

A Report From Peter

THE LAKELAND APOSTOLIC FINDINGS

From the Lakeland Outpouring Apostolic Team

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Introduction

Few events in recent church history have drawn as much national and international attention as the Lakeland Outpouring, May-August 2008, led by evangelist Todd Bentley and his Fresh Fire Ministries team. A key factor contributing to this unusual phenomenon has been the decision of Rory and Wendy Alec to use GOD TV to televise the revival meetings internationally.

As would be expected, true to the history of revivals, a powerful move of God like this inevitably draws serious attacks from the enemy and his forces of darkness. One outcome is a range of reactions to the phenomenon from those who focus on the hand of God in the ministry to those who focus on the damage that the enemy is doing. Because of the unprecedented number of people who have been affected one way or another by Lakeland and because of instant communication through technology, opinions and points of view easily become public domain, and the body of Christ can readily become polarized, which, of course, would be a victory for the enemy.

Unfortunately, in the case of Lakeland, the enemy has been succeeding, more than he should, in producing widespread confusion and even chaos throughout large segments of the body of Christ.

Throughout the early weeks of the Outpouring I watched it from time to time on TV, I followed the news items and rejoiced at what God was doing in Lakeland, but the matter was located

toward the bottom of my priority scale. I also became aware of a rising number of criticisms and concerns about what was going on there, but I had very little interest in absorbing or analyzing them. This changed when I received a telephone call from Apostle Stephen Strader, Pastor of Ignited Church, and host of the Lakeland Outpouring. Stephen called me as the Presiding Apostle of the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA) of which he was a member. From first hand observation he described both the blessings and harsh opposition that they had begun to experience. Then he said, "Where are the apostles?"

I believe the Holy Spirit spoke to me at that moment and said words to the effect, "Peter, you will need to answer that question." As I have written in my books, one of the roles of an apostle is to set things in order and another is to assure that the body of Christ is operating on the basis of sound, biblical doctrine. There was no question about the need-disorder reigned, and many of the Lakeland doctrines as well as practices were being called into question on an international scope. I believe that I was given a divine assignment that I hadn't even desired, namely to attempt to bring some kind of apostolic order to this widespread and potentially damaging confusion.

While I was talking to Stephen, God kept bringing the word "alignment" to the front of my mind, so I questioned him on Todd Bentley's apostolic alignment. The upshot was that Todd believed in apostles and prophets, but he had never entered into a formal alignment. I did some more investigation over the next couple of days, and I was assured that this was indeed the case.

As the picture developed, there were two pressing needs. One was to facilitate apostolic alignment for Todd and the other was to deal responsibly with the doctrinal and ministry style issues being discussed. Then the question became, Which

should come first? Meanwhile I had been discussing these things with several friends, all of whom were also members of ICA and whose opinion I highly respected. I immediately discovered to my surprise that many of my friends had formed highly-charged and emotionally intense opinions. Some were advising me not to go to Lakeland to promote a formal alignment until the doctrinal issues first had been resolved. Others took the opposite position. I carefully considered what they said and weighed the pros and cons as best I could.

My thinking was that I did not want to deal with doctrinal issues with any one but fellow apostles. I had recently attempted a similar process that had to do with a certain prophet, and I had failed in accomplishing my goal of bringing about a reconciliation of opposing parties. I felt that one of my mistakes had been attempting to deal directly with a prophet who was not aligned with me instead of dealing with an apostle with whom this person was in fact aligned. I certainly knew that I did not want to attempt to work directly with an evangelist such as Todd Bentley, especially one whom I had never met. If Todd was not apostolically aligned, this alignment needed to be formalized before I was prepared to go any further. I am well aware that some friends thought I should have stopped right there and pulled out. Perhaps I should have, but I felt that I would be disobeying the word from the Holy Spirit if I did. Some of my friends have not yet forgiven me for not taking their advice, and, who knows? Someday they might be telling me, "I told you so!"

