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## *THE ENCOUNTER*

Spiritual encounters, whether they are visions, dreams or visitations can go a long way in preparing individuals, groups, and even nations for the otherworldly, dramatic and critical shifts that God is setting into motion. Of course, we know in scripture that spiritual things must be discerned spiritually, and it's important to understand clearly what's being communicated. We also know that all dreams, for example, are not necessarily spiritual dreams. That must be discerned. I challenge you to stay up until 3 AM and then eat a bucket of hot wings, a can of Mountain Dew and a half a gallon of ice cream and see what kind of crazy images dance around in your head when you finally fall asleep. Experiences like that won't shake nations. However, the encounter I had absolutely must.

I had a vision of the *soon coming church*. For me, a spiritual revelation, a message delivered directly by the Creator of the world, is usually very easy to discern. It's rare that I have to go to someone seeking out an interpretation. The scene and the message are almost

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always extremely vivid and revealing. I immediately understand what the players and the atmosphere and the story line are attempting to communicate to me.

This particular encounter was no different – in fact, it was so striking, fearful, engulfing and overpowering that the imagery and message will keep me trembling in my spirit forever.

In order to appreciate the magnitude of the message that was communicated to me in the vision, it will be helpful to understand the context. If you can imagine, at least to an incredibly small degree, the picture of the church that God himself sees, it shouldn't be a stretch to realize the picture of the church that we see on the Earth clearly cannot match up. Meaning, when God drew up the glorious church leading up to its launch in the book of Acts, that diagram that was before him looks little like the church we see today. God's church looks little like the church we have come to know.

*Acts 2:1-3 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.*

Do me a favor and read that passage in Acts chapter 2 one more time. I want those three verses to dive into your spirit and shake you up. When God started diagramming the church, this is what he envisioned — this is where he started. When you compare this passage of Scripture with descriptions of the modern-day church as we know it, it seems like were comparing apples and oranges.

I'd like to ask you to read the passage one more time. As I'm writing this, I feel the Spirit of the Lord starting to burn in my inner man. Let me pray for you right now just before you read it again:

*Mighty God, I pray the burnings of your Spirit would be transmitted into your friends heart. Give them a glimpse into the supernatural yet strikingly real realm of the church. Give*

*them the capacity to release old paradigms, structures, traditions, mind sets and cultures as they come alive to the reality of the church as you see it. Amen.*

Okay, go ahead and read the passage in Acts chapter 2 one more time.

*Acts 2:1-3 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.*

Is it becoming a little bit easier to understand just what the church should look like? You see, as God designed and then launched the church, it was literally blowing and burning and every one of them in that upper room experienced it. As we begin to embrace the truth that passages like this are not science fiction, and that they communicate actual phenomenons that are to be normal for us as Believers, it will become easier to leave behind what we know and press toward the soon coming church. We will suddenly find ourselves so deeply dissatisfied that any thought of maintenance becomes quite insane.

Now, keep in mind that this fiery reality was communicated to us by Jesus, by the Word. This passage is the Word of God, not simply a descriptive, historical report. So, God's plan is for the church to be a supernatural raging furnace of Holy Spirit activity.

I have heard it said that the only thing more powerful than the Word of God is tradition. The traditions of man overpower the greatest power in existence — Jesus Christ himself. Do you feel the weight of that? Is it possible that we need to embrace the fear of the Lord again? The thought of allowing man-made concepts, structures or agendas to push aside and nullify God's plans seems ridiculous. Yet it happens with stunning regularity every day all over the world.

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*Mark 7:13 ...making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down...*

Of course it's true that the definition of the church cannot be limited to one perspective of one segment of the greater structure. It is certainly true, as is revealed later on in Acts chapter 2, that the healthy church will include wonderful fellowship, breaking of bread, powerful preaching, discipleship, evangelism, prayer and other critical activities. However, what we see in the church today is a lot of activity, even good activity, but usually without the tangible burning and blowing of God's Spirit.

### **The Crater**

If you take a look at the cover of this book, you will see a futilely poor attempt at visually communicating what I experienced in my vision. In the vision, I found myself in a dramatic, apocalyptic scene. Everything seemed to be colorless, or at best a variety of dark blues, grays and greens. The ominous clouds matched up with the dark and wild landscape all around me.

Directly in front of me was the focal point of the vision, a tremendously massive crater. I can't begin to describe in human language the overwhelmingly weighty, urgent, and fearsome atmosphere that gripped me and demanded my complete attention. I was trembling as I looked at the edge of the crater in the distance. As I slowly walked toward the gigantic hole in the ground, I knew I could not approach it casually. The fear of the Lord surrounded me. I couldn't imagine what type of alien invasion could have created an impression this deep in such solid ground. The force had to have been greater than anything my human mind could comprehend.

As I was analyzing the drama that I was experiencing, God revealed to me that the crater that I was drawing near to was the church. The church? My mind certainly couldn't even begin to analyze what that meant, but my spirit was raging. My mind presumed I should be looking at a small, white church building with a steeple, but that was not at all what my eyes were seeing.

My spirit was provoked and alive, but I knew that those who were more logical than spiritual in their life experience would most probably resist what is just over the horizon.

*1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Note, this doesn't mean the unsaved, it means those who are naturally minded. That's a lot of Christians. Here's what Paul says next:

*1 Corinthians 3:1-2 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;*

I continued to tremble as the increasingly intense, colorless atmosphere engulfed me, and as I ever so carefully, fearfully, yet with intense curiosity approached the edge of the church, the crater.

