

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

**TIMES OF SERVICES:**

*Sunday*

Bible Study.....9:00 A.M.  
 Worship.....10:00 A.M.  
 Training Class.....5:00 P.M.  
 Worship.....6:00 P.M.

*Wednesday:*

Bible Study.....7:00 P.M.



*Weekly Bulletin*  
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**The “Misleading” of the Holy Spirit**

*by Bill Hall*




The 1980s will surely be remembered as the decade when so many “Spirit-led” projects failed.

The fall of Jim Bakker with his PTL empire and Heritage USA will long be remembered. Jim Bakker could hardly speak without referring to what the Spirit was leading him to do. His explanation for the collapse of his empire was: “God has me on a roller-coaster ride” (*Time*, March 30 1987).

Oral Roberts built his \$150 million City of Faith “on direct orders from God” (*Time*, Nov 6, 1981). Roosevelt Greer, Rex Humbard, and Pat Robertson attended the dedication. Barbara Mandrell sang the national anthem. President Reagan sent a congratulatory letter. Further, in 1983 the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reported that Roberts sent out “millions of letters saying Jesus appeared to him and told him God had chosen Roberts to find the cure for cancer” (Jan. 18 1983). *The (Nashville) Tennessean* had a news item, however, in its 15 September 1989 edition that said, “Roberts announced Wednesday the City of Faith hospital will be closed by the end of the year and the Oral Roberts University School of Medicine will close after the current school year” (*Guardian of Truth*, Nov. 1989, p. 25).

Jimmy Swaggart was once called the “King of Honky-Tonk Heaven” by

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*Newsweek*. He raised \$142 million in just one year (1989). Because of sexual misconduct, however, his ministry is also foundering. An article by Bill Crews (*Park Forest Proclaimer, July 22 1990*), reports that the number of Swaggart's TV viewers has fallen 83 per cent and that enrollment in his college has declined from 1451 to 419. Throughout the buildup of his ministry, Swaggart credited God for the growth that had taken place.

These examples of "Spirit-led projects" gone awry are truly signs of the times in which we are living. We frequently hear people claiming that the Spirit is leading them to do this or that. Often the very activity into which the Spirit is supposedly leading them is contrary to the teaching of the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. Several observations are in order.

1. The Spirit on occasions did directly lead men of the first century into specific fields of labor. The Spirit told Philip to join the eunuch in his chariot (**Acts 8:29**), then caught Philip away after he had baptized the eunuch (**Acts 8:39**). The Spirit told Peter to go with the messengers Cornelius had sent (**Acts 10:19, 20**). The Spirit gave the orders for the beginning of the first missionary journey (**Acts 13:1-4**). The Spirit forbade Paul to preach in Asia and Bithynia as he traveled westward on his second journey, and then through a vision directed his feet toward Macedonia (**Acts 16:6-10**).

2. Whenever the Spirit did directly lead men in the first century, the results were always favorable. The eunuch was baptized and went on his way rejoicing (**Acts 8:38, 39**). Cornelius and those with him were converted, becoming the first fruits among the Gentiles (**Acts 10:44-48**). Paul's first journey resulted in much fruit, and when he went into Macedonia on his second journey, his work resulted in the beginning of great churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

3. The Spirit did not so completely take over the lives of men in the first century that every move made by them was "Spirit-led." More often they were left to make their own decisions and plans. For instance, plans for a second journey were formulated in the minds of Paul and Barnabas, and when they went separate ways, "Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas...and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (**Acts 15:39-41**). Had the Holy Spirit directed that Paul and Barnabas go on this journey as he did on the first, they would have been defying his directions in going separate ways. But these

were their plans, and they had every right to change their plans.

Later, Paul made his own plans to go to Rome and Spain after completion of his third journey, and he asked the Romans to pray that he could come to them "with joy by the will of God" (**Rom. 15:23-33**). Had these plans been made through the direction of the Spirit, our faith might well be shaken, for these plans did go awry. But they were Paul's own plans which fell through just as some of our plans fall through.

4. The tragic failure of "Spirit-led" projects of our generation is proof that they were not truly instigated by the Holy Spirit. Had the Spirit truly instigated them, they would have been successful. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (**1 Jn.4:1**).

5. The Spirit does lead us into various fields and activities through the revealed word, leading us through the directions he gave to the inspired men of the first century. As we read the Spirit's directions to Peter to go to Cornelius, the Spirit is leading us to go to people of all races without prejudice. As we read of the Spirit's directions to Paul not to turn aside into Asia and Bithynia, he is leading us to ever expanding territories in our world. As we read of the Lord's encouragement to Paul in his time of despair in Corinth (**Acts 18:9, 10**), he is encouraging us in our time of despair.

6. We do believe that God's continues to work within our lives, "choosing our changes" on occasions, but his providential workings should not be confused with the direct leadings of the Spirit in the first century.

Paul wrote of certain ones in his day who were inflated without cause, taking their stand on visions they had seen, rather than holding to the Head (**Col. 2:18,19**). Such people always seem to take on an air of superiority, lightly regarding those who simply take their stand on revealed and confirmed truth. Paul did not want the Colossians to be intimidated by such people in his day, and we must not be intimidated by such people in our day.

The Spirit leads through the word he has revealed. When all fully realize that the Scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit, and that whenever we read the Scriptures he is speaking to us, teaching us, and leading us, most of our problems over the Holy Spirit will vanish.