in the New Testament who uses the word Antichrist, and this only in his first and second letter (1 Joh 2:18.22; 4:3; 2 Joh 1,7). Let us have a look at John's teaching in context and compare it with Johnson.

1 John 2,18-23<sup>3</sup>

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4,1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

2 John 1,7-9

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

According to these statements of John we can recognize the nature of the antichrist and the spirit of the antichrist:

1. The antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ. (1 Joh 2,22)
2. The antichrist denies the Son and by doing this denies the Fatherhood of God in his relationship to the Son. (1 Joh 2,22)

3. If not otherwise stated all English quotations of the Bible are given according to New American Standard Bible, [Accessed May 9, 2020], The Lockman Foundation, 1995, <https://www.crosswire.org/study/fulllibrary.jsp?show=NASB>.

3. The antichrist does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.
4. The antichrist goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ.
5. While the Spirit of God confesses “that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”, the spirit of the antichrist cannot confess this (1 Joh 4,2-3).

For John the christology is the key to understand the difference between true Christianity and movements generated by the spirit of the antichrist. If I combine everything what John teaches about the antichrists and the spirits of the antichrists, it becomes crystal clear:

**If somebody denies that God has become flesh in Jesus Christ the Son of God, he is an antichrist** (John 1,1-3.14; 1 John 1,1-4; 5,20; Rev 19,13).

In this John totally agrees with Paul whose key confession is “Jesus is Lord” by which Paul means that Jesus is God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jakob (1 Cor 12,3; Phil 2,9-11; Rom 10,9-13) who has become flesh (Col 2,9; 1,19).

This is the reason why the true Church has always fought, when the christology got attacked. The teachers of the Church knew that when you loose the true Christ you loose salvation.

## 2.6 Johnson about the Cross

In his talk about “THE CHRISTIAN LIFE” and “COUNTERFEIT CROSS” (Loc. 2450-2475) Johnson explains his understanding of the cross.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian life is not found on the Cross. It is found *because* of the Cross. It is His resurrection power that energizes the believer. Does this diminish the value of the Cross? No! The shed blood of the spotless Lamb wiped out the power and presence of sin in our lives. *We have nothing without the Cross!* Yet, the Cross is not the end - it is the beginning, the entrance to the Christian Life. Even for Jesus the cross was something to be endured in order to obtain the joy on the other side (see Hebr. 12:2)! *The great majority of the Christian world is still weeping at the foot of the cross. The consciousness of mankind remains fixed on the Christ who died, not on the Christ who lives. People are looking back to the Redeemer who was, not the Redeemer who is ...* His blood wiped out my debt of sin. But it was His resurrection that brought me *into the black* (see John 10:10) ... Jesus became poor so that I could become rich. He suffered with stripes to free me from affliction, and He became sin so I might become the righteousness of God (see 2 Cor. 5:21). Why then should I try to become *as He was*, when He suffered so I could become *as He is*? At some point, the reality of the resurrection must come into play in our lives - we must discover the power of the resurrection for all who believe (see Eph. 1:21; 3:20).

### COUNTERFEIT CROSS

Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). A misunderstanding of this call has led many to follow His life of self-denial, but to stop short of His life of power. For them the cross-walk involves trying to crucify their sin nature by embracing joyless brokenness as an evidence of the cross. But, we must *follow Him all the way* - to a lifestyle empowered by the resurrection! ... One who embraces an inferior cross is constantly filled with introspection and self-induced suffering. But the cross is not self-applied - Jesus did not nail Himself to the cross. Christians who are trapped by this counterfeit are constantly talking about their weaknesses.

## 2.7 My comments about Johnson's teaching about the “cross”.

In the section quoted above Johnson asks: “Why then should I try to become *as He was*, when He suffered so I could become *as He is*?”

## 2.8 Christ commands us to follow him in his suffering, so that we may also partake in his glory.

Johnson quotes Mt 16:24 and speaks of a misunderstanding of this verse leading to a counterfeit cross: “For them the cross-walk involves trying to crucify their sin nature by embracing joyless brokenness as an evidence of the cross ... One who embraces an inferior cross is constantly filled with introspection and self-induced suffering.” It is clear that Jesus did not teach us “self-induced suffering”. Here Johnson is right. But what did Jesus teach in the context of Mt 16:24? Let us have a look at Mt 16:21-27 :

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.

There are two big main lessons which Jesus was teaching in the gospel according to Matthew. The first lesson was repentance (Mt 4:17) and the second was his teaching about his suffering and his resurrection on the third day (Mt 16:21). Both lessons are introduced with the words “From that time Jesus began to ...” Mt 4,17 is a summary of the public preaching of John the baptist (Mt 3:2) and of Jesus. Mt 16:21 is a summary of the secret teaching to the inner circle of the disciples as soon as it had become clear in this inner circle that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the son of God (Mt 16:13-20).

Now Jesus had to teach them that he would be Christ crucified, the suffering Son of Man (Mt 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:2.12-13.24-28.64). Out of very human considerations Peter was against this teaching of a suffering and dying Christ (Mt 16:22-23). In answer to his confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16) Jesus had called him “blessed”, but now in answer to his denial of the coming suffering of Jesus as the Christ he has to hear the words: “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

This would have been enough to show Peter that Jesus had to suffer. But Jesus uses this occasion to teach the disciples that every believer has to suffer: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” The idea is that Jesus takes up his own cross and goes to his execution which is a literal prophecy about his way of death.

Simon Peter would deny Jesus to save his own skin. But Jesus teaches him and us that we have to deny ourselves to follow Jesus into death. When Peter denied Jesus, he said: “I do not know him.” We have to act in a way as if we do not know ourselves and do not love ourselves.

This will be no self-inflicted suffering, but caused by people who hate the name of Jesus and everyone belonging to Jesus: “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Mt 16:25; 24:9). “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.” (16:27) Jesus will repay every man. If we deny ourselves and suffer for Christ, the glorified Christ will glorify us in his coming.

This is the future of Peter as well as Jesus says in John 21,18-19:

18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

Revelation 21:14 shows us the great glory of the twelve apostles of Jesus, including Simon Peter. It was worth it to live for Christ in self-denial and to die for him.

The apostle Paul presents the same key idea in Rom 8,16-18:

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Paul implies that every son and every daughter of God has to suffer with Christ. Only those who do this are truly heirs of the glory to come. This is in total agreement with Mt 16:21-27. According to Luke 9:23 the self-denial and taking up of one's cross is even a daily routine of every follower of Christ.

The example of the suffering of Christ as the way in front of us to be imitated by the church, by all believers is not really emphasized by the author. He teaches the power of the resurrection of Christ without teaching that we have to be prepared to follow Christ in his suffering as well. That is neither the teaching of Jesus nor of the apostles.

## 2.9 The source of every true revival is the power of the cross and the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have seen above that Johnson points to an idea of Paul in 2 Cor 5:21 to make his point:

Jesus became poor so that I could become rich. He suffered with stripes to free me from affliction, and He became sin so I might become the righteousness of God (see 2 Cor. 5:21). Why then should I try to become *as He was*, when He suffered so I could become *as He is*?

