

Discerning Spiritual Manifestations

'The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him (Moses)' (Numbers 11:25).

'The Angel of the Lord appeared to him (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, yet was not consumed' (Exodus 3:2).

'After the fire there was a still, small Voice. When Elijah heard the Voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle (cloak) and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave, and behold, there came a Voice to him ...' (1 Kings 19:12 & 13).

The most amazing Spiritual manifestation mentioned in the Bible, is the way the Lord came in the cloud and spoke to Moses. We can only imagine what it would be like to have the Lord speak to us out of a cloud, or just as amazingly, a Voice from a burning bush or from outside a cave. If we close our eyes and ponder those divine manifestations, we find them difficult to imagine, yet when we commit ourselves to the Lord, sometimes we experience or see unfamiliar manifestations in the same way Moses and other Biblical people did. They are unfamiliar because they come from the heavenly spiritual realm, not the earthly natural realm.

There are three sources from where manifestations come; the Holy Spirit, the human spirit or an evil spirit. When we have spiritual experiences, or see someone manifesting in the Spirit, we have to be very careful they are from the Lord and are not merely people seeking to draw attention to themselves, or worse still, an evil manifestation. If the manifestations are from the Lord, they will bear spiritual 'fruit', so we need to analyse that fruit. The Lord manifests Himself many different ways. The Lord can manifest Himself though His Voice as He did with Moses and later with Jesus (Matthew 17:5); through the gifts of the Holy Spirit; through an angel, as we see many times throughout the scriptures; He can reveal His Presence through His beautiful fragrance; through a puff of air; by holding our hand; through an inexplicable sense of joy, elation, peace and contentment; or any other way He chooses. Whenever a manifestation comes from the Lord, there is always peace and a sense of awe, so we gasp and feel like saying, "Ohh Wow." We feel a deep excitement and joy, and a long lasting feeling of love.

Other divine manifestations from the Holy Spirit are: Laughing joyously in the Holy Spirit as though our mouths are so full of laughter, we just have to let it out (Job 8:21); speaking in tongues or languages of men and angels (1 Corinthians 13:1); prophecies by several people in one place (Numbers 11:25; Acts 19:6); a beautiful, holy, heavenly fragrant perfume that fills the house during a time of personal prayer and worship; dancing gracefully; weakening and falling to the floor under the power of the Holy Spirit, and people (including Christians) can be delivered of evil spirits just by being in the presence of Almighty God. The church leadership has to have real discernment and wisdom to know the difference between the three sources of manifestations; whether they are from the Holy Spirit, from the human spirit or from an evil spirit. The church leaders have to have enough authority to encourage the manifestations of the Lord, while stopping the human spirit or an evil spirit. That is a key issue. When these manifestations are from the Lord, the presence of the Lord is powerful and tangible. The results can be dramatic and at times unconventional. Remember, we are dealing with the Spiritual world, not the natural world, and as such, many people come under a lot of criticism, especially from conventional Christians who are frightened of such manifestations.

Manifestations from the Lord can be stopped by fear, pride or arrogance. They can also be stopped by unbelief, uncertainty or lack of faith. We can be proud of our knowledge of the Holy Spirit; proud of our knowledge of the scriptures; proud of being Pentecostal; proud of our understanding of the gifts of the Spirit etc, and we can also be too proud to allow the Holy Spirit to minister to us in this way. On the other hand, some people are too fearful to believe such manifestations can happen, are unsure about them and back away from such things. That is unbelief and fear – the opposite of faith and trust. Once we allow God to deal with our pride, fear, unbelief or whatever is blocking these blessings from the Lord, things may start to happen. We can then be bold in our witness for King Jesus and His Kingdom.

The differences between the manifestations of the human spirit, an evil spirit or the Holy Spirit can be difficult to discern at first, but with maturity, knowledge and the gift of discernment, the spirit behind the manifestation will become clear. To discern where the spiritual manifestation comes from, we need to look at some major differences. The Holy Spirit brings peace and never controls us. He is gentle, sweet and Godly. We can choose to stop the manifestation any time we want to. The human spirit is also under our control and those manifesting or acting badly because of a wounded spirit, can stop themselves whenever they choose. Their behaviour does not bring peace and those looking on may feel disgust. A manifestation of an evil spirit brings unease, a sense of revulsion and the person manifesting sometimes cannot control what they are doing and saying. The devil controls them, they often harm themselves and sometimes have a serious mental illness (Mark 5:2 to 15; Luke 8:27 to 36). The marked difference in the three sources of the manifestations is

control. The Holy Spirit never controls a person – an evil spirit almost always does. A wounded human spirit will try to control a situation by acting badly, but the person is still in control of themselves. The human mind is very complex, and often people who have had an unstable, insecure childhood, desire more attention than those who have grown up in loving, stable homes. That is when the human spirit and emotions come into play and strange manifestations occur. Sometimes, these people want to draw attention to themselves by laughing loudly, screaming, rolling around on the floor, jerking, crying uncontrollably or frequently going forward for prayer, for the same needs, week after week, but they are in control of themselves and their bad behaviour. These people need the added attention to feel wanted and loved. It takes time; sometimes years, but eventually they will be able to accept God's love for them and their behaviour will moderate.