Again, I realized I couldn't casually participate. This was a very clear message that I was receiving. The days of casually connecting in the church were over. The shaking and trembling rocked my whole being as I approached this invasion of Heaven into Earth.

Once at the edge, I was stunned and my senses were overwhelmed as I looked at what seemed to be alive. While everything else around me was gray scale, I saw vivid, bright and glowing hues of orange, yellow and red and a prism of colors in between. The bright, colorful, burning lava was living and active. It was moving, coursing throughout the crater. My trembling intensified.

## **Holocaust?**

I received an email from someone in theLab School of Fire, our ministry training center, here in the Detroit area. The message instantly received my attention when I saw the content contained the word holocaust. Of course, that's a provocative and sensitive word

and it takes some care to handle it when applying it to current situations.

The e-mail was sent to several of us at theLab, and it was in reference to a conference I was about to minister at. I'll share the complete, unedited e-mail so you have a full glimpse of what was being communicated. Keep the vision of the crater in mind as you read.

*Hey Fellow Fireball Launchers! I've been hit w/ this urgency thing to pray for John, his upcoming trip to Connecticut to speak at the conference w/ Brian Simmons & James Levesque, & well, the conference as a whole. I just feel like we need to rally around him & call down fire on this conference! I'm feelin that God is gonna break through in a crazy way during this, & John is carrying this crazy powerful message. As the Lord impressed it on my heart to pray, I heard 1 word... holocaust. At first, the only thing that came to mind was "the" holocaust of World War II. After my initial thoughts on the word subsided, I started to think about the word. As I was talking to the Lord, I kept asking "What do you mean?". He prompted me to look up the definition.*

*Here it is:*

*hol•o•caust noun*

- 1. a great or complete devastation or destruction, especially by fire.*
- 2. a sacrifice completely consumed by fire; burnt offering*

*Hah! How crazy is that? I'm not even sure what else to say right now, but whoah! It feels like the meaning He's relaying is not negative. It feels powerful! Still grasping the full context of what's going on here, but I do know that God is bringin down the house with this one!!*

This word was given right after I shared the vision of the crater with theLab. What is coming to the church is not an enhancement or an adjustment. The destruction (or we could use the word deconstruction) will be so comprehensive and total that it will not only remove current structures, but also the foundations they were

built on. The coming church will look nothing like the church we now know.

This transformation will take us well beyond our human ability to understand. I believe God intentionally overwhelmed me with such a vivid vision while also leaving almost every question unanswered. This plan for reformation won't easily translate into a formulaic church growth process. The only way we can apply it to our own situation is by falling to our faces, being consumed by another world and availing ourselves to the risky, vulnerable and shocking process of transformation.

*Proverbs 3:5-7 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways  
acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be  
wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.*

Check out this simple yet profoundly important quote by Andrew Murray:

*Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God,  
not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He  
can do.*

We are all too often guilty of praying for what we can see or imagine. The dynamic life of prayer and faith doesn't even really begin until we venture outside of the realm of human senses. It's too easy to get consumed with what seems to be obvious and natural in our pursuits while forgetting that the majority of our answers and adventures sit just beyond the reach of our human understanding.

If this is true (which it is), then we must agree that God's picture of the church is also painted with colors that exist outside of our earthly realm. This invasion of Heaven into Earth will result in an explosion of brilliance that we could never have imagined.

This is precisely what happened in the Upper Room. God was birthing the church as only he could with revelation and power that only he had. There was no way for anybody in that room to possibly

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imagine what was coming no matter how creative they may have been.

In fact, their human futility was revealed just prior as they decided to fulfill the mandate for there to be a replacement for the fallen Judas. Their process actually looks a lot like the decision making processes of Christians today. They prayed and then cast lots.

*Acts 1:26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias.  
And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

They were so limited in revelation because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to them that they relied on clear, human methods of decision making. They could do no better than pray and cast lots.

When the Holy Spirit is in the mix however, what is humanly impossible becomes the launching pad of Kingdom life. The transition that is coming will result in a shift of manifestation. Instead of hoping for God to manifest in our natural realm alone we will begin manifesting in God's supernatural realm!

As wonderful as it is, when we focus solely on God touching life as we know it in our earthly realm, we limit God. But when we venture beyond this world into the great expanse of the heavenly world the possibilities of encounter, adventure, abundant life and Kingdom living are limitless.

I trust the idea of the church being defined by a Sunday service with some worship songs and some teaching is looking quite ludicrous right about now.





- Two -

## *CELESTIAL ELEMENTS*

**T**he day after I received the vision of the coming church I was still processing through it. I decided to share the vision along with my limited interpretation with the class of interns at theLab.

It's not uncommon for me and others to receive prophetic revelation such as dreams, visions and words, especially during the feverishly hot spiritual environments when theLab is in session, and it can be at least somewhat common to share those impressions with the class. It's a prime environment to learn how to be intimately connected with the lover of our souls, and to hear the beating of his heart. It's quite powerful to communicate just what that beat feels and sounds like!

This particular class was different in every way. I was suddenly carrying a burning coal from the embers of God's heart, and I was undone from the inside out. A tremble was resonating throughout my being, and I knew I at least had to communicate what was happen-

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ing. The problem was that I honestly didn't have clarity on what was going on. What would I say? Would it even make sense to these growing and hungry students? Little did I realize, it was about to make perfect sense to all of us very quickly.

