

Self-Promotional Churches Will Soon Be Judged

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 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 arise 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 that says the Christian doesn't need to repent—that God has forgiven all your past, present and future sins. Yet there's never been a greater need for repentance in the church world than today.

In a recent poll done 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 percent stated that they would. How does that happen? It's simple. Either they are hopelessly backslidden or they've never repented of their sins and experienced true conversion. A majority of them 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 of course, will never judge them. Amidst all of the frenetic religious activity going on today, we need the ability to recognize the real Jesus, the Lamb of God.

In John 3, 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's ministry was not one of self-exaltation or self-promotion as is so common today, but 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.

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

Those who are true friends of the Bridegroom hear 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, and 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 exalting the Lamb of God have no interest in being seen or heard. They are not looking for a platform 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 ministers 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 things, for He will not share His glory with another.

The Ephesians 4:11 gifts are to equip the saints for service and to prepare a bride for the Bridegroom, or a wife for the Lamb. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6). There is a present-day ministry with a mandate just as John the Baptist had, to turn hearts back to the Lord, to make a people ready for Him.

One of the great emphases of the Lord in this hour is on the preparation of His bride. There must be a distinction made between the church world and the bride of Christ. This is more than a salvation issue. It is more about the Lord possessing our vessels for His eternal purposes. This is the spirit and power of Elijah that was upon John the Baptist, and would also be a characteristic of those who would minister before His second coming (Mal. 4:5-6).

God's invitation is to everyone, but that invitation demands a dedication and a consecration. Counting the cost and paying the price are no longer terms we hear today in the marketplace of Western Christianity, but this language is found everywhere in the Scriptures.

It is time to wake up the sleeping church! She can be awakened kindly with a kiss or be shaken with the Lord's severity (Rom. 11:22). It's our choice. If we put it off to the future it will demand His shakings, which often come in the form of tests and trials, or a crisis that will expose our pride and crooked ways. Wholeheartedness is what the Lord desires.

In the times of Elijah we see this ministry in manifestation in the spirit and power of Elijah as he stood on Mount Carmel and contested with the false prophets of Baal. The fire fell and consumed the sacrifice along with the wood, stones, dust and even the water. This mighty manifestation caused the people to fall on their faces and declare the Lord as God.

"Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!'" (1 Kings 18:39).

We also see this ministry exercised in the days of Moses as he stretched forth his rod, and the Red Sea swallowed up and drowned the Egyptian armies. The results of this anointing and authority are noted in Exodus 14:31: "Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people

feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

This anointing administered in the spirit and power of Elijah will be seen again. Its purpose is always redemptive—to bring forth true repentance and cause the hearts of the people to turn to the Lord.

We are in the infantile stages of the release of this authority. This will include a worldwide company of men and women who have been summoned by the Lord to be His messengers.

In the times of Moses and Elijah, great severity was necessary to turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord. Often people quote the scripture in Romans 2:4, properly stating that it is the goodness or kindness of the Lord that leads to repentance. But when the Lord’s goodness does not lead to repentance, then He is forced to move us into the realm of Divine severity.

Too many people have taken the Lord’s goodness to further their pleasurable, worldly and even sinful lifestyles. Therefore, for the sake of their salvation and perseverance of their souls, the Lord has to administer His severity.

And so we will see both the manifestation of the goodness and severity of God side by side in the days ahead. Bittersweet times are upon us. We will choose our own medicine. These things will come with great cost and great loss to many as well as great glory and victory to others.

I find the scriptural reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God very rare until we get to the book of Revelation. There the Lamb is referenced 27 times. That is more than the rest of the entire New Testament combined. It was the revelation of the Lamb that ushered in His first coming, and it is that same revelation that will usher in the end of the age. It is only in the Lamb’s meekness that we will triumph. Let’s make ourselves ready!

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and *His wife has made herself ready*” (Rev. 19:7, emphasis added).

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