

Will the Future Church Resemble Our Vision of the Ideal Church?

The future church will be established for God, a highway ready for His arrival. The church will shift uncomfortably from preparing a place for people to show up on Sundays to preparing a place for God to occupy night and day.

God is releasing prophetic forerunners who are sounding alarms about the future church. What is coming will disappoint a massive segment of Christianity as the only wineskin they have ever known is retired. The coming wine cannot be held by the current wineskin.

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins” (Mark 2:22, ESV).

I have prayerfully attempted to cast the vision and communicate the realities of the coming church—including the cost of embracing such a radical shift. Yet, few have broken away from the tired old model that’s about to be judged and removed.

It’s better to shift now in this forerunner season than when there is no other option. Regardless of when we shift, our churches will most certainly lose the money and people that keep them running, so now is the time to prepare.

Aren’t people ready for a change anyway?

*“Reformation ends not in contemplation, but in action.”
—George Gillespie*

So many say they are tired of church as usual, yet those same

people are still employing the same methods of ministry they have for decades. Being tired of church as usual isn't enough—we must embrace and initiate radical change.

- Show up
- Worship for an hour
- Take up an offering
- Give announcements
- Preach for an hour
- Have some altar time
- Go home
- Repeat next week

Church as usual.

This model is comfortable. It's familiar. It's about to come to an end.

"We get called dishonoring for pointing out the garbage in the church, yet nobody ever seems to think it's dishonoring that somebody put the garbage there in the first place." –D.R. Silva

"Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof." –John Kenneth Galbraith

The Church of Choice

I recently asked on Facebook this question: "If you were searching for a new church today, what are some factors that would be very important to you?"

Here are some of the answers:

- *Truth being preached.*
- *Safe place for my kids.*
- *There has to be prophetic worship; prophetic ministry; multiple leaders contributing (1 Cor. 14:26); anointed, prophetic, word-centered preaching; prayer and prayer*

ministry; and outward vision.

- *Fellowship-Worship-Doctrinally Pure-and a leadership that is not afraid of the spiritual gifting that God puts in people.*
- *Friendships. I hate being a back of the head watcher.*
- *Pastor that knows God's heart and can lead and teach accordingly. "And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15, NKJV).*
- *More God, less talk of people.*
- *Manifest presence of God.*
- *None of the above: only whether or not I am called to be there.*

Those are great answers, yet we must exercise caution. The coming church may be so extreme, narrow and on point that even much of what people shared above may not be realized ... except the last bullet point. That's the correct answer.

We have to yield to God's coming design for the church, and we have to be willing to lay down our ideas of what church should be, along with our demands, and worship with our very lives.

God will be positioning people and families well outside their comfort zones in the coming church. There may be no children's ministry, no live worship, no pastoral care, no programs, poor preaching, no friendships or any other supposed deficiencies. The transitional season into which we are moving will result in radically disappointing church experiences—but we'll know it's not about us. It's about partnering with God as He regains leadership in our lives and uses us in the deconstruction/reconstruction reformation in the church. Soldiers don't choose their commanders, their assignments or their experiences. They show up, train and prepare for battle.

"About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho" (Josh. 4:13, ESV).

False Expectations

It's critical that every one of us look at today's Western church and agree—it is radically, embarrassingly broken. We can't have the thought that it's doing pretty well, and that some adjustments will help. No way. Full force reformation is coming, and the future church won't look anything like today's.

Today's church is soon to be no more.

"What is a man born for but to be a reformer, a remaker of what has been made, a denouncer of lies, a restorer of truth and good?" –Ralph Waldo Emerson

With reformers on the loose, we must not expect today's model to remain.

If you expect hours of Spirit-driven intercession, then you have a correct expectation of what church should look like. You will do well. Think of a prayer meeting. That is church.

"And he was teaching them and saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"?' " (Mark 11:17)

"And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense" (Luke 1:10).

"All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (Acts 1:14).

Other expectations may leave you frustrated when the future church minimizes or excludes entirely an emphasis on what you value.

The coming church will be so strange, unusual and illogical that the majority of today's Christians will resist or even fully reject it.

If we expect something to be a part of the experience, and it's not, offense and anger can follow. This is why it's critical to be in the church that God leads you to. If this is your criteria, then you won't be offended when the old wineskin disappears.

The coming church will be an end-time church unlike anything we've ever seen, and those who aren't given to fervency in intercession will become end-time resistors, unwitting partners with Satan himself.

This is the first of a two-part series on the future church. For what is coming and what will be going in the future church, tune in Friday.

John Burton has been developing and leading ministries for 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 planted two churches, has initiated two city prayer movements and is currently directing a prayer and revival focused ministry school in Detroit called theLab University. 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, etc.) that hinder an extreme, sold-out level of true worship.

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