

God Is Doing a New Thing in His Church



David Wilkerson October 3, 2016

How often have you heard Christians say, “God is doing a new thing in the church”? The “new thing” they refer to may be called a revival, an outpouring, a visitation or a move of God. Yet very often the “new thing” they describe dies out quickly. And once it has faded, it can’t be found again. In this way, it proves not to have been a move of God at all. In fact, Christian sociologists have tracked many of these so-called visitations. They’ve discovered that the average span of such an event is about five years.

Personally, I believe God is doing a new thing in his church today. Yet this great work of the Spirit can’t be found in a single location. It’s happening worldwide, yet you don’t have to travel far to behold it. Indeed, God’s “new thing” may be as close as a nearby church.

There is a biblical principle that governs any true move of God. We find this principle at work again and again in both Testaments. It has proven true through centuries of church history. The principle is this: *God will not begin a new thing in his church until he does away with the old.* As Jesus put it, the Father won’t put new wine into old wineskins.

Why is this so? It’s because God has a controversy with the old thing in his church. With every new work he raises up, only a few generations pass before apathy and hypocrisy begin to creep in. Soon God’s people have become idolaters with hearts bent toward backsliding. Eventually, God chooses to bypass the old work in his church. He forsakes it completely before he introduces the new.

This cycle has repeated throughout church history. Almost always it’s because the ministry becomes flesh-driven. The red-hot passion that birthed the work begins to fade, and over time the ministry becomes a human institution. Lifeless routine sets in. The once-prayerful leaders now rely on organization and fleshly skill to keep the work going.

At one time, these leaders trusted God wholly and he spoke to them. But at some point they abandoned their servanthood for politics. Now instead of ministering, they compete for power, prestige and numbers. Sadly, their ministry has become a faded memory of what God once accomplished in power and truth.

The Lord responded to this kind of compromise in Jeremiah’s time. He sent the prophet to the temple gate to proclaim a devastating word: “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place” (Jeremiah 7:3). In other words: “This work has grown corrupt, and now death is at the door. But there is still time to save it. I don’t want to walk away from it. I want to stay with you and move in your midst. But for that to happen, you have to repent. You must return to your first love.”

God heard the people crying, “God can’t destroy the temple. He’ll never abandon what he established here.” But the Lord responded, “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord” (7:4). He was saying, in essence, “What about your defilements, your rampant adultery? You swear falsely, you bow to idols and you’ve turned my house into a den of robbers. I sent prophets to warn you but you wouldn’t listen.”

He ended with this: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee" (7:16). In short: "Don't bother praying for this old work. It is over, dead and gone, beyond all hope of reviving. I have a totally new thing in mind. And you no longer represent me. I will have a people who represent me to the world as I truly am."

Would God dispose of an old work in New Testament times the same way he did in the Old?

Yes, he would. Jesus stood in the temple and invited all to come under his merciful wings of protection. He called out to the blind, the sick, the leprous, the poor, the lost, everyone to come and find healing and forgiveness. But the religious crowd refused his offer. Christ testified of them, "Ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). He answered those who rejected him by saying, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (23:38). He told them, "This is now your house, not mine. I'm leaving it. And it is left to you wasted and deserted."

Jesus added, "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (23:39). He was declaring to them, "My glory is no longer in this old work. I've now rejected it. And the remainder of your religious life will be conducted without God's presence. I turn this old work over to your flesh."

The disciples couldn't believe Jesus' words. They urged him, "Master, look at the magnificence of the temple, the awesome structures. Consider its history, the centuries of tradition. This can't possibly be left in ruins. Are you saying it's over?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it's over. This old work is finished, dead. I'm going to do a new thing."

Think of it: Here stood mercy and grace incarnate saying, "This old thing isn't mine anymore. I now leave it utterly desolate. It has absolutely no chance of being revived." But Christ moved on to Pentecost, to the beginning of a new thing. He was about to raise up a new church, not a replica of the old. And he would make it brand new from the foundation up. It would be a church of new priests and people, all born again in him.

