

If I were to shout through 1000 megaphones directly into your ears, it would not be possible for me to overemphasize just how disastrous and awful and horrific it is that our backslidden Western church today has-to all intents and purposes-lost its gospel. And in doing so it has lost its very reason for being.

Andrew Strom

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Prayer Study #329

The State of the American Church Content to Live without the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

I believe that one of the greatest needs of the American Church is teaching and reception of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in every believer's life. Without this experience the Church is not going to have the power to overcome the things that are coming soon upon the earth. With this experience will come peace and joy and love for others and power to be a witness and an overcomer. Without it the Church will become more and more apostate and will walk in the description Paul gives in 2nd Timothy 3:1-5: *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanders, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather the lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!* Many churches and ministries today have a form of godliness but deny the power of godliness, which is found in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. More and more churches are walking in apostasy and denying

Why has the American Church come to this place of complacency and compromise? Most of the church world in America has lost the foundation of the Word of God. Many pastors do not preach the word uncompromisingly but had rather entertain and tell "chicken soup" stories. Others deny the validity of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, even though the Word of God is so clear that this is a needed and valid experience. Furthermore, there are no passages in scripture that say the Baptism of the Holy Spirit went out with the apostles nor does the history of the 1st Century Church and beyond teach this. There is ample historical evidence after all the original apostles died that subsequent men and women walked in the Baptism and operated in the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit. In fact, there is no point in history since the 1st Century where no one was walking in these things. Those who deny this experience must be warned to read the

last verses of the Bible: *For I [John] testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book* (Revelation 22:19-19).

We live in a day of political correctness, a largely atheistic government, a liberal media where many write and speak with a bias towards Christians, and a powerless church which looks more like a country club than the Church of Jesus Christ. False doctrines are beginning to be taught in traditional, formerly Bible focused denominations.

The doctrines of men, however, cannot change the inerrancy of the Word of God. Even this time of apostasy, lukewarmness, and the falling away of many Christian believers for *every wind of doctrine* (Ephesians 4:14) did not catch the Lord by surprise. Jesus Himself, quoting from Isaiah, said in Matthew 1:9, ***“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of Men.”*** Furthermore, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, warned Timothy in 1st Timothy 4:1, *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.”*

Unfortunately, many people in the Church in America have already begun to walk in apostasy. Many ministers are denying and defying the Word of God teaching that there are many ways to heaven, that homosexuality and abortions are an acceptable way of life, that prosperity shows how spiritual a Pastor is (more money, more spiritual), that a person can live the lifestyle he desires because we are already forgiven through His grace anyway.

We know that Israel is an Old Testament type of the Church. Isaiah, in speaking of the six woes of unfaithful Israel, says in Isaiah 5:20: *“Woe unto those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”*

The Western Church, as a whole, is far from the *Ekklesia* or *called out ones* of which Christ said, ***“And I say unto you, that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”*** (Matthew 16:18. Paul warns us in 2nd Corinthians 6:17, *“Come out from among them and be ye separate...”*

We should have seen the handwriting on the wall because many spoke of the decline of the American Church. Jim, Elliot, the Christian missionary who was martyred in 1955 by the Acca Indians in Ecuador, wrote at the age of twenty-one in a letter to his parents: *We are so utterly commonplace, while we profess to know a Power the 20th century does not reckon with. But we are harmless and therefore unharmed. We are spiritual pacifists, non-militants, conscientious objectors in this battle to the death with principalities and powers of high places....We are sideliners-coaching and criticizing the real wrestlers while content to sit by and leave the enemies of God unchallenged. The world cannot hate us-we are too much like its own. Oh that God would make us dangerous.* This view of the American Church, if true in the 1950s, is much more true today.