I addressed the students and let them know that something terrifying, yet desirous beyond description was revealed to me the previous evening. I had their attention. I proceeded to share the events just as I did with you in the previous chapter. I was in a state of burning and sobriety, and it was quite clear that all attention was to be on what I was saying, and that it certainly wasn't time for interruptions.

I wasn't long into the encounter when one of the students suddenly got quite animated. She was popping her hand up and down, clearly wanted to be heard. I wasn't ready for any type of break as I was in the middle of sharing the revelation, so I asked her to wait until I finished. Throughout the remainder of the story, she was respectful as she waited her turn, but it was clear that something was awakened within. She was about to come out of her skin.

I ended by saying something like, "I'm not sure what any of this means, specifically, but I do know this—the church as we know it is about to end. There is a fearful burning that is about to replace today's church culture with the supernatural force of God himself."

Now it was Kathy's turn. Our unsettled student was about to bring revelation with great clarity.

Kathy said something along the lines of, "I have been about to explode the entire time you were talking! I have to share with you something that I saw on National Geographic last night!"

What she shared next launched this revelation into an entirely different realm. She shared what she saw, and later sent me the link to watch the documentary myself online. It was a brilliantly produced special on the ramifications of a massive asteroid crashing into the Earth.

The parallels to the encounter I had were remarkable. The question that was being considered in this documentary was this:

*What would happen to the Earth of a massive asteroid collided with it?*

## The Collision

### **Documentary:**

The first point of interest was quite interesting indeed. When the asteroid collided with the Earth, it was so massive in size that the top of it was 30,000 feet in the air—where commercial jets fly!

### **Spiritual Application:**

God is coming in such force that it will impact not only the Earth, but the Second Heaven as well. The strong demonic influence on the Earth from the Second Heaven will take a mighty blow as Heaven invades Earth. This doesn't mean the enemy will be disarmed. In fact, the demonic swirl will intensify with great power, but the church will be awakened into its authority and will see many demonic attacks thwarted. Confidence to advance the Kingdom of God will be at an all time high as a burning church is broken and born into its true authority.

### **Documentary:**

When the asteroid hit the Earth, a pillar of fire instantly exploded and reached from the surface of the Earth up into the heavens.

### **Spiritual Application:**

The connection between Heaven and Earth, between God and his church, will be a conduit of fire. The burning of the Holy Spirit will be raging as the church and God are in constant encounter at a level never known to man.

### **Documentary:**

Next, balls of fire shot out from the pillar and scorched regions far away from the point of impact.

**Spiritual Application:**

An impacted and supernaturally reformed church will be so volatile, so explosive, that it will ignite fires in regions far away.

**Documentary:**

A cloud of smoke then rose and actually surrounded the entire planet. The entire Earth was covered by the residual impact of the asteroid.

**Spiritual Application:**

The glory of God will cover the Earth! The residue of his activity will be felt all around.

**Documentary:**

Celestial elements, parts of the asteroid that don't exist on this planet, were implanted into the ground.

**Spiritual Application:**

This is powerful! Heaven was brought to Earth! The church will be infused with the very DNA of God. God himself will be coursing throughout.

**Documentary:**

Earthquakes rocked the Earth all around.

**Spiritual Application:**

Everything, including the Earth itself will be broken under the weight of God's presence.

**Documentary:**

Molten rock filled the crater.

**Spiritual Application:**

The coming church will no longer be a place simply to hold human events. It will be a place of burning that will destroy

flesh and threaten kingdoms of man. Church will be known by never ending fire that won't be turned down for the apathetic or cautious.

After watching the documentary, I was shaking. How can we prepare for something that seems so unavoidable, not to mention, so ominous? The answer, we can prepare our hearts, but we can't stop its arrival.

We will all be crushed under the weight of God's coming church.





~ THREE ~

## *A TROUBLING SHIFT*

**T**he revelation that Kathy shared, and that I later saw for myself in the video, was stunning to put it mildly. God was revealing his plans to crush most of what we know as the church in the Western culture (at least) and replace it with a terrifying and wondrous new experience with God himself.

While the revelation is symbolic, the extreme feeling that I was overwhelmed with reveals to me that it's less symbolic than we may think. There truly is a collision coming, and there's nothing we can do to stop it—though many will try.

We soon won't be able to define 'going to church' the way we do now. God is coming to reform, to crush structures of old for what is to be introduced very soon.

The force from Heaven, the celestial asteroid, is going to impact the church, and most pastors and people will resist with everything that's within them. Man-made support systems will be removed. People's financial and relational structures will be threatened by this strange, new spiritual invasion.

The human wisdom and natural common sense that has been involved in the development of the current church structure will not be usable in the new. Those who walk by sight are in danger.

We will have to rely on a new set of senses as we, in faith unlike any we've ever allowed ourselves to embrace, begin to walk blindly into a fearful new church reality.

However, if we have false expectations & a wrong understanding of who God is, we will soon be offended.

## **God & Church Confusion**

I believe the coming church is necessary in large part due to a confused and wrongly defined church model that has led to false-expectations and a misunderstanding of the person of God. This confusion and misunderstanding has put many Christians at eternal risk.

The current church model, generally speaking, has avoided the mandate to call the body into the fires of intercession and ministry to the lost. Instead of being a troubling shock to the current system of the world, and to the spirit of the age, the church has been marginalized.

We should be grieved. The pure Christian message of surrender, repentance, holiness, intercession and rescuing souls from Hell has been replaced by a self-centered gospel that boldly affirms a focus on benefits without cost, on personal gain without sacrifice, on freedom without consecration.

