

Get Ready for God's Surprises

Sometimes I wonder how the early disciples felt after Jesus left this earth. They were in awe after seeing the wounds in His hands and feet. They had never been more convinced that He was God in the flesh. Yet they probably battled fear and discouragement because He left them alone when He ascended into heaven.

Jesus told them He was sending the power of the Holy Spirit, but what would that look like? They had no idea what was next. Jesus didn't give them a script. There was no church bulletin to explain that a rushing wind would blow at 9 a.m., or that flames would rest on their heads at 9:05 a.m., or that they would speak in strange languages at 9:10 a.m.

Pentecost was a surprise. It was that way in the first century, and it is that way every time God sends revival. Like the "violent rushing wind" that blew in the upper room (Acts 2:2b, NASB), Pentecost is always an unscheduled interruption.

The moral and spiritual condition of people in the American colonies was deplorable in the 1720s. Churches were dead because most ministers weren't converted. Then some young people in New Jersey began to experience conversion, and this triggered the First Great Awakening. Hundreds of new churches were formed over the next two decades as masses responded to calls to repentance issued by preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield.

The Second Great Awakening was also unexpected. People would sometimes travel 100 miles by horseback or in wagons to attend church services. During outdoor "camp meetings" in Kentucky and Tennessee, hundreds of people came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and turned to Christ. Many people fainted or trembled because of God's tangible presence. The noise of the people's shouting was so loud that it was sometimes compared

to “the roar of Niagara.”

The Azusa Street Revival of 1906 was also a surprise. No one in the racially divided United States expected God to use an African-American holiness preacher to lead a national movement—but it was in William J. Seymour’s meetings in Los Angeles that the Pentecostal revival began. The charismatic movement erupted in 1967 when a group of Catholic college students met for a retreat. After they began speaking in tongues, the fervor spread. It eventually touched more 300 million people.

As I pray for another spiritual revival in my lifetime, the Lord keeps bringing me back to Acts 2:43: “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.” One characteristic of revival is that it baffles people. Even if we pray for it often—and we should—it always causes head-scratching, mind-blowing, jaw-dropping awe when it hits.

I don’t know all the amazing ways God will demonstrate His power in this next revival, yet I know it’s coming. I believe I will live to see the next wave. Here are seven surprises you can expect to see in the coming spiritual awakening. Please pray accordingly:

Expect an influx of unchurched people who are hungry for spiritual transformation. Right now we see growing opposition to the message of Christ. But we are heading for a tipping point. People today are more stressed, worried, depressed, confused, addicted and emotionally broken than ever. In the midst of this darkness people will go where they see light. Prepare for a harvest.

Expect supernatural eruptions of God’s presence. People will not want to leave a church service when the glory of God comes. Dead formalism will be replaced by the life of the Holy Spirit. Churches that normally end by noon may go on for hours

when God's presence takes over.

Expect an outbreak of healings. In the 1950s healing revival, people flocked to certain celebrity evangelists to receive a touch from God. But in the coming revival, teenagers, truck drivers, immigrants and schoolteachers will pray for the sick and see miracles. Spontaneous healings will also become commonplace during corporate worship gatherings.

Expect nearly vacant church buildings to be filled with worshippers. Some small churches today are hanging by a thread and almost ready to close. But God can revive the weary and open the barren womb. In some cases He will send new leaders, and when they begin to preach the uncompromised Word of God, new life will bring dramatic transformation and growth.

Expect many prodigals to return to the Father. The Lord gave me this promise from Zechariah 10:8 about the younger generation in America: "I will whistle for them to gather them together, for I have redeemed them; and they will be as numerous as they were before." When the wayward return, there will not be enough room to contain them.

Expect noisy demonic disruptions, followed by miraculous deliverance. Like ancient Ephesus, our culture is demonized. Dark spiritual forces have held many people captive. There will be resistance when those who are bound hear the truth. Prepare now, because most devils do not leave quietly.

Expect churches in small towns and remote rural areas to experience spiritual revival. The coming revival is not just for big churches in big cities. The Holy Spirit is attracted to places large and small—wherever there is hunger and humility. And people will drive long distances to visit churches in tiny towns where God is manifesting His power.

Our merciful God plans to visit us again with His refreshing latter rain. Pray for the outpouring. And prepare to be awestruck. {eoa}

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