What Johnson gets out of 2 Cor 5:21 is that we should celebrate the resurrection power and be as much alive as the resurrected Christ. But he ignores the immediate context of 2 Cor 5:21 leading up to that verse. One key idea of Paul in 2 Corinthians is God's power in his, in Paul's weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10) which is also found in 2 Cor 4:6-12.16-18 :

6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death works in us, but life in you.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

### 3 JOHNSON ABOUT THE QUESTION WHETHER GOD (THE FATHER) DISCIPLINES PEOPLE.8

If we look especially at the verses 10 to 12 in chapter 4, we realize that we cannot have the revelation of the resurrection power of Jesus in our body without “always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus”. “Death works in us, but life in you.” Whoever wants to be part of a revival, must be willing to suffer or even die for Christ. The rhythm of revival is the rhythm of God’s power in our weakness, God’s comfort “in all our affliction” (2 Cor 1,3-4) and God’s resurrection power in our death.

#### 2.10 **As the Son of God 'learned obedience from the things which He suffered' we have to learn obedience in our sufferings.**

There is another good outcome for suffering and pain for the believer if he endures it by faith and in obedience to God’s guidance as we learn from our Lord according to Hebrews 5:7-10:

7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus was perfect. He never sinned. He lead a most holy life. I am far from perfect. I have sinned a lot. But I wish for a most holy life. If Jesus had to suffer and thus “learned obedience from the things which He suffered”, who am I to think that my way to holiness shall be an easy one and easy going? This subject overlaps with the next subject and will be taken up in the response to Johnson’s idea about the god who does not discipline his people.

### 3 **Johnson about the question whether God (the Father) disciplines people.**

#### 3.1 **Johnson's statements**

Loc. 640-647

Faith lives within the revealed will of God. When I have misconceptions of who He is and what He is like, my faith is restricted by those misconceptions. For example, if I believe that God allows sickness in order to build character, I’ll not have confidence praying in most situations where healing is needed. But if I believe that sickness is to the body what sin is to the soul, then no disease will intimidate me. Faith is much more free to develop when we truly see the heart of God as good.

The same misconceptions of God affect those who need to have faith for their own miracle. A woman who needed a miracle once told me that she felt God had allowed her sickness for a purpose. I told her that if I treated my children that way I’d be arrested for child abuse. She agreed and eventually allowed me to pray for her. After truth came into her heart, her healing came minutes later.

#### 3.2 **My comments about Johnson's view of the Goodness of the Father.**

I assume that Johnson knows all the texts where God as a Father disciplines his people in the Old and the New Testaments. But he seems to have a ‘revealed will of God’ which includes the idea that God is good in the way that he never ‘allows sickness in order to build character’. I think here comes in what Bill Johnson calls the principle that “God is bigger than his book” (1500).



The fresh revelations which God gives his church today by the power of the Holy Spirit and prophecy may go beyond what we have in the Bible. But I am a little bit uneasy with this. I like to look to the Bible for my guidance. And I prefer what the Bible says in comparison to so-called fresh revelations of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So what do I do with Johnson's statements about God being a criminal if he disciplines his children when I come to Hebrews 12,3-11:

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

If I accept Hebrews 12 as holy scripture which is valid today then I accept the idea that God can discipline me that I "may share his holiness". If I want to become holy, I need God as my Father to discipline me. I trust him that his discipline will transform me to be more like him.

In view of that Johnson talked to that woman 'who needed a miracle' in a way that she got her miracle. I guess another side effect was that he convinced her that God does not discipline us today in the way Hebrews 12 tells us. I personally would prefer Hebrews 12.

## 4 Johnson about the Holy Spirit

### 4.1 Johnson's roots in a Pentecostal tradition and his personal experiences

Bill Johnson says (287):

As a fifth-generation pastor on my dad's side of the family, and fourth on my mom's', I grew up hearing of the great moves of God ... Grandpa and Grandma Morken received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1901 and 1903, respectively, and they loved to talk about what they had seen and experienced.

As Johnson is at home in a Pentecostal tradition for him the baptism in the Holy Spirit 'makes a life-style available to us that not even John had access to' (Loc. 1134 +1151) and goes hand in hand with speaking in tongues (Loc. 1171):

As glorious as the gift of tongues is, it is an entrance point to a lifestyle of power. That power has been given to us that we might dispossess the strongholds of hell and take possession for the glory of God.

We have read above about Jesus that 'the anointing is what linked Jesus to the divine' (Loc 1284) which points to the fact that Jesus was anointed by the coming of the Holy Spirit on him.

Bill Johnson writes about some very personal experiences he had in his hunger for more of God and more of the Holy Spirit (1854-1886):

In this endeavor I must passionately desire life-changing encounters with God, over and over again. I must cry out day and night for them ... and be specific. I must be willing to travel to get what I need. If God is moving somewhere else more than where I live, I must *go!*

In my personal quest for increased power and anointing in my ministry, I have traveled to many cities, including Toronto. God has used my experiences in such places to set me up for life-changing encounters at home.

Once, in the middle of the night, God came in answer to my prayer for more of Him, yet not in a way I had expected. I went from a dead sleep to being wide-awake in a moment. Unexplainable power began to pulsate through my body, seemingly just shy of electrocution. It was as though I had been plugged into a wall socket with a thousand volts of electricity flowing through my body. My arms and legs shot out in silent explosions as if something was released through my hands and feet. The more I tried to stop it, the worse it got ...

This was simply the most overwhelming experience of my life. It was raw power ... *it was God.* He came in response to a prayer I had been praying for months - *God, I must have more of You at any cost! ...*

The power surges didn't stop. They continued throughout the night, with me weeping and praying, *More Lord, more; please give me more of You.* It all stopped at 6:38 a.m., at which time I got out of bed completely refreshed. This experience continued the following two nights, beginning moments after getting into bed.

#### 4.2 Johnson's great visions of revival for the present church

In agreement with these overwhelming experiences of God as raw power one of Bill Johnson's key terms is 'power'. Johnson sees a movement happening which restores the apostolic order of God by the power of the Holy Spirit (Loc. 1480):

But now this gravitational pull toward fathers is happening even within denominations. Such a gathering of believers allows for differences in nonessential doctrines without causing division. Many consider this movement to be a restoration of the apostolic order of God.

Johnson has great visions for the church experiencing God's power in unity of faith (Loc. 3145):

Unity of faith means we will hear His voice together, and demonstrate great exploits. It is a lifestyle, not just a concept - as in having *unity in our ideas about faith.* The exploits of the present and coming revival will surpass all the accomplishments of the Church in all history combined. Over 1 billion souls will be saved. Stadiums will be filled with people 24 hours a day, for days on end, with miracles beyond number: healings, conversions, resurrections, and deliverances too many to count.