Great offense will come when God doesn't "come through" for us financially or otherwise. Many will experience rejection when God brings correction instead of a pat on the back. Millions of Christians are at risk of falling away when God disappoints them by not giving them what they presumed was a part of the package they signed up for.

Even today, people are becoming disenchanted with the church when they don't feel connected or served or edified. If they can't function in their giftings, focus on their desires or fulfill their ministries, the increasing trend is to become offended and cause trouble. If today's disappointed Christian can't withstand this current



semi-supernatural structure, what will they do when the asteroid from Heaven crushes them fully? What will their response be when they are called into the humbling ministry of night and day prayer? How will they react to an atmosphere of groans and cries of deep repentance and Holy Spirit intercession that cut to the heart?

## The Current Church

There's no way I'm going to attempt to present a comprehensive picture of the church with all of its varying streams and complexities. The point I'm focusing on is the simple, common experience that the current structure and function of the church presents.

- **Teaching driven:** In most churches, the Sunday service revolves around the message, the teaching.
- **Sunday only:** The average attendance for a church attendee in America is less than two services a month. Most of those services occur on Sundays.
- **Predictable & scheduled:** Each service and ministry of the church is mapped out and scheduled, and while there is often some flex, you can usually have a pretty good picture in your mind of what to expect during each event. Several songs of worship, a few announcements, receiving the offering and a 30-40 minute message is what most have come to expect.
- **Mostly natural:** While some churches do experience a measure of supernatural activity, the overwhelming experience is logical, natural and humanly comprehensible.
- **Locally focused:** Most churches have a vision that is limited to themselves. Their local church is where most of their energy is focused.
- **Centered around fellowship:** Friendships and a social culture are the defining factors in the church for many.
- **Seeker focused:** Even churches that aren't identified as "seeker sensitive" tend to be intent on attracting visitors and they gear their ministry to do so.

- **Personal gain highlighted:** God blesses and that message when presented in appropriate context is a necessary one. But, most churches highlight personal benefit while keeping the bar of personal surrender and commitment quite low.

## The Coming Church

The new church will look nothing like we see now. We must learn how to live in the Spirit if we hope to embrace this uninvited yet deeply needed invasion from Heaven. Everything is at risk. Will you embrace or resist this reformation?

- **Encounter driven:** We will gather together with the primary goal of having an overwhelming encounter with an invisible God. The burning of God will engulf us day after day. A 2 Chronicle church will be the normal reality.
- **The 24/7 church:** The thought of only gathering in the crater, in the lava of God's shocking presence, on occasion, a few times a month, will be laughable. Our entire lives will be empowered by this tent of meeting and our energies will be spent gathering the desperate masses into the fire to experience an otherworldly spiritual encounter together. Most days of the week we will easily make room to be in the church, on our faces, trembling under the weight of God.

*2 Chronicles 7:1-3 As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."*

- **Unpredictable:** Finally we will begin to know a God who is limitless in expression. Every moment with him, in our cor-

porate gatherings, will be unlike any other. The fierce burning will never stop, the myriad of emotions we experience as God hovers over us will surprise and overwhelm us continually. A gathering of burning ones will result in fire balls of worship that lead to sharp swords of prophetic teaching that shake the people to their core. Wave after wave of fiery shock and awe will never disappoint. Services will be open ended and will overlap each other as room is made for an uncontrollable Holy Spirit to orchestrate the events in his wisdom.

- **Supernatural:** We will take the leap from mostly translating God into our natural language and understanding to allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us out of the natural realm and into a supernatural culture that can only be understood via our spirits. The lost will finally have hope as we stop trying to give them logical reasons to 'get saved' and we start introducing them to a supernatural God that they have been craving to meet.
- **Regionally focused:** The level of impact that the rock from Heaven will bring will not be confined to a local church. Pastors and leaders will stop focusing mostly on developing their own local ministry and will instead shelve much of what they did in the old church model and focus on serving the regional mission. The local will give way to the regional as leaders 'lead' the people into encounter, into regional mission and into the greater vision of revival and reformation. The spirit of Pharaoh that focuses on personal goals and keeping people locally focused will give way to the spirit of reformation and Kingdom advance that was manifested through Moses and Joshua.
- **God focused:** Instead of attempting to 'grow the church' by focusing on visitors and seekers, the leaders will be fully devoted to a 2 Chronicles 7 strategy of compelling God to show up in extreme, weighty power. The pillar of fire that connects Heaven to Earth is the new goal. In fact, an empty church is a better goal than a full church if we understand that passage of scripture correctly! Many people will leave the church as

a more serious devotion to Holy Spirit activity is given, but the supernatural invasion of fire will result in fire, smoke and earthquakes that will rock cities and nations.

- **Personal surrender highlighted:** Instead of compelling people to 'join our church' through the promise of personal gain, we'll highlight the cross. The cost. The Rich Young Rulers will leave while the end-time remnant will gain confidence in leaders seriousness for revival and will flood in and serve with military level commitment. You will know leaders have turned the corner toward the new model of church when they actually raise the bar so unapologetically that those with money and influence are allowed to go. How many RICH RULERS are in our churches because leaders have compromised the call, just so they don't lose their money?

Even attempting to logically communicate in this book some of the changes coming to the church is really ridiculously futile. However, my belief, and my prayer, is that the Holy Spirit will drop a burning coal into your spirit and at least impart a measure of what I am seeing, and what God is about to do. Remember a immeasurable rock is about to annihilate most everything that we know as church today. The religious will violently resist the Rock as they did when Jesus walked the Earth. But, it's on this Rock that the church will be built.