In 1982 David Watson, an Anglican priest, said, *“It is widely held that the battle of the century will be between Marxism, Islam, and Third World Christianity. Western Christianity is considered too weak and ineffective to contribute anything significant in this universal struggle.”*

And James T. Draper in an article from the Baptist Press in 2003 added, *“People shop for churches like they shop for automobiles or groceries. People want something that fills their needs. We have missed the boat because we think Christianity is about us. It is not about us. It is about God and His kingdom of earth as it is in heaven. He has chosen Christians to play a significant role in showing the world what His kingdom looks like. Western Christianity has retreated from the battle for the souls of people into the pursuit of personal comfort.”*

Finally, David Wilkerson speaks of the American Church in a message shortly before his death. The title of his message is *Call to Anguish*: *“I look at the whole religious scene today and all I see are inventions and ministries of man and flesh. It’s mostly powerless. It has no impact on the world. And I see more of the world coming into the Church and impacting the Church rather than the Church impacting the world. I see the music taking over the house of God. I see entertainment taking over the house of God, obsession with entertainment in God’s house, a hatred of conviction and a hatred of reproof. Nobody wants to hear it anymore. Whatever happened to anguish in the house of God? Whatever happened to anguish in the ministry? It’s a word you don’t hear in this pampered age.”*

I believe that much of the ineffectiveness of the Western Church is due to pastors who no longer believe in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the Virgin Birth, the inerrancy of the scriptures, and Jesus being the only way of salvation. Many pastors tell good stories and entertain rather than teach the Word of God. There seems to be very little teaching on the Holy Spirit, much less the baptism in the Holy Spirit. What this has produced is a body of shallow believers with little knowledge of the Word of God and a form of godliness but no power. These pastors have compromised the Gospel message so much that Christian believers and the Church have become the targets of ridicule and put-downs, and Christians themselves have become comfortable and complacent. The American Church for the most part has become Laodicean or lukewarm. Jesus calls this church *“...neither hot nor cold...”* And He says He will *“spew them out of His mouth.”* I believe this means lukewarm Christians will lose their ability to hear Him.

So why is the American Church, as a whole, so weak, so boring, so worldly, and so defeated? I certainly think denial of the Baptism in the Spirit is a big part of all this. Spirit-filled churches in America are on the move. I also think we can answer this question when we look at the results of a survey by the late sociologist Jeffrey Hadden who in 1982 surveyed American pastors and priests. He sent the survey to 10,000 clergymen. Of that number 7441 replied.

Was Jesus born of a virgin?

60% of Methodist pastors said, “NO!”
49% of United Presbyterians said, “NO!”
44% of Episcopalians said, “NO!”
19% of Lutherans said, “NO!”

Was Jesus the Son of God?

82% of Methodist pastors said, “NO!”
81% of United Presbyterians said, “NO!”
89% of Episcopalians said, “NO!”
57% of Lutherans said, “NO!”

Is the Bible the inspired Word of God?

82% of Methodist pastors said, "NO!"
81% of United Presbyterians said, "NO!"
89% of Episcopalians said, "NO!"
57% of Lutherans said, "NO!"

Does Satan really exist?

62% of Methodist pastors said, "NO!"
47% of United Presbyterians said, "NO!"
37% of Episcopalians said, "NO!"
33% of American Baptists said, "NO!"
14% of Lutherans said, "NO!"

Did Jesus physically resurrect from the dead?

51% of Methodist pastors said, "NO!"
35% of United Presbyterians said, "NO!"
30% of Episcopalians said, "NO!"
33% of American Baptist said, "NO!"
13% of Lutherans said, "NO!"

In another survey (around the same time as Hadden's survey) of one of the large, well-known theological colleges of the United States, 93% of the students studying for the ministry stated: "I have not devotional life."

I find these statistics very disturbing almost to the point of unbelief, but Hadden was a well-respected sociologist. The point of including this survey is the fact that many of these pastors would be senior pastors today or would be influential people in the pastoral ministry, mentoring younger pastors.

To combat this problem I believe the Lord is raising a Remnant Company who will operate in the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit and who will stand on the Word of God.

We live in remarkable times=times before the coming of the Lord, who is the Son of God and God the Son. We will all behold Him in the Eastern Sky. Soon and very soon we are going to see the King. We as believers must prepare the way, and we can only do this by walking in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.