Loc. 1208 Johnson says:

The Holy Spirit has no battle wounds. He has no teeth marks from the demonic realm fighting for preeminence. Jesus is Lord, period. Those who learn how to work with the Holy Spirit actually cause the reality of His world (His dominion) to collide with the powers of darkness that have influence over a person or situation. The greater the manifestation of His presence, the quicker the victory.

#### 4.3 The believers can do greater works than Jesus

Loc. 2320

Jesus came as the light of the world. He then passed the baton to us, announcing that we are the light of the world. Jesus came as the miracle worker. He said that we would do “greater works” than He did (see John 14:12).

Loc. 2845

The original flame of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit Himself, burns within my soul. I have a promise from God. I am a part of a company of people destined to do greater works than Jesus did in His earthly ministry. Why is it so hard to see the Church with significant influence in the last days? It was God who determined that the Bride should be spotless and without wrinkle.

Loc. 3196

... *He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father* (John 14:12). Jesus’ prophecy of us doing greater works than He did has stirred the Church to look for some abstract meaning to this very simple statement ... Jesus’ statement is not that hard to understand. *Greater* means “greater.” And the *works* He referred to are signs and wonders ... This verse is often explained away by saying it refers to *quantity* of works, not *quality*.

#### 4.4 My comments about Johnson's explanation that the believers can do greater works than Jesus.

I agree with Johnson that the “greater” works Jesus spoke of in John 14:12 speak of quality. The works that the church will do after Jesus has gone to the Father are greater than the works Jesus did before the cross because of the one fact and the one foundation: “because I go to My Father”. According to his human body Jesus goes away and that was necessary so that the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7):

7 But I tell you the truth, 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. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

12 “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 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. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

The big change comes with the day of Pentecost. According to his human body Jesus went away to the father and sits now at the right hand of God the Father. But according to the spirit Jesus comes together with the Father and dwells in the church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 14,15-23):

15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 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.

18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in

Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

I would like to add a part of John 15:1-8 to this:

1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing ...

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Because of these texts I think that Johnson’s picture of the passing of the baton is not quite correct: “Jesus came as the light of the world. He then passed the baton to us, announcing that we are the light of the world.”

Jesus is the light of the world by his own essence and divinity (John 8:12):

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

According to John 8,12 a believer has the Light of life because he follows Jesus. Here the picture is not that Jesus is gone and has handed the baton into our hands, but he moves in front and we follow in his light.

Matthew 5:14-16 gives a different picture but agrees fully understood in substance:

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Here Jesus teaches his disciples. If they hear his word and do it, they show themselves to be light: ”Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Jesus is light of the world in a unique way by his own essence and divinity. We are light of the world insofar as we accept his words and do them (Mt 7:12-26). If the salt becomes foolish (Mt 5:13) or if we only hear the words of Jesus and call him Lord but do not do what he tells us, we are like foolish builders building our house on sand.

So there is a difference between Jesus being the light and us being the light. The same is true for his being the temple of God and our being the temple of God. He is God himself in his own essence. Therefore his body was a temple of God (John 2,19). We as the church are the temple of God because Jesus lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

With all this said what are the greater works that the church does and Jesus has not done? I think in John this relates to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which introduced a new time, a new era, the time of the new covenant. In John 7:39 we read:

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.

When Jesus says in John 14:12: “He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and **greater works** than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”, he states that the church will do the works he did: He healed the lame (John 5:1-18), in the name of Jesus they heal the lame (Acts 3:1-26). He raised the dead (John 11,25-45), they raised the dead (Acts 9,36-42; 20,9-12).

But what does he mean by talking of the greater works? What could be greater than making a dead person alive? The answer lies in the coming of the Spirit of God being sent by Jesus on the day of Pentecost. After Jesus was glorified the Spirit could come and do the greater works through the body of Christ, the Church of God, whose head is still Christ or through the true vine whose branches are the people of the church. According to John 15:5 we can do nothing apart from Christ. All we do, he does through the power of the Holy Spirit. What kind of work happens after Pentecost which did not happen before? What is the greater work?

I think it is that people are born again (John 3:3.5; Mt 11:9-11). Of course only God can do this (John 1,12-13), but he uses the church to do it and the proclamation of the word of God in world missions in Israel and the nations (Acts 1,8; 1 Peter 1,3.23-25). Somebody who is born again by God’s grace is raised from the dead in a spiritual way never to die again (1 Peter 1,3; Eph 2,6; John 11,25-26).

#### 4.5 When God colors outside the Lines

Loc. 2385-2400

His world has been breaking into ours with regularity in salvations, healings, and deliverances. The manifestations of that invasion vary. They are quite fascinating and too numerous to catalog. While some are difficult to understand at first glance, we know that God always works redemptively.

On many occasions laughter has filled a room, bringing healing to broken hearts. Gold dust sometimes covers people’s faces, hands, or clothing during worship or ministry time. Oil sometimes appears on the hands of His people; and it especially happens among children. A wind has come into a room with no open windows, doors, vents, etc. At some locations, believers have seen an actual cloud of His presence appearing over the heads of worshipping people. We’ve also had the fragrance of heaven fill a room. In my own experience the fragrance of heaven filled our car while Beni and I were worshipping on a short trip. It lasted for about 30 minutes, and was a smell that I could actually taste, similar to granules of sugar sprinkled on my tongue. I have seen the small gems that suddenly appeared in people’s hands as they worshiped God.

Since early in 1998 we have had feathers fall in our meetings. At first I thought birds were getting into our air conditioning ducts. But then they started falling in other rooms of the church not connected with the same ductwork. They now fall most [sic!] anywhere we go - airports, homes, restaurants, offices, and the like ...

No longer is it just tears during a special song or a time of repentance following a moving sermon. Our new list includes falling, shaking, laughter, etc. The problem is - it is still a list. And God will violate it. He must. We must learn to recognize His move by recognizing His presence. Our lists are only good for revealing our present understanding or experience ... The list that keeps us from certain types of errors also keeps us from certain types of victories.

## 5 Bill Johnson about salvation

Loc 444:

The gospel of salvation is to touch the whole man: spirit, soul, and body. John G. Lake called this a *Triune Salvation*... Matthew 6:13 (KJV), “Deliver us from

the evil.” The word *evil* represents the entire curse of sin upon man ... Jesus destroyed the power of sin, sickness, and poverty through His redemptive work on the cross.

Loc 670 shows us the application of this idea with regard to healing:

If the doctor says you have a tumor, it’s silly to pretend that it’s not there. That’s not faith. However, faith is founded on a reality that is superior to that tumor. I can acknowledge the existence of a tumor and still have faith in the provision of His stripes for my healing ... I was provisionally healed 2000 years ago. It is the product of the Kingdom of Heaven - a superior reality. There are no tumors in heaven, and faith brings that reality into this one.

Loc 1898:

Jesus healed everyone who came to Him. To accept any other standard is to *bring the Bible down to our level of experience*, and deny the nature of the One who changes not.

### 5.1 My comments about Johnson's understanding of salvation.

Johnson understands sin, sickness and poverty as an expression of evil. Deliverance from the evil is redemption from sin, healing of sickness and having abundant means to live by and to do good by. And all of this in this life. That is his understanding of the gospel of salvation.

