

A Time To Weep

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"Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people . . . Thus says the Lord of hosts, Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; And send for the wailing women, that they may come! And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, That our eyes may shed tears, And our eyelids flow with water. For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion, How are we ruined! We are put to great shame . . ." (Jeremiah 9: 1 & 17-19)

To be quite frank, I don't enjoy being right, especially when it means a "black eye" for the greater body of Christ. Things were already unraveling when Todd Bentley announced that he would be leaving Lakeland as of August 23. But his departure from Lakeland was hastened by the announcement this week that Bentley has filed for separation (in Canada, that's the first legal step in divorce) from his wife, Shonnah. I found the story today in the Lakeland newspaper "The Ledger" via Christianity Today On-line. J. Lee Grady, editor of Charisma Magazine, wrote and posted an excellent commentary this week that accurately sums up the situation. I would encourage you to read it at www.charismanews.com.

I wrote my original observations on the Lakeland Phenomenon in my e-letter of May 27. At that time I said,

"Call me foolish, but personally I believe that the Lakeland phenomenon will burn itself out and collapse under the weight of its own internal contradictions. I believe this to be the case based upon what I have shared above, and based upon what the prophetic people in our network have heard as they have prayed and sought God concerning it."

I and the prophetic intercessors I walk with were right, but none of us find any joy in it. What I find in the midst of all this is a profound sense of sadness. This is not a time for rejoicing. It is a time for weeping.

History remembers Jeremiah as "the weeping prophet" who called a nation to repentance . . .and who was roundly criticized and ignored. Jeremiah began his ministry in the 13th year of King Josiah's reign, one year after Josiah began his spiritual reforms. The first ten chapters of Jeremiah are, in essence, God's commentary through Jeremiah on that revival. When we overlay the ministry of Jeremiah upon the revival of King Josiah what we discover is that it was "a river wide and shallow." The hearts of the people remained essentially unchanged, and God (through His prophet) called the people to turn away from their spiritual adultery and to return to Him. He called them to repent. Repentance, both personal and corporate, stands out as one of the great and recurring themes of the book of Jeremiah. Judgment was coming, God declared, but there was still time to repent.

But it was not to be. The false prophets of peace, prosperity and blessing, of which there were at least as many then as there are today, found a receptive and willing audience. Their fifteen minutes of fame coincided with Judah's last fifteen minutes before national disaster. Politicians with too much to lose, priests who should have known better and people who were comfortable in their spiritual adulteries all turned a deaf ear to God's call of repentance and took their anger out on Jeremiah. The few remaining years of national existence quickly clicked by, the judgment of God fell and the Kingdom of Judah was carried away to Babylon and captivity, just as God - through Jeremiah - had promised. And through it all, Jeremiah wept.

A Time To Repent

Is the Church today at the same place as the people of God in Jeremiah's day? I don't know (no one does). But what I do know is that we need more weeping prophets and fewer rapping ones. We need less proclamation and more repentance from our leadership. We need greater discernment and less gullibility. It's time for the Church to say "enough" to conversations with "angels of prosperity" and to promises of gemstones, gold dust and manna. It is time for the Church to teach that the biblical purpose of "signs and wonders" is to bring people to repentance and faith, not to entertain the teeming masses. As we teach in our study of the seven signs of John, "Miracles are signs which cause men to wonder and which point to God

at work, and are intended to result in repentance and faith." When Jesus is not the focus, and repentance and faith are not the message, the outcome can only be a circus of pseudo-spiritual activity that collapses of its own weight and internal contradictions. How many times must we go through this before we learn this lesson?

We need weeping prophets and weeping apostles who genuinely fast, pray and weep in private over the public failures of God's people, and who will call God's people to holiness and fear, genuine repentance and genuine intimacy with God. This is the message clearly delivered to us over a year ago and which continues to be God's message to His Church today. Are we now prepared to listen? Are we prepared to embrace God's holiness and fear, to repent for our sin, our disobedience, our lack of discernment, our addiction to large "shows" and cults of personality, our making the Kingdom of God look like a circus side-show? Are we prepared to receive what God in His mercy and grace wants to give us? Are we?

A Time To Prepare

As I have declared for several years now, the River of God's Spirit, the River of Ezekiel 47, is preparing to flow in spiritual power and blessing the likes of which our generation has never known. The DNA of this coming move will be holiness & the fear of God, genuine repentance and genuine intimacy with Him. The channel of this coming River will be simple, organic house churches and similar organic vessels through which He can flow unimpeded. Are you and the church in your house prepared to be a vessel which He can use? May you find the spiritual encouragement you need to seek Him more diligently. There is still time to prepare.