Regardless, I knew that alignment needed to come first. Chuck Pierce, with whom I am closely aligned prophetically, wholeheartedly agreed. I did my due diligence and discovered that Ché Ahn was the ICA member who had the closest contact with Todd, and that Todd was willing to accept this alignment. Ché felt that he should bring in Bill Johnson and John Arnott since all three of them were close to Todd and they lead the newly-formed Revival Alliance. Unbelievably,

all four of us had one date in common open all summer, Monday, June 23, so we decided that we would propose it to Todd. He enthusiastically agreed and invited us to come.

By now the word was getting out and I was receiving a quantity of email correspondence from other apostles who were interested. I opened the door for those who desired to accompany us on the platform. I did not allow prophets, evangelists pastors, or teachers to join the group-apostles only. A total of 17 apostles participated representing three apostolic streams: ICA, Revival Alliance, and Morning Star (Rick Joyner).

The Alignment Ceremony

My role in the ceremony was to facilitate Todd's alignment with the three from Revival Alliance, who would then commission Todd as the evangelist to the Lakeland Outpouring. The others were invited to join in with short prayers or prophecies as led.

I need to explain a couple of things at this point, because it turns out that some have misunderstood what I have just said. Some have thought that Todd is aligned with me, which is not the case. He is not a member of ICA. We are barely acquainted. Please note that purposely I have never come out and defended Todd against any of the accusations. I have attempted to maintain neutrality in order to deal with the issues as objectively as possible.

Some have said that my very appearance in the ceremony constituted a de facto endorsement of the Lakeland Outpouring. I anticipated that this would be the case, and I felt I had to take the risk because I knew of no other way to proceed. So while it was an endorsement, I in no way meant it to imply that I was endorsing Lakelands's side of the controversial issues. For one thing I couldn't do that

because I had not yet investigated them as I am doing now. I felt that the proper protocol was alignment first. However, I did feel, and still do, that what was wrong with the Outpouring should be corrected if at all possible rather than rejected out of hand.

Others wondered if this was an ICA event. It was not. However, I cannot separate myself from my role as the ICA leader, and I so identified myself in my paper.

Thirteen of the 17 apostles on the platform were ICA members, and they agreed that Todd would be better with formal apostolic alignment than without it.

I have been scolded by some for making an apostolic decree at the end of my presentation. They may be right. However, I believe in apostolic alignment so much, that my thought was that Todd would be blessed more after the alignment than before.

Take note also that I mentioned a heightened level of discernment between truth and error which obviously has been called for.

The vows of alignment with Ché, Bill, and John led to Todd's commissioning. Ché Ahn was in charge of this. Notice that the only ones who laid on hands and commissioned were the three of them. Several prayed and prophesied. I want to make it clear that I did not commission Todd as some wrongly think. I didn't lay on hands, I didn't anoint with oil, in fact I moved to the back and neither my wife, Doris, nor I prayed or prophesied. I did this intentionally because I knew I would be wrongly positioned for the second part of my assignment if I did.

With the alignment completed, I was ready to go on with the second part of the assignment, namely attempting to bring order out of the confusion concerning doctrines and ministry

practices

Bringing Order to the Issues

I felt that I needed a team of apostles who were willing to work with me in order to identify the concerns that had been brought up, define them as carefully as possible, and come to an opinion that could be issued to the public. Ten other apostles have agreed to work with me in this project: Ché Ahn, Bill Johnson, John Arnott, Chuck Pierce, Stephen Strader, Lee Grady, David Cannistraci, Steve Strang, Jeff Beacham, and Joe Askins.

One of our first tasks was to develop a “Lakeland Spectrum” in order to help individuals concerned to know where they stood as over against others. We have a five point spectrum (1) Strong approval, (2) Concerned approval, (3) Neutral, (4) Conditional disapproval, (5) Strong disapproval. The members of our apostolic team range from 1 to 4.5, so we have a range of perspectives.

We have been working on sorting out what we now have, and the list is down to 24 issues. We are taking this very seriously, and we understand that the process will take time. When we arrive at our conclusions we will release them to the public. John Arnott will be the point person to review our findings with Todd Bentley and the Fresh Fire Board of which he is a member.

We will add to this report of the findings as soon as possible
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