Is that what Jesus meant by his prayer “deliver us from the evil”? Let us look at the three areas.

1. Poverty: Jesus’ teaching about the poor.
2. Sickness: Can God cause sickness and use it in this life for something good?
3. Sin: Is the redemption from sin an instant process or a lifelong experience of God’s redeeming grace based on the cross and the resurrection of Christ?

### 5.2 Poverty: Jesus' teaching about the poor.

Johnson uses the request in the prayer of our Lord in Matthew 6:13 (KJV), “Deliver us from the evil” to show us that God wants us to be delivered from poverty. Let us have a look at the context. This is from the sermon on the mount (Mt 5-7) which has a parallel in Luke 6. It begins with a blessing for the poor:

Mt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Lk 6:20-26 20 And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

24 But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

25 Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

The key idea is that the disciples often have difficult times in this life, but they can be happy now trusting God, because they will have enormous blessings in the future life.

They are poor now, they weep, they are hungry and they are hated because of the name of Jesus. But they cling to Jesus in poverty, in tears, in hunger and in being hated and they rejoice in the Lord.

Jesus proclaims several 'woe to you' over those who are rich now, well-fed now, laughing now and are celebrated now, because they will be hungry, weeping and rejected by God in eternity.

The epistle of James, the brother of the Lord, has many verses which are inspired by the teaching of the sermon on the mount. Here are some verses related to being rich and being poor (James 1:9-12 )

9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

10 and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 2:1-7 :

1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

The words of Jesus in Mt 19 spoken to and about the rich young man who came to him in search for eternal life have become very famous:

21 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

The teaching of Jesus is clearly that the riches of this world and the abundance of this world can be a great hindrance to enter the kingdom of heaven, to enter paradise. Let us come back to the sermon on the mount. After the teaching of Jesus about prayer and the "Our father in heaven" in the immediate context we find the same idea (Mt 6,19-24 ):

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves

do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

In the “Our father in heaven” Jesus teaches us to pray “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Mt 6:11). This is not a request for an abundance of bread for weeks and months to come, but for today. I have seen many faithful brothers and sisters in Pakistan who live more like that in relative poverty in this life, but “rich in faith” (James 2:5).

### 5.3 **Sickness: Can God cause sickness and use it in this life for something good?**

There are many cases in the Holy Scriptures of the New and Old Testaments where God sent sickness or even death for various reasons. A good verse about God’s omnipotence and his authority to cause anything he wishes in his sovereign will is Amos 3:6 “If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?”

We have seen above that Johnson states: “Jesus healed everyone who came to Him.” It is enough that I show one case where someone in the New Testament came to Jesus and was not healed. The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Cor 12:7-10:

7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me - to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

In the context here Paul speaks of great revelations given to “someone he knows” and this must be he himself because he gets “the thorn in the flesh” who beats him up. The source of the weakness in the body is spiritual, a messenger of Satan who is permitted to beat him up. The effect in the body is felt as a weakness. The Greek word used here for weakness often means “illness”.

This weakness or illness of Paul was a great plague for him. It attacked him like coming out of the blue sky. It was very inconvenient and very painful. When did it start? 2 Cor 12:2-5:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows - 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. 5 On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.

The revelations happened “fourteen years” ago. This Jewish way of speaking of a time span could mean in modern English reckoning something between 12 and 14 years. This is a long time. In verse 7 he tells us that he got the thorn in his flesh for a spiritual reason and benefit: “to keep me from exalting myself!” The reason for this is that the revelations were



so great that he could get puffed up and lose his spiritual grounding and become unusable and unfruitful in his life as an apostle.

Because he needed this thorn immediately after these great revelations to keep him on the ground, I assume that the attacks of the messenger of Satan started soon after he was back from his visit of the third heaven and of paradise. At the same time I think Paul did not realize that there was a connection between his great pain in the body and the heavenly revelations received recently. In a very normal way the pain drove him into prayer.

Three times he went to the Lord and asked for deliverance from this enormous pain. The first time he got no answer. The second time he got no answer. The third time he heard the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Paul again tells us that he accepted this word of the Lord: "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

We know Paul and his team as a power-station for revival. His testimony is that he needed and still needs this weakness, this illness to be kept spiritually on the ground. If this all happened more than twelve years ago, the revelations and the "No" of Jesus, then the most fruitful time of his life so far was overshadowed and accompanied by this pain. All his letters, from Galatians to 2 Corinthians so far, have been written by a man accustomed to pain. The many people he healed in the name of Jesus were healed by a man who was ill himself.

I do not want to miss his letters in the New Testament. I do not want to miss his testimony in the chorus of the apostles of Christ. Thanks to the Lord's arrangement for this messenger of Satan to beat him up again and again and thanks to the powerful grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we experience the power of Christ speaking to us in the letters of Paul even today.

#### 5.4 **Sin: Is the redemption from sin an instant process or a lifelong experience of God's redeeming grace based on the cross and the resurrection of Christ?**

Modern western culture is an "instant" culture. I want coffee, and I want it now. I want joy and I want it now, in this instant. I want redemption from sin, and I want it now. I want heaven, and I want it now. I want everything, not even today, but yesterday.

In the culture of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, a key word is patience and waiting trusting God and hoping for his time to fulfill all his promises. Faith and hope and love. That is the way to connect to God Almighty.

Within salvation history the coming of the lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world took a long time. Isaiah 53 was seen by the prophet Isaiah roughly 700 years before the cross took actually place. Psalm 22 was received by David approximately 1000 years before. The first Gospel of Genesis 3:15 was spoken even thousands of years before that. Mankind and Israel had to wait.

Rom 3:21-26 Paul gives us a glimpse from a New Testament perspective of the same waiting process:

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

When Jesus Christ died on Good Friday, God the Father gave him as an atoning sacrifice fulfilling the shadow animal sacrifices of thousands of years in a deeper and ultimate reality: God himself was and is just and will forever be just in his own being and as judge.

God also justifies every human being who accepts the sacrifice of Christ for him or her by faith. The people who accept this sacrifice by faith have been enlightened by God's grace (Rom 3:24; 9:14-16; 11:4-6; John 6:37). Within Romans 1-5 they have received the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (Rom 4:3-5) which is not their own righteousness but the righteousness of Jesus Christ who is typological the last Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45). In the sin of the first Adam all die, by the righteousness of the last Adam imputed to us we all live (Rom 5:17-19).

By having received this righteousness the redeemed have a stand of grace (Rom 5,20-6:2):

5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

The moment sinners repent and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, the moment they are born again by God's grace through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have a new stand: They stand in grace (Rom 5:2) and under the rule of grace to eternal life (Rom 5:21). This is instantaneous. As soon as they are connected to Jesus Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit they are under grace (Rom 8:9). God's grace brought them to being born again by their personal faith in the gospel of God. Now they are covered and ruled by this grace.

