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Anointing for Ministry
(Isaiah 61:1-2)

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ARE WE EXPERIENCING THE HOLY SPIRIT'S OUTPOURING?

by Jonathan

IS THE GLORY OF GOD DEPARTING FROM OR DESCENDING UPON THE CHURCH?

"And she named the child I-cha-bod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken" (1 Samuel 4:21-22).

This passage of Scripture has reference to the fallen spiritual condition of Israel during the time of Eli, the high priest, who had himself turned his back upon God. It speaks of the taking away of the Ark by the Philistines (the enemies of Israel). It was a time of tragic spiritual darkness for Israel. The Spirit of God had departed. Thousands died because the glory and the power of God was no longer present. Sin in Israel was standing between God and His people.

Now, it is important to note that while the Ark represented God's glory among Israel; it was not the actuality of His presence there (when translated, "Ark" means "Presence"). A parallel can be drawn within the situation of our churches today. Are our churches becoming mere institutions? Oh, we have our pretty buildings, great music, impressive presentations, organized programs; but I ask you, "Is there the presence and anointing of the Holy Spirit?", "Are there changed lives (or are the crowds merely "pew-warmers?")"

Dear Christian Friend, we are confronted today with a paradox. While we are witnessing tremendous revivals around the world, I am concerned that we are also at the threshold of the greatest falling away of the Church. In some small measure, I do have a burden to prevent the falling away.

THE PENTECOSTAL WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." (Jeremiah 6:16).

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

From the outset, I want to state that we are not promoting any particular church, denomination, movement, or fellowship when we refer to the term "Pentecostal". Rather, we refer to the Biblical pattern of witness of the Early Church, as clearly defined in the Book of Acts. God is not impressed with the labels of our churches (or denomination) as much as He is with our lifestyle. While it is true and certain that the term "Pentecostal" has come to describe specific groups of people who believe in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues (according to Acts 2), I want to emphasize that a genuine Biblical Pentecostal witness goes far deeper than just speaking in tongues. It must involve a total lifestyle of seeking God's way with the leading of the Holy Spirit as our priority.

Without being critical, I am concerned that there are Pentecostal churches that are Pentecostal in name only. For example, we Pentecostals (and Charismatics as well) tell people to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (and of course, we should) but sadly, not as much is said on the righteousness of God whereby we are to conform to His image. We seem to forget that any temple God resides must be holy. Matthew 3:11 reads, "...he (Jesus) shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire" and not "...baptize you with the Holy Ghost (merely)". "For God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29) and as such, He cannot overlook or condone sin. Even a zealous Christian cannot be blessed by God if there is unrighteousness. In the name of ecumenism, "everything goes" and this is about the most dangerous element in facilitating the apostasy

of the Church. I believe the Church desperately needs a revival of the true Pentecostal outpouring. This is the only strength of the Church: The presence and the leading of the Holy Spirit!

DECEPTION RIGHT ALONGSIDE THE VISITATION OF GOD'S GLORY

"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 John 4:1).

In these days, the unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit has touched almost every denomination within Christendom and how we thank God for this! Yet, I am painfully aware that there are still those who fight the obvious work of God and say that the day of miracles is past and God no longer performs in the manner He did in Bible times. This is erroneous!

On the other hand, I am convinced that with the coming of God's glory and with the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit in operation, there will be deceptive miracles and manifestations right alongside that appears to be exactly the same. Perhaps, it is not too difficult to explain this. Satan is the master counterfeiter. He counterfeits the gifts of the Spirit so as to create untold difficulties to the Church (this is in great part, the cause of tragic divisions between the Pentecostals, Charismatics and the denominational churches). This does not, however, lessen the validity and significance of the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit (for example, just because there are counterfeit dollar notes or bills do not negate those that are genuine).

Now, for the past months, I believe the Lord has been dealing with me about the directions of the Church world that could be fatal. Many believers readily embrace the seemingly harmless fads of "charismatic" preachers; when in reality, it is a departure from the teaching of the Word of God. What are some of these fads? I want to identify them as these: Dominion teaching, inner healing, possibility thinking, psychology, the fourth dimension, visualization, etc. Because of the subtlety of these approaches, even sincere and well-meaning Christians are not immune to some of these philosophies. However, a close and discerning study will reveal that they are in effect saying, "The blood of Jesus Christ is inadequate! We need something in addition to the cross!" There is an attack upon the finished work of Christ (and it is not from without, but from within the church)! God help us today!

THE SHAKING OF THE NATIONS (AND OF THE CHURCH)

"And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:7-9).

Do you know of believers who once walked with God but no longer are today? Perhaps, it hurts you to realize how their former love and zeal for the Lord have waxed cold, others are not even sure if they are still "in the faith".

I believe the Church of the Living God is right on the threshing floor today. Turning to Matthew 3:12, we read, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire". Friends, if you believe that there are no empty or wasted words in the Bible, I humbly beg you not to ignore this serious and solemn affirmation!

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, a few things will occur. Of a priority, the moving of the Holy Spirit enables effective reaping of the harvest of souls. For example, the collapse of communism as a whole has led many to be disillusioned with politics. But as a segment of these people turn to Jesus, they will never be denied or disillusioned. I am overwhelmed and thrilled whenever I read or hear of reports concerning advancements in the fulfilling of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Really, the condition in the world will not get better; but God in His great love and mercy is reaching and touching many with the Gospel. Praise God! Hallelujah!

Next, because of intensifying spiritual deception, the Holy Spirit is to prepare God's people for the darkness ahead.

Then also, God is going to sift and purify His church. Because God is holy, no one outside the covering of the blood of Jesus will escape His righteous judgment. Church, the time is short and there is no more room for complacency and compromise. We must make every effort to adhere closely to the precepts of God's Word and not try to cover up sin with slick excuses or theological persuasion. You see, we must obey God; He does not obey us. If God is unscripturally treated, it will be spiritual death! Now, I realize that the import of these words are strong, but I have a responsibility in the areas and capacity that I believe He has entrusted unto me- "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

THE HOPE THAT PURIFIETH

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:28-29).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Yes, Jesus is coming back. However, He is not coming after a weak church, but a church that is glorious, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). Yet, it is sad that little, if any, is preached on the rapture of the church these days. Sometimes, I wonder, "Could this be the cause of so much backsliding of believers?"

Allow me to ask a few personal and sober questions:

"What is the condition of your heart today?"

"If you sincerely believe that Jesus Christ could rapture the church at any moment, would you have the confidence (according to 1 John 2:28) in meeting Him?"

"What will your answer to the Lord be (not for salvation, but in terms of Christian accountability and stewardship)?"

I pray that you will be ready.

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(This article was written in the early 1990s. The message is still as relevant now as it was back then.)