

Cristián Romo Jimenez

### **The Move of God in the Last Decades**

*In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.*<sup>1</sup>

God, with a father's heart, and Jesus Christ, wanting to see his Church materialize as it was originally designed to be in eternity, do not cease to watch over Her and be actively involved in her development. Since the very beginning of the twentieth century, at a time when it seemed that nothing was happening, the Lord poured out his Spirit in different parts of the world which initiated a spiritual movement that was the force behind the expansion of the gospel to many parts of the world. At the same time, it should be mentioned that in more recent history a dispersion tendency has taken place that has led this Pentecostal Church to innumerable divisions and spin-off groups, especially in Latin America. One is obviously led to ask the question: If this awakening was really of the Holy Spirit, why did it end up in this condition? One simple answer could be: because there is a human element involved. I want to leave that question for further reflection.

Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the last century, a huge missions movement emerged in the world from European countries and North America towards different parts of the globe.

Undoubtedly the Lord has surprised us in these years, surpassing the limits of our expectations regarding his manifestations in the world. There was a time when those that had experienced the Holy Spirit thought that they had a monopoly on spiritual gifts as well as other charismatic experiences. Suddenly, however, God began to surprise all of us with the events which took place at the end of the 60's, when the Holy Spirit began to be poured out - without asking permission of the religious establishment - on people that no one could have imagined would have had such an experience. This very fact gave way to much speculation. How could God manifest his Spirit in a Catholic, an Anglican, a Baptist, a Presbyterian, etc.? He himself said, "on all flesh," and He didn't add denominational titles to his requirements for Spirit manifestations. What happened to Samuel in Jesse's house can help us understand how God deals with human beings.

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<sup>1</sup>The Holy Bible : New International Version. 1996, c1984 (Acts 2.17-18). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

*But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."<sup>2</sup>*

One very significant experience was that which took place in the life of our brother David du Plessis in the 60's. Due to his great desire to share with different traditional groups his experience with the Holy Spirit, among those groups were Catholics as well, lost his credentials as a Pentecostal minister but didn't lose his fire. The Catholic Charismatic movement began around 1966. At around the same time, a similar awakening took place among evangelical groups. This servant of God was greatly used at the beginning of the charismatic movements in the more traditional groups.

When the winds of the Holy Spirit began to blow during the previously mentioned period of time, the consequence was an obvious renewal in the Christian world. Without a doubt, this marked the beginning of a very important part of the life of the Church in general, as little by little the hearts of many were opened to the working of the Holy Spirit. It can't be denied that the initial impact was shocking indeed, as it transformed much theology which was contrary to the Holy Spirit, but the Lord has not withheld his work even in our days. I imagine that He is not frightened by those things that are born of the human nature and that tend to oppose what He has proposed to do in the world. Thanks be to God that He has ignored the times of our ignorance and has continued with the development of his eternal purpose.

#### **THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT**

At the end of the 60's and the beginning of the 70's, God desired to begin to intensify his work, not leaving the Church with only one renewal experience, but desiring to move the Church along into a restoration that was absolutely necessary. Why restoration? Because the Church in many cases had lost her compass regarding the purpose of God. Therefore, a profound change concerning the values that had been lost was necessary.

#### **RESTORATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES**

Discovering how, during the last of the 60's and the early 70's, the Lord began to restore throughout the world principles and truths that had been forgotten was very impressive. Europe (England), the United States, and South America, specifically Argentina, Chile and Brazil were among the pioneering centers of this restoration movement. Some of these principles and truths that were beginning to be restored as a consequence of the illumination of the Holy Spirit through different men of God are listed below. One must remember that making known these truths in a traditional church setting caused an initial negative impact, which is generally the case. It is also important to note here that God's movement began to appear in the context of a plurality of servants, and not focusing on individual ministries. Certainly the reason for this is that He wanted to emphasize from the very outset the importance of the Body, of unity, of complementing one another. The reasoning behind this is that the majority of us came from a context of individualism or by inheritance or by human nature.

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<sup>2</sup>The Holy Bible : New International Version. 1996, c1984 (1 Sam. 16.7). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

The principles and truths that God has been restoring during the last forty-five years approximately are:

- %1 The Eternal Purpose of God
- %1 The Kingdom of God
- %1 A New Attitude Towards the Holy Spirit
- %1 The Lordship of Christ
- %1 Praise and Worship
- %1 The Church
- %1 The Ministries of the Church
- %1 The Gifts of the Spirit
- %1 Discipleship
- %1 The Unity of the Church
- %1 Order in the Family of God

It is important to remember that these truths were being elaborated and amplified by the Holy Spirit during this time through the participation of a team of men of God who did not seek to consider any of what was taking place as a personal achievement. The entire Christian world has been benefited by the dedication and sacrifice of many of these servants of God, some of which may not be known by all. What is important, however, is the contribution of grace and ministry that these have made to the Body of Christ.

The following question might arise at this point: Why are these truths so important? Here we will only briefly outline a few things regarding each one of them:

#### %1 **THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD**

This has been one of the truths that has illuminated the minds of many in the context of the restoration experience the most. This is the element which gives meaning and content to the other truths that have been revealed by the Holy Spirit. This is perhaps the one truth that has taken on more force than the other truths, perhaps due to the great confusion that still persists regarding it in the interior of the Church. But thanks be to God our Father for such an immense enlightenment and reality in our identity with Him. Now we know why we live, work, preach, teach, etc. We now know, as a result of this revealed truth, that a Christian has a goal to reach on earth: that of being like Jesus. This, obviously, changed the comfortable and fragile mentality of those that believed that salvation was a one-way ticket to heaven, which allowed the Church to walk in an unending immaturity.