But as Romans 6,1-23 show us, they now should live as having been crucified with Christ and buried with Christ in their baptism and risen to live a new and righteous life. Paul unfolds this way of life in Romans 6:1-8:14. The bottom line of this is that the cross of Christ has an immense ongoing impact on the daily life of every believer clinging to Christ. They have received the righteousness of Christ instantaneously with being grafted into Christ.

But now we are challenged to live accordingly a life of commitment to Christ, holiness and righteousness (Rom 6:12-13 + 22; 8:3-14). This is not instantaneous, but a lifelong struggle and war between the Spirit and the flesh (Gal 5:16-6:2; Rom 7:4-8:4) with no peace until the last breath or until Christ comes with the clouds of heaven to gather his elect to himself. Following the Spirit of God we have victory, but as far as we try to fight in our own strength, we are desperate and always losing (Rom 7:14-25).

Crucial for the right understanding of this struggle are two verses in Romans, 7:24 and 8:23 within their context:

7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Rom 7:24 is the climax of our wretched state crying out for salvation and redemption. "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" The answer is clear: Jesus Christ. But I need patience. He has set me free by the Spirit (Rom 8,1-14), but my body is still unredeemed according to Rom 8:23:

8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes

for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

The fact that my body is not redeemed yet has a double effect on my spiritual life and on my physical well-being. In my spiritual life in the struggle between Spirit and flesh, I may fall down and need help to stand up again (Gal 6:1-2; 1 Cor 10:11-12; Prov 24:16; Ps 19:12). With regard to my physical well-being I might get ill according to the sovereign will of God without my knowing why now and why this illness, why this weakness. I have to wait patiently.

There is no promise that God will always take my weakness or illness away, because my body is still unredeemed and I have to wait patiently hoping for the future redemption. I may pray for temporary healing and may ask others, for example the elders to do it, but I personally do not know what is going to happen until the Holy Spirit might give me the confidence of getting healed or give it to the elders (James 5:15-16).

The promise I have is that the Holy Spirit is going to help me in my weakness (Rom 8:26): I do not know what to pray and how to pray in this situation, but “the Spirit Himself intercedes for” me “with groanings too deep for words” or “with word-less groanings”. Pentecostals often understand Rom 8:26 as referring to the gift of speaking in tongues.

To speak a tongue means to speak a language in Greek: λαλεῖν γλώσση *lalēin glōssē*. But in Rom 8:26 the Spirit conveys his meaning to God the Father by groaning without speech: στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις *stēnagmōis alalētōis*. So there is no language involved, neither human nor of angels (1 Cor 13:1). It is speechless, direct divine and perfect communication.

Another reason why this is not talking of the gift of speaking in tongues is 1 Cor 14:14: “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.” Paul says that his own human spirit is praying when he prays in tongues. The Holy Spirit helps him to pray in a language he has not learned and which is new for him (Mark 16:17). But his own spirit does the act of prayer.

The intercession of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-28) and the intercession of Christ (Rom 8:34) help us successfully that “all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). This includes the suffering of Rom 8:17-18 and the problems mentioned in Rom 8:35-37:

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

God helps us not that we never experience “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword” but that we “in all these things ... overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us”. It is the way of the cross, the way of weakness and illness and poverty on which walking by faith we celebrate God's victory and reach our destination.

A key concept of Paul is that there is a tension between the “already” and the “not yet”. Some things we have received already, but others we have to wait for patiently, because they have not happened yet. Paul is very balanced about that. I often found that the whole Bible is very balanced on hundreds of subjects. Sometimes the people of God may pick their favorite verses for the given subjects, but as soon as we look into the whole Bible, we often detect other perspectives as well and the whole gets more balanced.

I do not think that Johnson's teaching about salvation is as balanced as the biblical teaching of salvation is. It is not really sound doctrine, neither with regard to poverty,

sickness and healing, nor with regard to salvation from sin. The impact of the cross on his teaching is too shallow. Another area where his teaching does not come up to the standard of balanced sound biblical teaching is the area of eschatology. That is another area where he does not acknowledge the tension between the “already” and the “not yet”.

## 6 Bill Johnson about “The Kingdom of God is at hand!” or his impatience with certain eschatologies.

Loc 470

One of the tragedies of a weakened identity is how it affects our approach to Scripture. Many, if not most theologians, make the mistake of taking all the *good stuff* contained in the prophets and sweeping it under that mysterious rug called the *Millennium*. It is not my desire to debate that subject right now. But I do want to deal with our propensity to put off those things that require courage, faith, and action to another period of time. The mistaken idea is this: if it is good, it can't be for now.

In Loc 1290 Johnson says about 'heaven':

Its “present tense” existence was explained in Jesus' statement, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” That means heaven is not just our eternal destination, but also is a present reality, and it's within arm's reach.

Loc 3050

The power of one word from His mouth can create a galaxy. His promises for the Church are beyond all comprehension. Too many consider them to be God's promise either for the Millennium or heaven ... Jesus taught us how to live by announcing, “The Kingdom of God is at hand!” It is a present reality affecting the *now*.

### 6.1 My comments about Johnson's understanding of “The Kingdom of God is at hand!”

In the above statements Johnson quotes the Bible “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” and “The Kingdom of God is at hand” and explains it in a way that it is “affecting the *now*.”

The title of the book “When heaven invades earth - A practical guide to a life of miracles” agrees with this understanding that the kingdom of heaven is invading the earth now in the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus and in the miracles happening and confirming that now. Johnson wants to speed the coming of the kingdom of God by drawing God's kingdom by deeds of faith into the now.

Because this subject is connected to the title and the whole purpose of the book I would like to do a word study of the “kingdom of God being at hand”. Who uses this phrase, at what time, speaking to whom in what meaning and with what purpose?

#### 6.1.1 Who uses this phrase?

The first to use this phrase is **John the Baptist** (Mt 3:2) “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Mt 3:2 summarizes John's whole preaching activity.

The next to use it is **Jesus** (Mt 4:17): From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In Mk 1:15 it sounds like this: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” This summarizes the preaching activity of Jesus.

The next who have to use this phrase are **the twelve apostles sent by Jesus to preach it** (Mt 10:7):

5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. 9 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, 10 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.”

The next to use the phrase are **the seventy** (Lk 10,1.8-13) **which Jesus appointed**

1 ... and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. 2 And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few ... 3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves ... 4 Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way ... 7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages ... 8 Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ 10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ 12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. 13 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

The phrase is only used in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It is not used beyond that. Only John the Baptist and Jesus use it, but Jesus in a way that he commands his disciples to proclaim it. Therefore we know that the twelve apostles and the seventy will have used it as well. It is an interesting fact that all who proclaimed that the kingdom of God or of heaven has come near were poor while they were proclaiming it. The disciples were commanded to go without purse or money belt. They were only allowed to accept their meals but preach and heal for free.

### 6.1.2 When is it used?

The phrase that the kingdom of God is near is used while preaching repentance. It is the reason why people should repent. It is absolutely necessary to repent now because this is the window of opportunity to accept the kingdom of God by repentance and coming back to God and starting to live according to his holy will with the yoke of the kingdom of heaven on one's shoulders (Mt 11:28-30).