Very literally, everything is threatened including pastor's salaries, people's favorite expressions of church life, current church relationships and many other personally important aspects of church. When that threat comes, many wonderful church leaders, elders, Sunday School teachers, small group leaders and deeply committed ministers will be saddened, troubled and offended.

## **Where is Prayer?**

To the dismay of those who simply want to hear a little worship and listen to good (and short) teaching, services will become more like prayer meetings. One of the greatest indictments on the

church today is that prayer is not the driving force. Today, people tend to choose churches based on the appeal of the teaching and the worship instead of the fervency of prayer. If the church was a house of teaching, or a house of worship, that would make sense, but it's not. Scripture reveals that the church is a house of prayer for all nations. Every person in the church will function as a burning intercessor and the services will be marked by this unified groan of fiery prayer. It simply does not make sense that people gather together as Christians, and they don't pray as their primary activity. Some key reasons why this is the way it is? First, it's uncommon to find a pastor who is consumed by a lifestyle of prayer. The pressure to draw—and keep—a crowd is high, and their energy is most often given to that endeavor. Second, it's equally rare to find Christians who are invigorated by a spirit of prayer. Even in some of our most Spirit-filled bodies, you will notice people quickly checking out after even five or ten minutes of vigorous intercession. Simply, the people don't prefer it, and to keep them around, the program doesn't include it.

Further, the call to prayer is in itself offensive. There is a massive demonic resistance against the prayer movement today. In fact, people are actually creating doctrine that rejects devotion to intercession and affirms a lackluster, casual approach to prayer. Those who are fervent are often labeled as legalistic or elitist. The accusation is that those who pray with extreme devotion presume themselves to be closer to God than the rest of the Christians. My response? They are! Anybody who invests their time, energy, heart and passions into deeply connecting with God, and by allowing him to cut them to the core, is most definitely closer to God than those who have a theological approach to God. Is that so hard to believe?

Those who pray cause problems for those who don't, and since most don't pray with a fiery spirit, churches focus on those people and, in effect, shut down the spirit of prayer in the church. These churches, more often than we might realize, have Ichabod inscribed above their doorposts.

In today's church, connection with other people seems to be more appealing than connection with God. While personal relationships are extremely important, especially as it relates to the Great

Commission, the coming church will again highlight vertical, prayer driven connection with God as the primary call for every Believer. That will result in a revelation of mission that takes us well beyond our desire to have friends or to have others meet our needs. Personal need will give way to personal mission. Today, churches are often more like organic, socially driven hospitals. People tend to use the church as a way to meet their personal needs instead of serving it as a minister of God. This is going to change. Of course, there will still be personal ministry and true needs will be addressed. However, instead of the church functioning as a hospital, it will once again function as a mission-driven military. The mission will take precedence. The saints will be equipped for service, not for personal survival or personal satisfaction. In this ancient and emerging model, there will be MASH units that will take very good care of the wounded with the primary purpose of getting the soldier back into battle. Apostles will again lead with governmental authority and pastors will be seen as the main leader less and less as they focus more on shepherding the soldiers and less on primary leadership. By some estimates, there are over five billion people on the Earth today who don't know Jesus. In fact, my personal belief is that many in the church today who presume themselves to be saved, are not. This may take the number well over six billion! With that in mind, how can we be focused on our personal needs, fitting in and making new friends as the primary motivators of our church experience? It's nonsense! It's a violation of the very purpose of the church! The coming church will be changing that with great finality.

## **Do You Trust Me?**

One of the most important shifts in my life as both a Christian and as a ministry leader came as I was in the midst of developing Revolution Church in Colorado. I was relaxing on the couch late one night when God spoke very simply yet profoundly to me. He said, "John, do you trust me?"

The question was threatening! I knew he was about to call me out of comfort and into challenge. I wanted to shout back, "Nope!

I love you but right now I know you are up to something that will trouble me! I'm not sure if I trust you!"

I'm sure God appreciated my honesty. Of course, after I gathered myself, I told him with clarity, "Yes, God. I trust you."

The reality is this: What other choice did I have? I either trusted him and embraced the threat of extreme personal loss, or I refuse to trust and attempt to maintain what would be valued, by default, as more worthy than God. The choice was simple, but not easy.

What God said next was confounding. Understand, for those of you who are familiar with the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, what God said will sound very familiar. Later, after we joined the staff at IHOP, I was amazed at how so many others were hearing the same thing! However, I had not yet been exposed to the IHOP culture, and what God said was strange indeed!

God said, "John, I want you to move from ministering to people to ministering to me."

What? I had never heard of such a thing. After all, isn't the goal to be connected with people? The Great Commission certainly would demand that we focus on people, right?

This life altering encounter I had with God revealed just how limited my perspective really was. The black and white analysis would reveal that first, people are going to Hell, and second, we need to tell them about Jesus. Additionally, we need to invest into the process of discipleship. This is scriptural, right?

The black and white answer is, "Yes."

As a graphic and web designer, I work with images quite a bit. It's possible to reduce a beautiful, vivid, colorful image down to only black and white. It's the same image, without the detail and without the depth. Take a look at what I mean on the next three pages.



This photo is expressive and full of detail, and, though you can't see it in this book, it's full color. Contrast it with the same exact photo on the opposite page.





The image has been reduced to three shades. Almost all detail is gone and there is really no sight of the tornado that is quickly approaching. On the next page, you'll see a true black and white photo with only two shades.



Reduced to only two shades, we can see a road, and a girl and really, nothing more. We don't realize that what appears to possibly be clouds is actually a threatening storm. We can't determine the girl's age or what she is holding.