Meanwhile, the old work would drag on. Crowds would still come to the temple to observe their dead rituals. Shepherds would still rob the poor, adulterers would sin at will and people would drift into idolatry. Each day, the old work would grow increasingly dry and weak. Why? God's presence was no longer in it.

This brings us to the church of the present day. Let me ask you: Is what you see in the church today representative of who Jesus is? Consider all the denominations and movements, everything associated with Christ's name. Is what we're seeing truly the church triumphant, the spotless bride of Christ? Does it reveal to a lost world the very nature of God? Is this the best that God's Spirit can produce in these last days?

The number one idol among God's people isn't adultery or pornography. It's a much more powerful lust: a driving ambition for success. And it has a doctrine to justify it. Many in God's house are upright, morally clean and full of good works. But they've set up an idol of ambition in their hearts and they can't be shaken from it.

Tragically, this was the same driving spirit behind Baal and Molech: to prosper and be successful. Today this spirit has polluted the gospel of Jesus Christ worldwide. It presents itself as a spirit of blessing, but it's a perversion of the blessing God intends for his church. And it's shipwrecking the faith of millions.

This is not the church that Jesus Christ is coming to take as his bride. So has the modern day church become the old thing? Has it become defiled, teetering on the brink of being replaced by some new work? In short, will God make a change one last time before Jesus returns? Will he abandon what has become corrupt and raise up a final, glorious church?

Yes, I believe he will. Isaiah says, "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them" (Isaiah 42:9). The materialistic, flesh-driven institution has grown old and corrupt. And young pastors all over the world sense this. They're fed up with the old thing, with its bickering and denominational infighting. They want nothing to do with it. They've rejected the drive for bigness and notoriety. Instead, they're turning back to the centrality of Christ, back to seeking God, back to hungering for truth. And they sense a fresh new work in the air.

What is the new thing God is doing in his church?

Right now, God is raising up ministers and people who'll lay hold of his true blessing. This blessing has been misrepresented and defiled by the modern church. And now the Lord desires to renew it for the people he's calling forth.

God first revealed this blessing to Moses: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them" (Numbers 6:22-27).

God is stating, "This is the way I will bless my people." This implies, "There is only one formula for my blessing. It's defined in this prescribed manner alone. All other methods of blessing are unacceptable to me." The blessing he describes to Moses is threefold:

1. "*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee*" (6:24). This speaks of the keeping power of Christ. It is the beginning of all blessings: the knowledge that we are kept by Christ himself. Armed with such knowledge, we no longer fear falling. God's last-days people will lay hold of his covenant promises to give them a holy fear, take away their heart of stone and give them a new heart. They trust him completely to keep them from falling: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:2).

2. "*The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee*" (Numbers 6:25). This describes a church with a clear conscience, not a seared one. After all, God can't show you his "face"—that is, the glory of his grace—until you're secure in him. That implies favor; you're no longer a stranger to God but favored in his eyes. You're in his favor not by your initiative but by his. You don't have to pray for his favor to come upon you; he brings it to you.

3. "*The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*" (Numbers 6:26). This speaks of an increase of God's presence. Here is a mark of the new thing God is doing: a prostrated people who receive God's touch of love and assurance. That intimate touch keeps them prostrate in prayer. And they hear his voice clearly. All the while, a pure ministry is being birthed in them. It's a prophetic ministry, producing pastors after God's heart and believers who are secure in his love. Such servants aren't restless or driven. They're gifted with great peace. And because of that peace, they bear the very countenance of Christ.

There is no more critical time for a remnant of God to represent him to the world. Indeed, God has lifted his Spirit from the old and he's beginning the new. He's going to have a church that's spotless, not through works of flesh but by his Spirit. And this church will walk in his blessing as he intended it. Amen!

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