### 6.1.3 To whom is it said?

The audience is always Israel. John the Baptist preached to Israel, Jesus did, the Seventy in Luke 10 did and the Twelve in Matthew 10:6 did:

5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

By all these sermons and all the miracles God wanted Israel to know that the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God is near.

### 6.1.4 What is its purpose?

The purpose of proclaiming that the kingdom of God is near is to urge the people of Israel to repent. The fact that the kingdom of God is near is to offer the kingdom of God to the

audience and urge them to accept it by repenting and obeying God's holy will and by being changed through God's grace. The miracles of healing and casting out demons performed by Jesus and the disciples underline that this is really God himself who offers them his kingdom and commands them to repent and accept the gospel of God's kingdom including the obedience towards God by producing "fruit in keeping with repentance" (Mt 3:8).

About the people and places that do not repent, Jesus says in Luke 10:12 "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city." By "that day" he means the day of judgment (Mt 11:21-24).

### 6.1.5 What is its meaning?

What is the meaning of "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7)<sup>4</sup> or of "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk 1:15; Lk 10:11)<sup>5</sup> or of "The kingdom of God has come near to you." (Lk 10:9).<sup>6</sup>

1. First there is no real difference between the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" and the phrase "the kingdom of God". They are synonyms. The genitive in "kingdom of heaven" does not mean that the kingdom is in heaven, but that the kingdom (on earth) is from heaven, that means from God who will do away with the kingdoms of this world and establish his rule and kingdom visibly on earth (Daniel 2:44; Rev 11:15).
2. The phrase translated with "is at hand" means literally "has come near". In Greek it is a verb in the perfect tense which has the aspect meaning of something that has happened in the past and the result is now felt in the present, is felt now.<sup>7</sup>
3. The phrase does not mean that it has totally arrived. It is very close but it is not yet there. In addition to the verses given above there are the following further examples for this use of the same verb in this specific verb form. Of the following examples the sections in James 5, 1 Peter 4 and Rom 13 not only have the same verb form, but are in an eschatological context which is similar to the phrase "the kingdom of God is at hand".
  - (a) Twice in Mt 26:45-46 "Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" Judas was coming closer, but it still took him a minute or so to kiss Jesus and betray him thus (similar in Mark 14:42).
  - (b) Luke 21:20-21, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city." The desolation is near, but it does not happen yet. There is still a little time to flee. Believers should do this without delay.
  - (c) James 5:7-9 "7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it,

4. Matthew 3:2, καὶ λέγων• Μετανοεῖτε, ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Matthew 4:17, Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς κηρῦσσειν καὶ λέγειν• Μετανοεῖτε, ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Matthew 10:7, πορευόμενοι δὲ κηρῦσσετε λέγοντες ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. All Greek NT quotes are given according to Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition*, [accessed May 18, 2020], 2020, <https://github.com/morphgnt/sblgnt>.

5. Mark 1:15, καὶ λέγων ὅτι Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ• μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Luke 10:11, Καὶ τὸν κονιορτὸν τὸν κολληθέντα ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὑμῶν εἰς τοὺς πόδας ἀπομασώμεθα ὑμῖν• πλὴν τοῦτο γινώσκετε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

6. Luke 10:9, καὶ θεραπεύετε τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ ἀσθενεῖς, καὶ λέγετε αὐτοῖς• ἤγγικεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

7. See Eddy Lanz, *Basic New Testament Greek* (Rawalpindi: Eved Adonai - Is 53:11, 2013), <https://www.lanz.l1/grnt/basic-nt-greek/Basic-NT-Greek.pdf>, for the aspects in general p. 9-10, for the resultative aspect in particular p. 10 and 29-30.

until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.” The coming of the Lord is near and the Judge stands right at the door, but he has not entered yet and is not here yet.

- (d) 1 Peter 4:7, “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.” The end is near, but there is still some time left to be of sound judgment and sober to go into prayer.
  - (e) Romans 13:11-12, “11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” The day is near, but it is still night.
4. With regard to our phrase in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke it is important to realize that the kingdom of God was near or at hand for Israel, because Jesus the Christ, the king of the kingdom of heaven was already born and near, living in his nation and offering his guidance to his people.
- (a) That is the reason John the Baptist preached it, because he was preparing the way of the divine coming one, of the Lord (Mt 3:3.11-12; Isa 40:3).
  - (b) That is the reason Jesus preached it, because he himself was the King of kings proclaiming the kingdom of God and proving himself to be the Christ by his life and his deeds even without proclaiming it publicly (Mt 12:28; 11:27; 12:6,8; 16:20; John 10:24).
  - (c) That is also the reason why Jesus sent his disciples to preach that the kingdom is at hand, because they did the miracles empowered by him and in his name and sent by him. He was the source of the revival (Mt 10:1; Lk 10:17-19).
5. But as Israel did not repent and rejected the king of the kingdom of God and had him crucified,
- (a) the kingdom of God was taken away from Israel's established leadership (Mt 21:43; 23:37-39; 26:24)
  - (b) and given to the twelve Jewish apostles (Mt 19:27-28; 16:19; 18:18-20)
  - (c) and to all who would accept their gospel of the kingdom of God (Mt 28:16-20; 8:10-13; 3:9)
  - (d) until the times of the Gentiles would be over (Lk 21:20-24) and Jesus would show himself coming with the clouds (Mt 24:30-31; Zech 12:9-13:1) to the remnant of Israel who welcomes him (Mt 23:39; Rom 11:25-29).

#### 6.1.6 My Summary about this point.

**Filling the same words with a new meaning.** After this analysis I would like to give my impression that Johnson's usage of the phrase “the kingdom of God is at hand”, drawing it into the now, is foreign to the biblical texts analyzed. Johnson fills the same words with a new meaning. When the kingdom of God is preached in the New Testament, the purpose is repentance and waiting patiently, hopefully and faithfully for the coming of the Christ and the new era.

**Lacking a sound eschatology.** It is also my impression that Johnson lacks a sound eschatology. The eschatologies might differ. And everyone has to find his own way through the promises of God about the future in the Bible. It is a great subject with a great hope. One key element is the difference between this age and the age to come, this world and the world to come. Certain promises of God relate to the age to come and not to this age. Regardless of whether you are in favor of Premillennialism (Christ returns before the millennium, the

kingdom of one thousand years), Postmillennialism (Christ returns after the millennium) or so-called Amillennialism (the time of the church is the time when Satan is already bound for a “thousand years”) the common key conviction of all three mainstream eschatologies is a big difference between this age and the age to come. The church inherited this from Jewish eschatology.

One key element of this difference between the life now and the glorious life to come is that this life is difficult and a life of suffering and weakness while the life to come with Christ is an eternal life in power without death and illness (1 Cor 15:42-43). Johnson does not really acknowledge this big difference. In this book he offers no eschatology. I think, a sound eschatology is missing. It would be a necessary correction for his idea that heaven invades the earth now and that illness and death can be overcome now.

