

# KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 60

Phenomenal. That's the word that comes to mind when we read of the actions of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. They were phenomenal. What I mean is that his actions described in the New Testament were striking, unmistakable, unmissable. We read that he worked in and through the apostles to witness to Jesus. But in addition to that he also witnessed to Jesus directly, by a whole range of mighty works and events. He witnessed to Jesus by means of amazing phenomena – buildings shook, mighty winds blew, tongues of flame descended, prison doors flew open, thousands were converted, people were filled with fear, people were struck dead.

And what we see is that all these amazing phenomena had the same purpose. They were testimonies and evidence of the authority and glory of Jesus. Indeed the amazing phenomenon of the Holy Spirit's coming on the day of Pentecost was just such a witness to the authority and truth of the word of Jesus. Jesus had foretold that the Holy Spirit would come; Jesus had promised the disciples that from heaven he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever. And the amazing events on the day of Pentecost were the fulfilment and the evident proof of the truth of that promise. Had the Spirit not come, had it not been seen that he had been sent then the entire life and teaching of Jesus would have been seen to have no authority and could not be trusted. The very coming of the Spirit, in the phenomenal way that he did come, witnessed to the fact that Jesus indeed is all that he claimed to have been.

And all the other amazing and striking actions of the Holy Spirit were witnesses to Jesus. That is what the Spirit has been sent to do – to give witness to Jesus. Not to witness to or to talk about himself, but to bring to us and make known to us 'the things of Christ'. These mighty events we read of in the book of Acts were all of them ways in which the Holy Spirit vindicated the apostles and their testimony to Jesus Christ.

Of course the Holy Spirit had been sent to guide and empower the apostles in their witness and preaching. But in addition to and independent of that he himself also brought about these amazing phenomena we read of.

There are two kinds of phenomena that the Holy Spirit works. On the one hand he performed great works to *confirm* the apostolic witness. These events were **confirmations** separate from and independent of the things that the apostles themselves were doing.

On the other hand the actions of the Holy Spirit were acts of **condemnation** of an unbelieving response to the Lord Jesus. By these amazing actions he confounded the opponents of the gospel and the apostles. There is a most

striking case of this in Acts chapter 5. These two people, Ananias and Sapphira, had attempted to deceive the Holy Spirit and were instantly struck dead. Of course those looking on had no understanding of what had happened. But they saw this dreadful and remarkable phenomenon. It exposed the treachery of these two people. But that it was the judgment of God, the action of the Holy Spirit, wasn't recognised. And there is a reason for this – it is that the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to himself. He authenticates the gospel and he glorifies Jesus. And that was precisely what happened here. Following this event people came to see that these great phenomena were a testimony to the fact that Jesus had risen, and that these men and women who were witness to him were filled with a remarkable and unmistakable power and authority.

And so it has been down through all the centuries since then. On the one hand the Holy Spirit authenticates, vindicates and confirms the gospel by **revival**. On the other hand he authenticates the gospel by bringing about terrible acts of judgment. We are warned that these events will occur when men and women reject the gospel and react to Jesus with scorn and ridicule.

These acts of judgment always have the intention of bringing men and women to their senses, to repentance and faith. Their purpose is to bring us to that place where the prodigal son eventually got to. Their purpose is so that men and women will 'come to themselves and say I will go to my Father and say that I have sinned...'

These are the very phenomena we read of in Revelation chapters 9 and 16. After appalling acts of judgment on a global scale, we read that those who suffered these things still refused to 'repent and give God glory'. It was exactly the same when Jesus looked out over Jerusalem, he foresaw the terrible destruction that would befall that city, and he burst into tears: *'If you had only recognized the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Your enemies will surround you; they will crush you to the ground ... because you did not recognize that God had visited you'*.

And so it is today. The world is experiencing these very same phenomena. Indeed in an unprecedented way the world is undergoing the consequences of its rebellion and rejection of God and the Saviour he has sent and the continuing testimony that the Holy Spirit gives to Christ. The ultimate purpose of these disasters and catastrophes is to prove to us our inability through human means to solve the problems of humanity, the problem of human sin and guilt. The purpose of these upheavals is to make clear our inability and our need so that we call out to the one and the only one who can save us, not merely from the catastrophes of this life but from the infinitely greater catastrophe of final condemnation. We have become proud and confident of our human abilities. We hear such claims as 'science will save us'. How foolish. Man thinks he has the answer for everything, but he has an answer for nothing that truly matters: famine, war, disease, guilty conscience, sin, death and judgment.

It is thought by some that unless the Holy Spirit is sending revivals that he is not active in the world at all. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus explained the work that he would do – *when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment* (John 16.8). And this is exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world at this very time. It is just as it was when men set about to build the tower of Babel. And when that happens, God comes down! He overturns the arrogant plans and proud plans of the world. He disrupts and scatters and brings confusion. This is exactly the case now and our response should be to call out for his mercy and plead that the Holy Spirit will perform ‘wonders of grace’.