So, the simple answer is this: there is more to the picture. Yes, we must touch people, we must lead them to Jesus, and we must be connected to them. That's the black and white reality. But there's more, much more.

In God's wisdom, he knew that a radical shift toward ministering to him, to intercession and the pursuit of a deep, abiding relationship with him would result in many critical elements added to the mission or changed radically.

- **Power.** The more we minister to God the greater the anointing on our lives. You simply gain strength when you are encountering God.
- **Clarity.** When we are intentionally living in the spirit, with God, we see with new eyes. The two shades of our past understanding transforms into a beautiful, more fully revealing image that drastically changes the way we minister.
- **Mystery.** What was previously hidden is revealed to us. Mysteries in the two-dimensional realm morph into brilliant revelation in the multi-dimensional, multi-faceted realm of the spirit.
- **Emotion.** The last photo evokes little emotion. The actual photo demands a reaction to the reality only seen when our eyes are fully opened. As we minister to God we are overwhelmed by God's emotion for the lost and for the people he died for.
- **Strategy.** The image with two or even three shades is too vague to even begin with a strategy. It seems as if all is well and the girl may just want to watch out for traffic as she's standing on the road. In the full color picture, the strategy becomes clear and urgent! Run! That way! Now! Jump into a ditch and cover your head! Intimacy with God changes our missions drastically. The low level concern about oncoming traffic gave way to an immediate concern about a deadly twister!

## Teaching vs. Instruction

Another shift we will see has to do with teaching. Teaching will be minimized while instruction is emphasized. Teaching is mostly for personal edification while instruction is mostly for corporate assignments.

Today, most churches focus on teaching principles of scripture, providing truths that will help Believers navigate through their lives and on offering nuggets of biblical info. While there will still be important Bible teaching, apostolic instruction will emerge as a necessary new ministry. There is enough Bible teaching online, on CD's, in books and on video to turn every one of us into personal spiritual giants. We need to take it upon ourselves to grow.

What is lacking, however, is apostolic leaders, military commanders, who give instruction, assignments, to a ready army. *Teaching is personal growth based while instruction is a call to corporate action for the sake of mission fulfillment.*

An example of apostolic instruction is this: The apostolic leader communicates scriptural truths about prayer and fasting as it relates to city transformation. He then relays a corporate assignment for everybody in the church to fast and pray in a very focused manner for a week and then show up, full of the fire of God, together to prayer walk through the city streets. It's a corporate call to action vs. a simple biblical study. It's mission focused vs. personal growth focused. Personal growth will be largely our responsibility between services so we can be ready to respond to the corporate instruction where we will receive our assignments.

Such an intense culture will require an immediate spike in the number of hours we spend together. The missions will require time to complete them. In the coming church, we will gather together most days of the week. The 24/7 church will again emerge as the church drives culture instead of reacting to culture. Cares of life will lose their power as we simplify our lives and put corporate prayer and mission ahead of most everything else. This may be the most challenging change for Christians. Today, Sundays are the days to set aside

for corporate worship while we give precedence to our 'normal lives' throughout the week.

In the coming church, the very reason we live will be to pray on fire together every day, receive apostolic assignments and then move out into our lives as Kingdom ambassadors. It wouldn't be surprising if a tithe of our time is what became the standard. Two to three hours a day, whether it's in the morning, afternoon or evening, or even in the late night hours, will be given by every Believer to praying on site together with others, ministering, and giving ourselves to intercession fueled Kingdom ministry. Of course, much of what we have been giving ourselves in our typical American lifestyles to will have to be eliminated so we have the time necessary to devote.

## **Groans of Worship**

As we become supernaturally changed in a place of extreme intercession, worship will change significantly. It will be supernaturally driven. There is a new sound coming to worship, and it's not simply a new style. There is a supernatural, otherworldly groan of intercessory worship that will explode out of the entire body as a new breed of trembling worship leaders lead the way into the shock and awe of the glory of God.

We will no longer simply sit in a pew or stand with a raised hand while a familiar worship song is sung. The prophetic, groaning sounds of Holy Spirit facilitated worship will make it normal to shake and fall to our faces as we cry Holy! The natural, logical sing-a-longs will be no more. We will have a hard time standing as God's Shekinah and Kabod glory resides in his church. Worship teams will practice less and pray in the Spirit with tears in their eyes more.

Today, along with most other expressions of church life, worship is at least slightly and sometimes extremely marginalized for the sake of the less adventurous attendee. Since most people tend to be adverse to more supernatural forms of worship, and many would leave if the atmosphere became too uncomfortable, the majority has been winning.

## 38- John Burton

I've said it countless times, and have written before that I refuse to tone down the activity of the Holy Spirit out of respect of those less hungry. How is it that the naturally minded majority has supplanted the supernatural remnant in the church? How is it that burning, raging, intercessory worship that's driven by the groans of the Spirit himself are not appreciated enough to risk losing people from our churches?

*Romans 8:5-8 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Romans 8 is a very important chapter of scripture. It's clear that the call to live in the spirit is not a simple suggestion. It's not only for those who want to go unusually deeper in God. If we are to live in sync with God, we must live in the spirit. This is clear for all believers.

*John 4:23-24 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

True Christians are identified by the way they worship. Is it possible that we have churches that worship ministries that are not fueled by spirit and truth, that are more natural than supernatural? Yes.

The reality is that God is spirit. We have to worship him at his level—what an honor that is!