## 7 How Bill Johnson uses the Bible

### 7.1 God is bigger than his book

In Loc 1501-33 we read:

#### GOD IS BIGGER THAN HIS BOOK

*You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor God's power* (Matthew 22:29 AMP). In this passage Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their ignorance of the Scriptures *and* God's power. His rebuke comes within the context of *marriage and resurrection*, but it is aimed at the ignorance infecting every area of their lives.

What was the cause? They didn't allow the Scriptures to lead them to God. They didn't understand ... not really understand. The word *know* in this passage speaks of “personal experience.” They tried to learn apart from such an experience. They were the champions of those who spent time studying God's Word. But their study didn't lead them to an encounter with God. It became an end in itself ... God does as He pleases. While true to His Word, He does not avoid acting outside of our understanding of it ... The Bible is the absolute Word of God. It reveals God; the obvious, the unexplainable, the mysterious, and sometimes offensive. It all reveals the greatness of our God. Yet it does not contain Him. God is bigger than His book.

### 7.2 My comments about Johnson's slogan “God is bigger than his book”

#### 7.2.1 In Matthew 22:29 Jesus does not rebuke the Pharisees, but the Sadducees.

It is only a minor point, but it speaks volumes about the way Johnson handles his Bible. The context speaks about the resurrection which was denied by the party of the Sadducees (Mt 22:23; Acts 23:8). With regard to the resurrection Jesus, his disciples and apostles and the Pharisees had the same conviction. In front of the Jewish Supreme Court the apostle Paul could even confess himself as a Pharisee in this point with an interesting outcome (Acts 23:6-10):

6 But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!” 7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” 10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.



To confuse the party of the Pharisees and the party of the Sadducees in the question of the resurrection is as if a 50 year old US American would not know the difference between the Democratic party and the Republican party in some important area of politics.

### 7.2.2 What does it mean that God is bigger than his book?

1. Where we stand on common ground. I agree with Johnson when he says: “God does as He pleases. While true to His Word, He does not avoid acting outside of our understanding of it ... The Bible is the absolute Word of God. It reveals God; the obvious, the unexplainable, the mysterious, and sometimes offensive. It all reveals the greatness of our God.” I think this is good and well formulated. I especially appreciate the statement “The Bible is the absolute Word of God.” Here we stand on common ground.
2. Where the slogan “God is bigger than his book.” is not precise enough and thus misleading.
  - (a) Correct is that the matter of the book or the gadget does not contain God. The following words of Johnson are open to interpretation: “Yet it does not contain Him. God is bigger than His book.” If we buy a Bible, hardcover printed on paper or a digital Bible, we know that according to matter this might be paper or digital code on some kind of gadget. We do not identify this book or this gadget with God. The gadget or the book do not contain God in a material sense.
  - (b) We accept the Bible as the word of God in a spiritual way. What we do appreciate about the Bible is that God speaks to us through Moses, his prophets, his apostles. If God speaks through Moses or the apostle Paul, we accept that God is speaking. We make no difference. We have to understand it from the context of the Bible, but basically we believe that God really spoke then and really speaks today to us through the books of the Bible.
  - (c) How did Israel start to know God? Because God revealed himself to them. How do we know God? Because God revealed himself through Jesus Christ the Son to us and through the power of the Holy Spirit? How came the message of Jesus Christ to us? Through the gospel of the New Testament predicted in the Old Testament. Through the Bible. How do we know how great God is? Through the Bible.
  - (d) How great is God according to the Bible? Have a look at Gen 1:1; Jer 23:23-24; Isa 44:6; Ps 139:1-10; John 1:1-5; 17:5,24; Rev 1:8; 19:11-16; 22:12-13. The Bible tells us that God as creator is greater than his creation according to space and time. Nothing is greater than he is. He is greater than everything. With regard to the self-revelation of God in the Bible God is exactly as big and great as he has revealed himself: He is without competition, greater than all creation, unique and beyond our comprehension.
  - (e) God knows more than he has revealed to us in the Bible (Dt 29:29): “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” There are many things we do not know which only God knows. In the Bible of the Old and New Testaments we have a limited revelation of God according to God's will.
  - (f) What God has revealed to us in his Holy Scripture we should cling to according to the apostle Paul 1 Cor 4:6, “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.” For me this is a very important verse. In my theological work I would like to follow this rule. I want to “learn not to exceed what is written” (in the Holy Scriptures). What God has revealed in

“his Book” is enough. I do not want to exceed that in my theological teaching and preaching. If anybody would ask me for a piece of advice in this area, I would tell him: Just follow the apostle Paul and “learn not to exceed what is written”.

### 7.3 Use of the Lord's prayer

#### Loc. 538 **Your will be done**

The Christian life has been harnessed to this goal, verbalized in the Lord's Model Prayer: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). His dominion is realized when what happens here is *as it is in heaven*.

#### Loc. 595 **Healing of Walter**

That same collision between light and darkness happens when the sick are healed. Walter had experienced two strokes in the previous year, which left him without feeling on the entire right side of his body. He showed me a horrible burn on his arm that he had suffered, not knowing he was being burned. Conviction, one of the words used to detect faith (see Heb. 11:1 KJV) began to burn in my heart. While he was still talking, I began to pray for him with my hand on his shoulder. I had to do so quickly. I had become aware of the Kingdom where no numbness existed. I didn't want to become more aware of how severe his problem was. My prayer went something like this: *Father, this was Your idea. You commanded us to pray for things to be here as they are in heaven, and I know there is no numbness there, so there shouldn't be any here. So I command, in the name of Jesus, the nerve endings to come to life. I command full restoration of feeling in his body.*

Soon after I started to pray, he told me that he felt my hand on his shoulder and could even feel the fabric of my shirt with his right hand. That world began to collide with the world of numbness. Numbness lost.

#### Loc. 920 Under the title “**Jesus gave the model to follow**” Bill Johnson explains:

The Lord's Model Prayer provides the clearest instruction on how we bring the reality of His world into this one ... God's response to prayer with obedience always releases the nature of heaven into our impaired circumstances. Jesus' model reveals the only two real priorities of prayer: First, intimacy with God is expressed in worship - *holy is Your name*. And second, to bring His Kingdom to earth, establishing His dominion over the needs of mankind - *Your Kingdom come*.

#### Loc. 933 In explanation of the request “**hallowed be Your name**” Ps. 22,3 is applied and explained:

He inhabits our praise. One translation puts it this way, *But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel*. God responds with a literal invasion of heaven to earth through the worship of the believer (see Ps. 22:3).

#### On Loc. 950-960 we read in explanation of the requests “**Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**”

This is the primary focus for all prayer - if it exists in heaven, it is to be loosed on earth. It's the praying Christian who *looses* heaven's expression here ... Faith grabs hold of *that reality* ... Such an invasion causes the circumstances here to line up with heaven ... How much of heaven has God purposed to become manifest here on earth? No one knows for sure. But we do know through Church history that it's more than we have now. And we know through the Scripture that it's even more than has ever entered our minds (see 1 Cor. 2,9-10; Eph 3:20-22) ... Conversely, if it is not free to exist in heaven, it must be bound here.

