

John 14: The Manifested Presence of God

There was a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early 1970s at the church I now lead. Thousands were saved, while many delivered from demons, healed and baptized in the Holy Spirit. Life-changing encounters with God were expected in every service. My family were members of the church and this is where God later called me into full-time ministry. The intensity of that initial outpouring dissipated after a few years but the imprint Jesus made on my life has remained. Revival for me represents an unabated and continually expanding version of what I just described.

Some don't understand the difference between the manifested presence of God and His omnipresence. The "omnipresence" of God means that He is everywhere at the same time. In Psalm 139, the "manifested presence" occurs when the Lord allows Himself to be perceived. In other words, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is with us always (Matt. 28:20) but not every Christian regularly perceives His presence. When we speak of His "manifested presence," we are talking about something that can be personally experienced beyond a theological truth.

Salvation involves a personal manifestation of our unseen Lord. The Lord condescends to make Himself known to us, bringing conviction of our sins and an awareness that we are in need of Jesus as our savior. Every true salvation experience involves God manifesting Himself to a human being. This is glorious but for many it represents their only legitimate encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. We should not allow ourselves to become complacent with salvation representing our only experience with the manifested presence of God.

There is an insatiable, God-given hunger within mankind for His manifested presence. We yearn to experience God. The devil tries to counterfeit spiritual experiences and He sometimes distorts perceptions during holy visitations of God. Every true disciple of Jesus Christ recognizes that there are spiritual excesses and we must be vigilant to guard against them. However, in an attempt to guard against demonically inspired charlatans, we dare not negate the supernatural reality of biblical Christianity.

Consider the implications of the following words from Jesus: "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21, NKJV).

The last supper is the setting for John 14. Knowing that He was about to be crucified the next day, Jesus promised that He'd continue to "manifest" Himself to His followers. Jesus has never wavered from this decree, "I will love Him and manifest myself to Him." He intends to have an unending, ever-deepening relationship with each of us. Demonstrations of His love are to be expected. I can personally testify that Jesus is alive and He sometimes allows His presence to be perceived. Revival begins when our experience comes into agreement with His decrees. {eoa}

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