*Romans 8:22-28 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope,*

*but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Creation groans! We ourselves groan! This is the cry of intercession, a literal, thunderous groan that fills a room of intercessory worshipers!

Certainly it must be easy to understand that the supernatural realm is quite different than the natural. Yet, we still can't see ourselves as a church becoming strangely and wonderfully spiritual in worship. Remember, everything is changing! A small enhancement it is not! Our typical worship experiences will become so humanly bizarre, that most will resist it. Why? Because it will raise the bar above where most would be willing to go. The cost to live in the spirit like this is massive, and in today's logical and busy culture, it's not appealing. In fact, it's threatening. However, it's coming, and those who resist will do so tragically of their own volition.

*2 Chronicles 7:1-3 When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever."*

In the coming church, it will be normal for people to hit their faces and tremble and cry holy as the fire of God's presence rages! Do you see why we can't formulate low level, seeker focused worship services that can be understood naturally? Worshiper will be groaning

40- John Burton

and crying in the spirit, and it's possible we may have to do it on the pavement outside of the sanctuary!





~ FOUR ~

## *FIERCE RELIGIOUS RESISTANCE*

**M**y favorite definition of religion is this:

*Man's attempt to use God to get what he wants.*

Today's church is largely setup in many ways to best appeal to people. It's people-centric. The presumption is that God is always there, and now we have to get the people there. This couldn't be more incorrect.

The simple truth is that people want certain things in life, and, by extension, in the church. Instead of being fully surrendered to Jesus, to the cross of Christ, demands and expectations are placed on God and his church. A religious spirit will accept God as long as God performs according to expectations.

The moment God fails to meet their spoken, or usually unspoken, demands, the religious spirit will embrace a demonic spirit of accusation against God and will look for other means to get what they want.

The coming church will threaten almost everything we have come to value in the church of today, because today's church is largely fashioned by the will of man.

## Ichabod

*1 Samuel 4:1-22 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field. And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies." So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook. Now when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. So the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a thing has never happened before. Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Be strong and conduct yourselves like men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!" So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. Now when he came, there was Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the*

*ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out. When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What does the sound of this tumult mean?" And the man came quickly and told Eli. Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see. Then the man said to Eli, "I am he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line." And he said, "What happened, my son?" So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it. Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."*

In the coming church, we will be entirely focused on God showing up and visitors being troubled, not the other way around. The only way we can impact the people of the world is if we jealously guard the ark, God's presence.

The coming church will result in a ferocious invasion of God's presence into the church, and this will result in a mass exodus of the naturally minded and lukewarm. This reality is what keeps many churches tepid. The "come as you are" sales pitch is another way to say, "come on in, the water's fine, the temperature is perfect!"

Not too hot, not too cold. Perfect for everybody to feel comfortable, except God.

## 44- John Burton

If the temperature is too hot, people will flee, and will take their money with them. Many who earn their living from the ministry will be revival's fiercest resisters.

Remember, a religious spirit is focused on self, and specifically using God and God's systems for personal comfort, safety and gain. If any of that is threatened, even by God himself, that person will aggressively resist. If the increase of God's uncomfortable burning presence means fewer people will remain, the religious will manipulate the thermostat back down. Fear of man will replace the fear of the Lord.

This is why Ichabod is hanging over many churches today. Leaders have traded God for people. God is currently raising up a new generation of leader who will not be afraid of people or loss, and who won't give in to the pressure to provide a comfortable, lukewarm environment.

Watch how God rebuked Saul, removed him from position and provoked Saul to react in violence:

*1 Samuel 15:23-28 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king." Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."*

Remarkable! That doesn't sound like God, does it?

*"The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."*

That's not nice at all! Friend, let's be aware of a difficult reality. God is much different than the imaginary image we want him to live up to. God isn't always nice, but God is always right. He is always holy. He is always just. He is not always fair. He is not always pleasant. But he is always a fearful and loving God.

Leonard Ravenhill said: *"A man who is intimate with God will never be intimidated by men."*

There are leaders being identified right now who don't fear man. They will be receiving the batons that God has pulled from the hands of some of the previous generation's most celebrated leaders. When their ordination has been lifted by Heaven, people will start to be drawn to other churches led by God's new breed of firebrands. This will not be an easy transition.

I encourage you to read my book *Pharaoh in the Church*. I explain this challenging shift for God's people being violently pulled out of Egyptian, man-made religious systems that are intent on using God's people for their own gain, financial prosperity and legacy. A brilliantly worded lyric to a worship song by Brian Ming sums it up well:

*God forgive us for building kingdoms of man on doctrines of demons in your name.*

Even Saul's repentance was too late to save his position.

*Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice."*

When Samuel basically told Saul, "Too late buddy," Saul responded with violence! His livelihood, his reputation, his kingdom was being stripped from him!

*1 Samuel 16:1-2 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king."*

*among his sons.” And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’”*

The religious intimidation will be extreme when the new breed who are unafraid, humble and surrendered to God are identified. As this story plays out, Saul eventually tries to kill David, though his humble replacement refused to reciprocate. He honored Saul.

Before we get to that point, however, let's watch the story unfold a bit. It's a familiar story, but one worth revisiting.

*1 Samuel 16:6-13 So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the LORD’S anointed is before Him.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen these.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all the young men here?” Then he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.” So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.*

The Lord has not chosen thee. We live in a nation where we presume that we can be anything we want. Many parents will tell their children, “You can be President of the United States if you want.” Mom and Dad, no they can't. There will be but a handful of people of all the millions who live in our nation who will be chosen by God to fulfill that role. Humility would demand that we cannot

and should not be most things, but we will most certainly fulfill the calling that God has for our lives.