Loc. 970 **“Give us this day our daily bread.”**

Is anyone starving in heaven? Of course not. This request is a practical application of how His dominion should be seen here on earth - abundant supply. The abuses of a few in the area of prosperity does not excuse the abandonment of the promises of God to provide abundantly for His children. It is His good pleasure to do so. Because there is complete and perfect provision in heaven, there must be the same here. Heaven sets the standard for a Christian's material world - enough to satisfy the desires born of God and *enough “for every good work”* (2 Cor. 9:8). Our legal basis for provision comes from the heavenly model given to us in Christ Jesus: “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). According to what? *His riches*. Where? *In glory*. Heaven's resources are to affect us here and now.

Loc. 990 **“deliver us from evil”**

The phrase “*deliver us from evil*,” as it is traditionally rendered, actually means, *deliver us from the evil one*. A heart modeled after heaven has great success in spiritual warfare. That's why it says, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4,7). Jesus was able to say, *Satan has nothing in Me*. The believer is to be completely free from all satanic influence and attachments. That is the cry voiced in this prayer.

Loc. 1015 **“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33)**. The gifts of forgiveness, healing, deliverance as part of the gospel.

Granted this verse is not in the prayer model that Jesus gave in verses 9-13 ... Understanding this prayer helps us to realize the intended goal of all prayer - that the lordship of Jesus would be seen in all circumstances of life. As the Kingdom of God confronts sin, forgiveness is given and change comes to the nature that had only known how to sin. When His rule collides with disease people are healed. When it runs into the demonized, they are set free. The Kingdom message's nature provides salvation for the whole man - spirit, soul, and body. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

7.4 **My comments about some of Johnson's application of the Lord's prayer**7.4.1 **His use of “Your will be done.”**

When Johnson says (Loc. 538), ““Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). His dominion is realized when what happens here is *as it is in heaven*”, he again fills the old and well-known words with a new meaning. Often Christians understood this to mean that we pray in a way that we accept God's will, even if we would wish something else as for example in Acts 21:10-14:

10 As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, “The will of the Lord be done!”

The people of the team of Paul and the local residents wanted Paul to live and be free. Paul himself was ready to become a prisoner or die for Christ. With the sentence “The will of the Lord be done!” all accepted that the will of God must be done. They did not argue that there is no imprisonment of believers in heaven, so Paul should stay free in Jerusalem. They did not pray that there is no death for believers in heaven so Paul should live for ever in his old body.

The bottom line is that Johnson uses the words in a new way in which the people of the New Testament were not using them and understanding them.

#### 7.4.2 His use of “Give us this day our daily bread.”

I have already said that this request (Mt 6:11) is not a request for “abundant supply”. It is a daily prayer. And we pray every day for the needs of that day and not for a supply lasting for weeks or months or years. The abundant life of John 10:10 does not mean great prosperity and abundance in a material sense in this life on this earth, but speaks of riches beyond that. John the Baptist was poor. Jesus was poor. He did not even use his own donkey when he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Paul was poor (2 Cor 6:10). Peter and John were poor (Acts 3:6). Without the hope of the resurrection the life of Christians would have been most miserable (1 Cor 15:19). Paul describes the state of Christ’s apostles as a low state from a worldly perspective (1 Cor 4:8-16):

8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.

9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

Paul clearly does not invite them to become rich imitating him, but to follow Christ (cf. 1 Tim 6:6-12). And it is Paul whom Johnson quotes above (Loc. 970):

Our legal basis for provision comes from the heavenly model given to us in Christ Jesus: “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). According to what? *His riches*. Where? *In glory*. Heaven’s resources are to affect us here and now.

But again the author quotes one part of Paul and does not quote the other from the same context (Phil 4:10-14):

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. 14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

The gift which the Philippians sent him helped him a lot. But he was a well trained apostle who also could go hungry and be content in great poverty. And he knew that this was the daily routine of many fellow Christians. This is another example of a selective use of Bible verses which results in an unsound and unbalanced teaching. Because I have seen it so often in this book, I give a list below.

### 7.5 Selective use of Scripture statements ignoring other statements in the context

The sections are listed according to the order of the New Testament books. The Location is given to look it up in the book. If a text is used in more than one place it may appear more than once with the locations of the book. This list is only an example of the way Johnson uses certain verses to underline his understanding while ignoring other verses in the immediate or wider context which would contradict his understanding. It is not a complete list. But you get the picture.

| Quoting this   | Ignoring that                     | Location |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Mt 16:24       | Mt 16:22-23 + 25-26               | 2460     |
| Joh 5:19       | Joh 5:16-24                       | 370      |
| Joh 14:12      | Joh 15:3-5.7; 16:7                | 3196     |
| Rom 16:20      | Rom 8:17-25; 12:14-21             | 859      |
| 1 Cor 4:14-20  | 4:6-13                            | 1465     |
| 2 Cor 3:17     | 2 Cor 4:7-13                      | 960      |
| 2 Cor 4:18     | 2 Cor 4:16                        | 625      |
| 2 Cor 4:18     | 2 Cor 4:16                        | 655      |
| 2 Cor 5:21     | 2 Cor 4:7-13                      | 2465     |
| Eph 1:21; 3:20 | Eph 3:1; 6:20                     | 2460     |
| Phil 3:20      | 3:8-11                            | 1055     |
| Phil 4:19      | Phil 4:12-13                      | 976      |
| Col 3:3        | Col 3:4                           | 528      |
| Hbr 11:1       | Hbr 11:35-38                      | 720      |
| Hbr 11:2-30    | 11:35-38                          | 720      |
| Hbr 11:2-30    | Hbr 12:3-11                       | 720      |
| Hbr 12:2       | Hbr 12:3-11                       | 2451     |
| 1 Joh 2:18     | 1 Joh 2:19-23; 4:1-3; 2 Joh 1:7-9 | 1275     |

## 8 My own summary of the teaching of Johnson in this book.

The strength of Bill Johnson's book lies in the experiences, the miracles and wonders which he shares. Building on that he has a wide audience willing to learn from him how to live a life of miracles.

As I have said, I was reading this book from an another perspective. I was reading it as someone who has been teaching the Holy Scriptures for decades. I also belong to another Christian tradition. For me any Christian teaching should be checked against what we find in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. I enjoyed Johnson's affirmation of the Bible as the word of God. Here I agree with him very much. But for me this would have one consequence: If I have to teach any topic I would try to see what is written about it in the Old Testament, what in the New Testament. I would try to give a balanced teaching with all the important information taken from the whole Bible. This would also happen within the framework of salvation history with the first coming of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem and his second coming with the clouds of heaven as climactic reference points.

Having gone through the book we have seen teaching about Christ (Christology), the Holy Spirit, God the Father, salvation, the kingdom of God in the now, about the Bible. I see many problems from my theological perspective. The biggest problems I see in his view of Christ (Christology) and the persons of the Trinity (Theology proper; Trinity; this is of course related to Christology). His handling of the Bible makes these problems possible.