

Radical Revival Falls on China's State-Controlled Churches

CBN News traveled to southern China and obtained exclusive, never-before-seen images from inside these churches.

When God Shows Up in a Communist Church

It's Thursday evening in Fujian Province, southeast China. Scores of men and women are dancing, waving flags, blowing shofars, singing and worshipping God.

You might think these images come from a charismatic service in the United States. But they're not. This is communist, and officially still atheist China.

And what Duan Huilai says is remarkable about this scene is that it's happening in an officially government-controlled congregation known as Three-Self Church.

"Dramatic changes are happening," Duan told *CBN News*. "God is moving in a powerful way inside these Three-Self Churches."

Duan and his wife have witnessed this move firsthand. Both are evangelists and have for several years crisscrossed the Chinese countryside documenting the Holy Spirit's move among Three-Self Churches.

"The most amazing thing is that the Lord is raising up God-loving people in these churches—so many brothers and sisters who love God deeply and want to serve Him," Duan said.

Signs and Wonders Now Allowed

Pastor Duan says what is happening today in Beijing and in other parts of China as it relates to the powerful move of God

amongst the Three-Self Churches is quite remarkable considering where the church has been in the last 30 years.

“Every sermon that the pastor preached back then had to be vetted by the government authorities. Young people were never allowed to attend these churches, so you’d only see old people, mostly women,” Duan said. “Preaching about the power of the Holy Spirit was forbidden. You couldn’t talk about end times or preach repentance.”

Topics on healings, miracles, signs and wonders were out of the question. Not anymore.

“Nowadays people have accepted these topics,” Duan said.

Two main types of churches exist in China: registered and unregistered. Registered congregations, also known as Three-Self Churches, are government-approved.

Unregistered, sometimes called underground or house churches, operate outside government control, and for decades faced intense persecution. And with that persecution came tremendous growth.

Three-Self Churches, on the other hand, never experienced that kind of explosive growth. Until now.

“Now there’s big revivals happening in the Three-Self Churches,” Dr. Zhao Xiao told *CBN News* from his offices on the outskirts of China’s capital city.

Communist Encounters Christ

Zhao is one of China’s foremost experts on Christianity. A former Communist Party member and atheist, Zhao converted after reading the Bible.

“If you go to Haidian Church, you’ll find yourself in a more than 100-meter line trying to get inside and worship. In Shenzhen, there are usually an average of 500 people being

baptized each Sunday!" he shared.

Decades ago, the Chinese government had a law that said that young men and women below the age of 18 could not attend Three-Self Churches. Zhao says those rules have been loosened in recent years.

"There's an increasing proportion of them in churches now—more young male believers, professionals, mainstream celebrities, especially in the big cities, that are attending the church unlike the past when it was mainly the elderly who attended."

Love Camp

Back at the Thursday night meeting in Fujian Province, folks have gathered for a four-day event affectionately called "Love Camp"

"Love Camp aims to help the believer grow in their faith walk and get closer to God," Sun Rengui told *CBN News* one evening.

Sun is a pastor and leads the camp. He says the idea came 12 years ago when he says the Holy Spirit one day showed up while he was preaching at the Three-Self Church he pastors here.

"We were in the middle of the service; suddenly everyone at the church felt the Holy Spirit anointing fall. Some couldn't stand straight, others fell down. Some were dizzy and nauseous. When the worship began, people started crying. After the service, some were being healed. I saw demons being chased away from people's bodies."

Pastor Sun says his church had never experienced anything like it.

"We were seeing something unprecedented. We had no theological training in the move of the Holy Spirit. This was completely new for us," he said.

Word quickly spread.

"We were one of the first churches to experience this in the area. Soon, leaders from other churches came to us and were eager to receive the Holy Spirit. Later they also started witnessing the Holy Spirit's move as well," Pastor Sun said.

But it wasn't without controversy.

"People doubted if this was real. There was even conflict among my church staff," Sun said. "But as time passed, more people accepted the power of the Holy Spirit."

Transformed Lives

Twelve years later, Pastor Sun says the impact of the Holy Spirit's move is seen in the transformed lives of church members.

"Our cell groups are expanding, more people are attending church, and more people are going outside the church walls into society to share the gospel."

The church runs two orphanages and two elderly care centers, and twice a year puts on the Love Camp.

"We have four goals in this camp: to evangelize people, strengthen the family, disciple believers and encourage other Three-Self Churches to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit."

For Pastor Duan and his wife, this is evidence that God is doing something special in the world's most populous nation.

"I was speaking in Shandong, Henan and Zhejiang recently. Around 8,000 people joined the meeting. Last Christmas, I was speaking at a Three-Self Church in Yuhuan and I was amazed there were 12,000 people," Duan exclaimed with joy.

They, Dr. Zhao and countless others say they feel honored to play a part in helping more Chinese turn to Jesus Christ.

"The number of Christians in China is growing rapidly. It

means Christ is starting to play an active role in China's society and that's good in many ways," Zhao said.