

The American Church Must Judge Itself, Discern Its True Condition

If you will read the last few articles I've written on this site you will find a common theme concerning the church that Jesus is building. Holiness, judgement, consecration, readiness and preparation for what is coming have been highlighted. 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 we don'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 than today.

In a recent poll done by , single Christians between the ages of 18-59 were asked if, given the opportunity, they would have sex before marriage. A whopping 63 percent stated that they would. How does that happen? It's simple. 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 (refer to my book, *The Real Jesus*).

In John 1 John the Baptist, who was filled with the spirit and

power of Elijah, declared, "Look, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36b). Then he declared again, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John's ministry was for the 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 and agendas.

Today we have imposters in the church who are acting as sort of mediators between God and man, and who are in fact hindering the intimacy of God's people by stopping the Bridegroom from kissing the Bride and by constantly pointing people to their questionable ministries, skewed doctrines, and strange visions instead of the Lord and His pure unadulterated Word. The false prophetic movement has contributed greatly to this in many ways, as the love of appearance and showmanship is at an all-time high, and accurate prophecies at an all-time low. Man's flesh and un-sanctified soul has gotten in the way of God.

Long ago when Jesus was crucified and resurrected the veil was rent in two so we could come to God without a human mediator. This is truly a judgment of the heart for people to put their fellowship with God above the traditions of man and the glory of personalities and celebrity. Closing the veil is the spirit of religion that tells us we need to go through a man or a program. This is the same spirit that was always confronting Jesus and the manifestation of His compassion. 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 churches and ministries.

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 (Rev. 21:9). Thankfully among today's many imposters, charlatans and hirelings there are a company of ministers who've been proven and prepared to minister in divine authority and whose mission and purpose is to turn hearts back to the Lord and to make a people ready for Him. And in a day when false apostles and prophets are tooting their own horns and such harmful ingredients are being introduced to our spiritual diets, never has the authentic pastoral and teaching ministry been more important to the believer than today to provide sensibility and balance. Holiness unto the Lord should be a major theme touted from our nation's pulpits, but strangely there's been a diabolical silence on it in most places.

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 general church 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 for the sleeping church to wake up. She can be awakened kindly with a kiss or be shaken with the Lord's severity. 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. Whole-heartedness is what the Lord is after.

"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).

Our books and articles are forerunners to the move of God and personal holiness. I hope they are a blessing to you. If so, let us hear from you.