

Jerusalem 2015 Brings Evidence the Holy Spirit is Alive and Well

Jerusalem 2015 sponsored by Empowered21 proved to be a powerful event that brought Pentecostals and charismatics from around the world to Israel for Pentecost Sunday, a day when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is joyfully celebrated.

The five-day event was streamed live on the Internet. TBN recorded it and will use it along with interviews from leaders for a period of weeks. Our Charisma News covered it and, if you follow me on Facebook or Twitter, you saw my posts of some of the worship, some clips of powerful preaching and people I met along the way.

I was amazed at the number of top leaders who came at their own expense to minister. The preaching and worship was the best of the best from around the world. E21 presented the first Lifetime Global Impact Awards to Reinhard Bonnke, Morris Cerullo, Jack Hayford, Marilyn Hickey, David Mainse and Vinson Synan.

While attendance records were not discussed, it seemed that the largest groups came from Asia—mainly from Indonesia and China. On the last night, those of us in leadership formed prayer tunnels and prayed for every person in less than half an hour. I served with five others and prayed for mostly Chinese attendees who seemed overwhelmed being prayed for on Pentecost in Jerusalem. I felt out of my element, but I stepped out in faith and prayed in the Spirit for those who passed before me. It was a powerful experience.

Billy Wilson, president of Oral Roberts University, and Dr. George Wood, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, are co-chairs of Empowered21, which grew out of the Azusa

Centennial in 2006. The vision of E21, which I endorse, is that every person on earth would have an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit by Pentecost 2033.

Charisma Media served as one of the event's main sponsors and presented the Modern English Version of the Bible, which the public seemingly received well. I spoke with leaders about it, explaining that in only nine months it had cracked the top 10 among all translations. Many leaders like Dr. Mark Williams and Dr. Jack Hayford have given rousing endorsements. Other leaders seemed to like the idea of a new literal translation into modern English in the King James tradition.

During the conference, author and worship artist Faytene Grasseschi from Canada and I emceed a session in the arena. She gave away a CD of the worship that took place at the event. I gave away a copy of the MEV; a lady from Africa almost tackled me to get it, much to everyone's delight! Later, Cris Doornbos, CEO of David C. Cook (which owns Integrity Music) and I co-chaired a breakout session on media. I said I'd give away a Bible and the place was packed. I conducted a short writer's seminar and connected with many new writers for Charisma House and Charisma News.

I flew home yesterday feeling full and inspired. The renewal movement seems alive and well. The conference put an emphasis on the next generation and raising up leaders. And the more than 100 volunteers from ORU seemed to be everywhere serving and encouraging.

The event encountered a few problems. It began with the fact that, while services were held Wednesday and Thursday night, no service could be held on Friday night in observance of the Jewish Sabbath. Not only that, but the following day is the holiday Shavuot—Feast of First Fruits. It was as if two consecutive Sabbaths had occurred. On Pentecost Sunday night, we had to wait until 8:15 p.m. when Shavuot ended. While we

were lined up outside waiting, officials kept us out longer just in case the first star hadn't come out signaling the beginning of the new day.

On Friday, a special celebration was planned in Manger Square in Bethlehem partly to show solidarity with Christians in the Palestinian area and to avoid the Jewish Sabbath. But there was so much local controversy over this that, hours before the event, local officials cancelled it. It was moved to the area during the late afternoon, a time that had been allotted to travel to Bethlehem. But we had to end by sundown!

The next day, a special baptism was held in the Jordan River was planned where a few Jordanian Christians were baptized on the Jordanian side as a sign of Christian unity. I missed this because I was interviewed on TBN about the Modern English Version.

Some people took Saturday and Sunday to view a few of the many significant sites in the Holy Land. Since I've been six times previously, I did no touring. But I used the time to drive to Tel Aviv to visit a messianic congregation called Adonai Roi (The Lord is my Shepherd) on Shabbat. What a blessing to see this thriving congregation. It's worth seeing the video clip of Senior Pastor Avi Mizrachi saying the Shema. The children also did a little dance for Shavuot, which I'd never seen.

The next day—Sunday—I attended Calvary Baptist Church in East Jerusalem pastored by an amazing young man named Steven Khoury whom I'd met on my last trip to Israel. Even though the name said Baptist, the service was fully charismatic. And the congregation of about 120 (huge in Israel) is solidly pro-Israel, unlike some Arab Christians. I was so impressed by what I saw, we will be writing about this congregation and their efforts to buy a much-needed building.

Another thing that impressed me was the new Friends of Zion Heritage Center founded by my longtime friend Mike Evans. It's

a multimedia experience that tells how Christians were early supporters of Israel and how many like Corrie ten Boom risked their lives to save Jews during the holocaust. We'll write about this later as well.

I felt the goals articulated in the beginning were achieved:

- To unite the global Spirit-filled community together intergenerationally for the purposes of seeking a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the 21st century
- To focus the energy and resources of the Spirit-empowered global church on the harvest and the challenge before us
- To provide a platform for addressing the crucial issues facing the 21st-century Spirit-empowered church
- To discover contemporary methods, vocabulary, spiritual grace and relational favor for engaging every generation in Spirit-empowered living
- To witness greater convergence and collaboration of Spirit-empowered ministries around the world

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I've been to many large Pentecostal gatherings over the years—probably an average of one a year for 40 years. This one had a good spirit. No big egos were evident. Powerful ministry took place.

Despite the doom and gloom we often hear, there seemed to be optimism about the work of the Holy Spirit around the world. If anything, the message seemed to be that, with the world we live in, we have no choice but to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

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