

How the Holy Spirit Awakened This Evangelist to the Reality of Hell

How could I be going to hell?

What I was experiencing messed with my theology to a radically uncomfortable degree. The Holy Spirit was making sure I would never be the same again. Mission accomplished.

I count the early 1990s as the most significant season of my life to date. God had invaded my life. Do you feel the weight of that reality? The burning, raging Creator thrust Himself into this mere mortal!

The Holy Spirit took me beyond a mere understanding of my need for a savior and a simple acceptance of Jesus as that savior to a place of breathtaking experience in His extreme, fearsome and surprisingly vivid invisible realm. The sudden all-consuming desire of my heart was to be intimately joined with the Lover of my soul every moment of my life. I was craving and experiencing a legitimate, reportable and constant weighty manifestation of the presence of God in my life. I was burning! The desire and the cry of my heart was, "More!"

In those early years, as I was diving into the increasingly deeper realms of life in God, many things happened that I'll never forget—but one event shook me like no other before or since.

I Had a Dream

The night I had this uninvited invasion of both God and hell into my sleep, I was living in an old, vacant church building as the caretaker. The dramatic scene was what you would imagine—the church was a relatively ancient stone structure. I

would regularly encounter God as I walked through the now empty corridors, hidden rooms, sanctuary and other mysterious places throughout that relic. The countless hours praying in this vacant building resulted in forming me as a young burning man in some very memorable ways.

One destined evening I prepared for bed as I did every other night. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. I prayed myself to sleep in the weighty and wonderful presence of the Holy Spirit as I had done so many times before.

What was about to happen as I slipped into sleep that fateful night would result in a tremble that is with me to this day—25 years later. I was invited into an otherworldly encounter that I had no freedom to turn down.

Because of the unimaginable panic and terror I experienced that night long ago, I would often pray as I went to sleep, “God, please don’t give me any dreams tonight.” I prayed that way for 13 years.

Thirteen years! God eventually spoke clearly to me, after 13 years of receiving many visions, but no dreams of God, “John, I need you to stop praying that prayer. I have things to reveal to you. I need to talk to you. I have dreams for you to dream.” I relented and have since craved dreams, angelic visitations and other forms of communication from the heavenly realm.

During this night of terror over 25 years ago, I fell asleep in the old, empty church building and found myself dreaming.

In my dream, I was laying on my stomach in a one-room building. It was very comfortable inside, though there was nothing in the room. It was empty. I rested on the carpet and looked out of the two windows, one in front of me and one to my right. The overwhelming feeling that I had was one of comfort and relaxation. I had no concerns and no thoughts beyond enjoying the atmosphere I was in. This feeling is what

drove my entire experience. Obviously nothing could be wrong if I was feeling so good, right?

Through the windows I could see a peaceful, lazy and bright sunny day unfolding. It was beautiful! The trees were blowing in a gentle breeze. The birds were chirping and flying from tree to tree. What a brilliant Creator we have! Everything was so refreshing and alive! I couldn't have asked for a better afternoon.

Then, suddenly, I experienced a changing of the scene. Like time-lapse photography, as I was in the same position on the floor looking out the window, I watched the atmosphere suddenly change. There was an immediate and progressive shift. The clouds were ever so slightly darkening and increasing in coverage in the sky. The gentle breeze picked up velocity and the brilliant brightness started to go in and out as periodic shadows covered the area while the sun hid beyond the advancing clouds. It seemed as if some rain might be moving in. I rested there, stretched out on my belly with my head in my hands as I watched it unfold. I remained immersed in my own comfort. I was taking deep breaths and enjoying every moment of my day.

Time lapsed again and I saw the sky completely covered in clouds—clouds much darker than just a few moments ago. I could now smell the fresh and unmistakable scent of the coming rain.

“Concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:36-39).

The birds were taking cover as the wind picked up significantly. In the distance I saw several lightning

strikes. It sure seemed as if this could be quite a storm. How was it that I was feeling no concern, no urgency to prepare as I enjoyed my personal, careless experience in that small, one-room shack? I stretched out and relaxed even more. The greater the threat, the greater the “peace.” What a wonderful day I was having.

Again, for the third time, I watched the scene in front of me change suddenly. Now, it was fully obvious the storm would most definitely hit—and soon. The wind was intense and large, ominous drops of rain started to hit the windows. Violent and arrogant lightning that seemed to have a personality all its own struck less than 300 yards away.

The thumps of hail hitting the roof started and quickly increased in force. It was time for concern. The threat of danger was increasing by the second, but I didn’t feel any urgency or need to respond. I remained prostrate on the ground, refreshed and at ease, just as I did when it was a beautiful sunny day. I was enjoying the perceived safety of my environment. I was feeling so good.

Once again, time lapsed and I found myself in the center of a churning, dreadful force that seemed powerful enough to split the Earth in two. The storm of the century was upon me. The massive trees were nearly snapping in two as they bent over parallel to the ground. The hail was massive in size and was slamming every surface around me. The windows were buckling in and out as the incredible pressure of the storm weighed on them. The lightning that burned hotter than the surface of the sun was literally striking mere feet from the shack. The walls were shaking. You can imagine what I was experiencing in that terrible and fearful moment. You guessed it: beautiful peace, safety and comfort. It truly was a wonderful day, until ...

Tune in Thursday for part two of this article. {eo}

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over 20 years and is a sought-out teacher, prophetic messenger and revivalist. John has authored nine books, has appeared on Christian television and radio and directed one of the primary internships at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. Additionally, he has planted two churches, has initiated two city prayer movements and is currently directing a prayer- and revival-focused ministry school in Detroit called the School of Prayer. John's mandate is to call the church in the nations to repentance from casual Christianity and to burn in a manner worthy of the King of kings. He is equipping people to confront the enemies of God (established religion, Jezebel and so on) that hinder an extreme, sold-out level of true worship.

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