One major problem in the modern church, is so-called 'Christian' rock music. Rock music came from Africa and the beat was used to conjure up evil spirits. Modern rock music has the exact same result whether it is in Africa or a modern Western church. There is Christian music and there is rock music. To combine the two types of music, results in carnal Christians who cannot produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit as they ought to, and these people usually have a rather rebellious or arrogant attitude. It is like inviting the Baal worshippers to offer sacrifices in the holy temple of God. It cannot be done. If churches accept that kind of music, they accept the evil forces that come with it, and sadly, there is a lot of demonic activity in many Christian churches, that can be directly contributed to the kind of music played in those churches. Rock music can bring about demonic manifestations that have sadly been attributed to the Holy Spirit, which is really awful. It is blasphemy. Another major cause of demonic activity is drug taking and excessive alcohol intake. Once a person uses these mind altering drugs, they can open the door to evil powers. Involvement in witchcraft and the occult can cause a person to become under the power of an evil spirit. These are just a few things that cause evil spirits to influence a person's mind so much they need to have the evil things cast out. Evil manifestations can be similar to the human ones described above; screaming, rolling around on the floor, writhing around the floor like snakes, howling like a wolf, jerking, vomiting, frothing at the mouth, showing violence or yelling at the leadership. These poor people are under the control of these evil spirits and sometimes cannot remember acting in such a manner. Sometimes they do remember, but cannot control what they are doing. People who manifest like this are under the power of an evil spirit and need to have the demon cast out of them, just as Jesus cast them out in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

There are churches where people make animal noises and actions. For example, people writhe like snakes; emulate the trunk of an elephant; grunt like pigs; bark like dogs and all that kind of thing. That behaviour is not from God. These people are not bad, they are either hopelessly misled or they need deliverance from evil spirits. That behaviour is tragic because some people will think they have to act that way to be saved. Many turn away from the Lord because of this ridiculous behaviour. We read where the Lord touched a donkey so it could speak like a man (Numbers 22:21 to 33), but God will never touch a man and make him bray like a donkey. We need to sort out the good from the bad and one way is to look at the Lord's example. Jesus never, ever allowed that behaviour when he was on earth, and the apostles never allowed it in the early church. We have to be faithful to the Lord and His Word and to the Holy Spirit.

We must stress this important point: the Holy Spirit is a thorough Gentleman. He never, ever manifests in a way that is less than well-mannered, polite and gracious. The Lord never controls us or forces Himself upon us, so the person is in full control at all times. That is one major way to discern the manifestation; is it wise, gentle, polite, calm and will it bring forth fruit, such as peace or healing? 'The wisdom from above (God's wisdom) is first of all pure, then peaceful, courteous, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and compassion and good fruits, is impartial and sincere' (James 3:17). When the Holy Spirit manifests through people, sometimes they sob, but that will lead to healing of deep emotional wounds. Sometimes people laugh, but that is with joy. Sometimes people weaken under the power of God and fall to the floor, but that will bring edification and joy and sometimes emotional or physical healing. The gifts of tongues and prophecy are often manifested, and they are mentioned in the scriptures many times. When the Holy Spirit manifests, there is always a powerful presence of God, Who brings peace, joy, edification, healing, relaxation and strength.

Other types of manifestations can be spiritual visitors. Again, we need to discern the difference between Godly visitors and evil ones. Evil spirits bring fear and a sense of unease when they visit. Occasionally they stink; they can smell like sulphur. Sometimes they threaten. They are usually quite ugly, but occasionally they show up looking like angels of Light to deceive us (2 Corinthians 11:14). If we are spiritually covered with the blood of Jesus and live under the covering of the whole armour of God, and are walking uprightly then we have nothing to fear from them. The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10), but that does not mean he can get away with it. If we know the Word of God, we can use it as a weapon of warfare and order the devil to flee (James 4:7), just like Jesus did (Matthew 4:1 to 11; Luke 4:1 to 13). When we were born-again, we were given authority over all the power the devil has (Luke 10:19).