Nobody was called to be king except one—David. This type of exclusivity causes problems even today. Many adhere to a false belief system that demands that we are all on a level playing field. This just is not so. There are leaders, and there are followers. This is by design. And, as is the case in this story, some leaders will be replaced by others who seemingly have little going for them—except that they are intimate with God and unafraid of man.

Now, the story is about to get interesting! Saul, representing the old, resistant, religious system is about to be visited by a distressing spirit—sent by God! (This isn't the only time God assigns a troubling spirit to someone named Saul. Paul, previously Saul, was given a messenger from Satan to keep him humble. God will use all of his resources to fulfill his plans.)

*1 Samuel 16:14-23 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him. And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me." Then one of the servants answered and said, "Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD is with him." Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by his son David to Saul. So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer. Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.*

## 48- John Burton

The emerging generation of anointed leaders will bear the burden of loving the previous generation, those they are replacing, and to minister to them from the place of their intimate relationship with God! Only those who are most deeply connected with God will be chosen for this task. This is why the prayer movement is so necessary today. People who know God a lot will be replacing people who know a lot about God.

Again, this will be a very difficult transition in the church. Those who are moving into position must, without fail, honor, serve and love those they are replacing.

*1 Samuel 18:5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.*

He behaved wisely. As a result, his favor increased, not only with Saul (which would be short lived) but with all of the people. This didn't set well with Saul. Not at all.

*1 Samuel 18:6-9 Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day forward.*

The resistance has escalated. Young emerging leader, know this: no matter how humble and surrendered and loving you are, the bold advance that is required of you in your developing position in God's Kingdom will result in jealousy, accusation and extreme resistance. Are you ready? Will you still love? Will you use gossip as your



weapon of choice, or intercession? David continued to choose intercession.

*1 Samuel 18:10-13 And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice. Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.*

Fear of loss of money, of reputation and of influence with people will strike many. Again, how will you respond? David continued to intercede for Saul. David held a harp with the intent to deliver while Saul held a spear with the intent to destroy.

Scripture reveals that David continued to exercise wisdom, and that in itself resulted in great fear coming on Saul. Saul's days were numbered.

*1 Samuel 18:14-15 And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him. Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.*

I know this is quite a long, dramatic story, but I'm compelled to keep with it at least for another moment. I believe it's critical that we see over and over again the heart of David as he was under continual threat of death at the hand of the one he was serving, and ultimately, replacing. This process is about to hit the current day church, and this lesson cannot be underemphasized.

*1 Samuel 19:8-11 And there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him. Now the distressing spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing music with his hand. Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear,*

*but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night. Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."*

So, God continues to provoke the outgoing leader by sending a distressing spirit, and God continued to test David's heart at the same time.

David again passed the test with love and a harp while Saul again failed the test with fear and a spear. Intercession was the stronger weapon.

As Saul's mission intensified, he became relentless as he broadened his attack to include anybody who was faithful to David. The lesson? God will send people your way, young emerging leader, to stand with you, and they will have to be equally prepared to respond rightly, as Jonathan did.

*1 Samuel 20:31-34 For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, "Why should he be killed? What has he done?" Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully.*

The coming church will divide families and will result in extreme anger. We see the true motive of Saul's heart in the above passage.

*For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom.*

Saul's plan was to be established and to lead the kingdom. That same spirit is driving many leaders today. It's a Saul spirit and it's a Pharaoh spirit. It's a religious spirit. Personal gain was their motivation.

Now, read this last, somewhat lengthy, portion of the story closely. Take note of the attitude of David and his willingness to go through great, inconvenient process and to continually honor the one who he would replace. His heart qualified him, and, equally importantly, Saul, who had God given authority, declared David to be king.

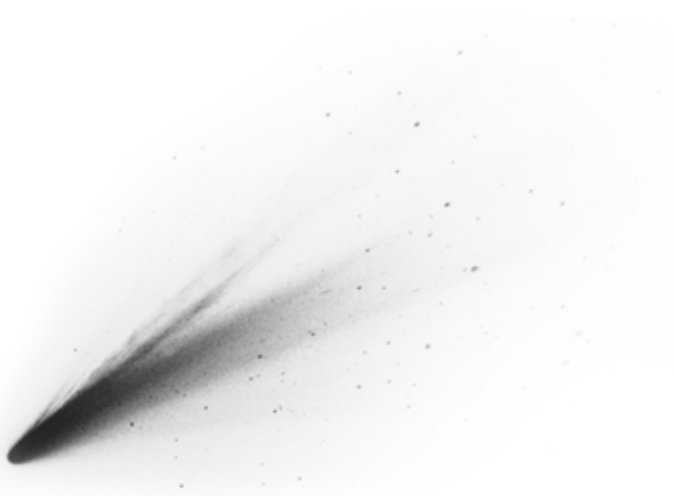
Just as God had to put extreme pressure on Pharaoh, the established leader of Egypt, to be the one to make the decree that the Israelites may go, he caused King Saul to do the same. The current authority validated the incoming authority. This is significant.

*1 Samuel 24:2-20 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.) Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.'" "And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD." So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD'S anointed.'" Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my*

## 52- John Burton

*hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand." So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David: "You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.*

There's the declaration. David would be king. Saul, after great and grievous pressure, relents. The religious resistance, as with Pharaoh, surrendered and God's kingdom would advance.



~ FIVE ~

*THEIR FREEDOM IS YOUR MISSION*