#### %1 **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

This principle clearly awakened in us the truth concerning the true gospel that Christ taught, which was, to be precise, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. This is the only gospel that can transform the life of men, because according to this Gospel, summarizing, conversion is a change of government. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is confrontational, it is not ambiguous nor weak, it is strong and those who are brave must snatch it up. This is the good news of the government of God.

#### %1 **THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST**

A true revelation regarding who Jesus was and is was absolutamente necessary, since until the

time we came to this point, He was only known as Savior. This is the one factor that made the great difference in the behavior of those who had truly recognized Jesus as Lord, due to the fact that this truth deeply touches the will of a person and doesn't begin with the emotions. The Lord himself was categorical in his ministry and I don't believe we want to be more than He, trying to take the edge off of the gospel by presenting a Christ different from the one who came to live on the earth, who identified with us, who died on the cross, who was risen from the dead, and whom the father sat at his right hand giving him the name that is above all names: JESUS IS LORD! for the glory of God the Father.

#### %1 **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The restoration of the truth concerning the person of the Holy Spirit has also produced profound changes in a large portion of the Church. For a long time and in many instances, the Spirit was considered to be some kind of an influence, a force. Today He is respected as a person and he is given the place and the honor he deserves. Though there is still much to do in the since that the entire Church can come to know Him as He is. Knowledge of the Holy Spirit is very necessary, since without Him we could not know the Lord.

#### %1 **PRAISE AND WORSHIP**

From a program to an event. From customary songs to genuine praise and a heart worship. The Lord didn't want to teach us to sing; He wanted to teach us to praise Him in spirit and in truth. The truth that we are temples became more real. Today, in many parts of the world, many are learning to worship God. But we must keep this in mind: we mustn't only learn new songs, rather He wants true homage that comes from the heart.

#### %1 **ECCLESIOLOGY**

The fact that the Lord has povoked a mind change in us has, in itself, changed our mistaken concepts about the Church. The Church is not a building, nor is it an organization, nor an institution created by the human mind. The Church is a living, dynamic organism. It is the Body of Christ, the People of God, the Family of God, the Temple of God. This has revolutionized everything in the context of the Church.

#### %1 **MINISTRY**

The recovery of this principle of God is leading to a restoration of the Church. Without the governing ministries, the church cannot be restored, as this is the project and the strategy of God.

#### %1 **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

In a Church that functions normally, the gifts of the Spirit provide a great input towards the building up of the Church as well as the extension of the Kingdom. The truth concerning this matter is that these gifts must have their place in the Church without being turned into the centerpiece of its experience, as the Lord is the center of all things.

#### %1 **DISCIPLESHIP**

This is a truth that is strongly linked to the Kingdom of God. This is not a late discovery of our time. More than thirty years ago we practiced this in several places as the Lord illuminated several of his servants concerning the need to revive this principle as a life-producing relationship and not a system. The fruit of this relationship has been the training of many leaders for the work of the Lord. This is not a quick process but it is an effective way of transforming lives.

**%1 THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH**

This has come to be not only a truth that the Lord has restored, but also a type of divine burden upon those who believe Him.

**%1 GOD'S ORDER FOR THE FAMILY**

The advent of this truth put in order many things that were out of place in the family as well as in its constitution. With the passing of time, humanism has done damage to the family as well as some so-called rights and concepts that are outside the principles of God.

**APOSTOLIC AND PROPHETIC MOVEMENTS**

During the same period of time that the Lord has been resorting the aforementioned principles, in the last two decades an apostolic and prophetic movement began to develop. In some cases this development took place slowly with sobriety, making sure that this was happening with regard to true ministries and not ones that had been invented. In South America, seven men of God met in 1987 in Argentina to initiate an apostolic ministerial relationship that continued to grow in number and in development, which continues to do so today. In other cases these movements rose very quickly of whose content we are not aware. The truth is that we need a greater knowledge of these movements as well as of prophetic ministries which, in many cases, tend to function individually without having their ministries scrutinized. I feel we are at a time to draw closer together to those that are in truth blessing the Body of Christ and have a burden for the Church as such. One thing is certain: these ministries must be restored in order for there to be a real restoration of the Church.

**UNITY MOVEMENTS**

Another aspect of God's working by His Spirit in these last decades is the way He has brought about an awakening in the Church, a desire for unity. This has been no easy task for the Lord despite the prayer offered to the Father in John 17. First of all it hasn't been easy among those of the evangelical Christian world, and it has been even more difficult with the catholic Christian world (among Evangelicals and Catholics). This last aspect is due to the great rejection that arose especially in Latin America due to the persecution to which evangelical Christians were subjected in the past. It is necessary to make mention of this part of history to understand the origin of the rejection that has been evident in time and in history. Today, even though there are still sectors of the evangelical church that are afraid of drawing near, what is certain is that the Lord is working miraculously in several cases to show his desire that the Church be united as one. Within the evangelical sector there has also been a notable awakening towards unity. News from different cities relates that fellowship among the city pastors is steadily increasing. This all leads to the creation of a conscious awareness of the concept of the Body in the Church. Surely in this context there will emerge a testimony of an ever budding reality in the Church in the world.

**CONCLUSION**

All the wealth that has been received in time and in history, including its positive and negative aspects, must guide us to point with clarity toward the goal that the Lord has proposed for His Church. I beseech the Lord, therefore, that He use this convocation as an impulse to live out those things that have been shown us in these times for the effective advancement of the fulfillment of His will.

*Cristián Romo Jimenez*