When a holy angel visits, there is peace, tranquillity and sometimes a message from God. Deeply committed Christians regularly receive visits from the Lord or angels, and some are too afraid to speak about it for fear of being considered 'weird'. Often it is the carnal Christians who pass negative judgement on that, but if we are focussed on the Lord, and can fully understand that we live in a spiritual world as much as a natural world, then we would welcome a visit from the Lord or one of His angels. When an angel visited someone who is mentioned in the Bible, the person often did not know at first, that their visitor was an angel, until the Lord opened their eyes. In the New Testament, the people of the early church had angels who came to join in when they ate their meals, and they never knew an angel had been there. They thought their visitor was a person. 'Do not forget to extend hospitality to strangers, for some have entertained angels without knowing it' (Hebrews 13:2). Angels are ministering spirits sent by God to minister to us (Hebrews 1:14), just as they ministered to the prophets in the Old Testament (1 Kings 19:5 to 7), to the apostles in the New Testament (Acts 12:7 to 9), and to Jesus (Luke 22:43). We are strictly forbidden to worship angels (Colossians 2:18), but we can enjoy their company when they visit just like Abraham and Sarah did (Genesis 18:1 to 16). Visits from angels are not in the distant past; they can happen to Christians today too.

A woman we will call 'Pauline', is a deeply committed Christian who serves the Lord with all her heart. God the Father woke Pauline one night when He called her name then gave a word of encouragement and an instruction. She has been to different areas of heaven and back several times. On different occasions she was taken to heaven like Paul was (2 Corinthians 12:2 to 4), was shown the opaque marble-floored throne room and worshipped there while God the Father went about His business running the whole universe. She saw very tall angels with small bowls in their hands, travelling between the throne room and earth. The contents of the bowls was burning with a blue flame. When Pauline asked another angel what was burning in the bowls, she was told it was the prayers of God's people on earth being presented to God, and on His instruction, the angels would go back to earth and answer the prayers. Pauline was shown the room where the Lamb's supper is being prepared and was ushered into the room by Jesus Himself and saw herself in her new immortal body, wearing her wedding garment and crowns.

The Holy Spirit woke Pauline one night and asked if she wanted to accompany Him because He wanted to show her something. The Lord is a Gentleman and asked her; He did not command her to go and she could have refused if she wanted to, but Pauline did not hesitate. Together, they flew over Pauline's city in Australia with the Holy Spirit holding her hand. They then stood together on the one small mountain that is in the middle of the city and she was shown the judgement that was to come to that city in the form of flooding, because of the sin in the churches there, and was told to prepare to leave. Pauline supernaturally saw the flooded city months before it actually happened. Pauline warned several people about the looming flood but of course nobody believed her except one couple, who sold up and left the city. A few months after Pauline left, a unusual dark rain cloud hovered over the city for several days, causing extensive flooding and damage. The same day she was supernaturally shown the flooded city, the Holy Spirit took her to a house where a prayer meeting was in progress. As they supernaturally hovered over the house, Pauline was able to look right through the roof down at the people inside, where eight Pentecostal pastors were sitting around a table praying for the Lord to do various things in their churches. When Pauline asked the Holy Spirit why He was not in the room with them, He answered, "Because I have never been invited."

Pauline has walked and talked with an angel and has had an angel appear in her front room with a message from the Lord. On two separate occasions, she was aware of an angel standing next to her in church, and on each occasion the message from the Lord was different. Another time, when Pauline was facing a family tragedy, God the Father visited her to strengthen and encourage her, and she was able to speak to Him face to face. Pauline is so 'in tune' with the Lord, these manifestations from the Lord are excitingly regular and always thrilling. She was the one who was at home praying with a friend, when the Lord filled the house with His fragrance. Another time, Pauline was sitting on the back steps of her house praying, when the Holy Spirit swirled around her like a light wind and with a puff of air, He wrapped her up in His love. The presence of the Lord was so powerful, Pauline could hardly stand up.

Another woman was shown her name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. A man called Ian was visited by Jesus and was taken to heaven. Because of these visits, the man repented of his sins and turned to God. A man named Jesse was taken to heaven, shown his heavenly home, spoke to Paul about his epistles and generally had a very long and wonderful visit before returning to earth reinvigorated. Angels can speak to us like they did many times throughout the scriptures. Sometimes we can be transported to another location like Philip was (Acts 8:39 & 40). The Lord can give us visions so real, it is as though we are in the place He is showing us. Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah experienced visions like these.

If every Christian was completely committed to the Lord, would put away carnal desires and the distractions of this world, shunned all evil and rebellion, would spend many hours in His presence praying and fasting, had a continuous attitude of worship, humility and submission, and would open their hearts to the Lord and

focus on Him in every area of their lives, then more Christians would experience divine manifestations of God and visits from angels. It should be a normal event in the lives of deeply committed Christians, not an unusual occurrence. Look how often the people in the Bible heard the Lords' voice; how often they had visits from angels, saw amazing visions, experienced miracles and all the various kinds of Spiritual manifestations from God Himself. God is Spirit; He is real; He is beautiful; He is exciting and we are going to spend eternity with Him; He is our everything; He is our life and our breath. We need Him. We need to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength and all our mind (Luke 10:27).

Amen and God bless you.

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