

Are You Serving 'American Jesus'?

I believe that much of what the Lord is doing today is completely counter to Christian pop culture and the flow that we are seeing in the mainstream and most highly visible Western church. It is typical in such times that there will be a counterfeit that runs parallel to the real. There will be an echo that arises right alongside the authentic voice.

Some of these echoes are very deceptive and hidden from the casual hearer, while others are rather obvious and easy to discern. For instance, there's a false teaching out there, a part of the "hyper-grace" message that says the Christian doesn't need to repent—that God has already forgiven all your past, present and future sins. Yet there's never been a greater need for repentance in the church world than there is today.

In a recent poll by , single Christians between the ages of 18 and 59 were asked, if, given the opportunity, would they have sex before marriage. A whopping 63% stated that they would. How can that be? It's simple. Either they are hopeless backsliders, or they've never repented of their sins and experienced true conversion. This is the kind of damage that extreme messages like this can do. A majority of these deceived Christians belong to a church culture that is perhaps trendy and popular but has no interest in fulfilling the demands of Christ.

Many of them serve an "American Jesus," who lets them live as they please and who will, of course, never judge them. Amidst all of the frenetic religious activity going on today, we need the ability to recognize the real Jesus and the authentic voice and leading of the Spirit of truth.

In John 1:36 (NASB), John the Baptist, who was filled with the spirit and power of Elijah and who ministered with divine authority, declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Then he declared again, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). We must continually behold the Lamb of God in prayer and our walk with Him, especially the attributes becoming to a lamb, such as those of being pure, harmless, holy and undefiled. Unless we are constantly decreasing in pride and self-assertiveness and cultivating meekness, humility and teachability in our lives—as well as a ravenous hunger and love for the truth—we will eventually lose our way and drift into deception.

John's ministry was not one of self-exaltation or self-promotion, as is so common today. He was separated by God for the sole purpose of exalting the Lamb of God and preparing a people for Him, a bride for the bridegroom, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27b, MEV).

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice" (John 3:29a).

Those who are true friends of the bridegroom in this hour are hearing His voice, not an echo. The voice of His messengers, who are filled with the spirit and power of Elijah, will point people to the Lamb of God, not to their own ministries, personalities or agendas. John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness. The entirety of his ministry was focused on the Lamb and His bride.

If a ministry is not pointing people to the one who was, and is and is to come, it will be judged harshly in this hour. Those who are truly exalting and honoring the Lamb of God have no interest in being seen or heard. They are not looking for a platform or a microphone to promote themselves. The things that denote ministerial "success" in our day, such as large

buildings, large followings and popularity, are of no interest to the true messengers of the Lamb.

Actually, the Lord is leading His true ministers and friends of the bridegroom right now to do the opposite of what it takes to build a large ministry. He is stripping away human wisdom and all we've utilized in our own efforts to build His church, for He will not share His glory with another.

(This is an excerpt from Bert's latest book, Cleansing the Temple.)