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"FIRE STARTERS - RELEASING THE CHURCH" by Robert I Holmes.

John the Baptist was known for his fiery repentance preaching. This wild man of God, to whom all of Israel came, declared concerning Jesus: "I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit, and with FIRE!" (Luke 3:16). Christ in fact said of Himself "I came to set the world on fire, how I wish it were already kindled" (Luke 12:49).

Today we are in the church age, one that should demonstrably be marked by empowered ministry. We are to have been baptised with the Spirit, and with fire. But for what? What are we empowered to do? What is our mission? Jesus told us that all He did, we would do and more. He also only did what He saw the Father doing. This is the definition of our ministry - we should do as Christ did, our mandate is His. Christ set out His mandate clearly, as He read from Isaiah 61:1-4...

"The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion-- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit...They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations."

It is with these two things in mind (the baptism of Jesus- with the Spirit and with fire, and his mandate for empowered ministry), that I wish to outline the upcoming prophetic ministry to the church. For the Lord this year has raised up those with the anointing of fire starters. The servants of Christ who, like firebrands set alight by the Holy Ghost, shall walk in the true ministry of Christ.

THE NATURE OF FIRE

In the Bible, fire symbolises several things. These include: holiness (Zech. 2:5, Deut. 4:24), God's glory (Exek. 1:4, 13), his protective presence (2 Kings 6:17), His nature (Heb 12:29), His very words (Jer 23:29) which he puts in the mouths of his prophetic servants (Jer 5:14), an instrument of purification (Psalm 66:12, Isa 43:2) and refinement (Zech. 13:8,9, 1 Cor 3:13,15) and lastly as a symbol of His wrath against sin (Isa 66:15,16). All of these things are a part of a ministry coming to the church: the fire starters.

The nature of this ministry was made clear to me on the last day of 1995 when the Lord came to me and said: "The city of Sydney was set on fire two years ago (January 1994 in fact). It was circled about, and burned throughout by evil pyromaniacs. A dozen wicked men touched the lives of every inhabitant in the Sydney area.

These things were a sign. I will again set this city on fire! But not with evil, but for good, not by fire bugs, but by my Holy Ghost Fire Starters. There are holy men of God, who will spark the fires that touch the lives of every person in my kingdom one way or another!"

This very same message was heard by a colleague of mine- Kevin Brennan, editor of "The Voice" prophetic magazine in Queensland. An elder said to him on the same day that we would see the "Fire-bugs of the kingdom" come forward, and that this group he was among were just such people.

Then in January 1996 I had a vision confirming this message: In a vision the Lord said to me "Look at the house of Israel", and I looked and saw a teeming multitude. He said "Many who you see in the church are not in the house [of the Lord]. Yet I have my fire starters in every land and province. Behold, I am about to mobilise my church. I will light a fire under them." I looked again at the multitude and saw some lashing themselves, I saw men in chains, and others bound. Some were sitting on the ground rocking back and forth. "See, in the church many are bound by religion. They have been deceived and follow in the traditions of men, they are ignorant of my Son, they ignore Him. See those who have grown cold in captivity. They think they are free but they are bound. They have been taken captive to Babylon in chains. Some whip themselves with the Law, for they are under the Law, and not under Grace". I could feel the Lord's heart, burning for them, burning for the lost, and filled with love for His bride."

THE FIRE STARTERS

God is looking for a people He can use to start the fires burning. The fires of repentance, the baptism of the Spirit, a fire under the church! The fire starters will come in this aspect of Christ's ministry, kindling a fire on the earth. It will bring with it division, but not like church splits and doctrinal division. It will be division over Christ himself, over the living relating, powerful Jesus whom we are called to be intimate with. Men and women of God, called and raised up in the anointing of Jesus who will do the works He did, and more in His name. The anointing of the fire starter, I believe is linked very much to Christ's own mandate, to:

- preach the good news to the poor (in spirit?)
- bind up the broken-hearted
- proclaim freedom for the captives
- release the prisoners from darkness
- proclaim the year of the Lord's favour

- provide for those who grieve in Zion
- bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes
- bestow the oil of gladness instead of mourning
- put on them a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
- rebuild the ancient ruins

THE MANDATE FOR FIRE STARTERS

From the two revelations I heard at the beginning of this year, it is evident that God shall sovereignly raise up these individuals. Many are in the organisation called the church, yet are not in the house of the Lord. The fire starter will be used of God to lead many to true faith in Christ, many who call themselves by the name of Christ (Christians).

They will soon be used to set the church on fire! The Lord will use his remnant to touch the lives of every inhabitant. The revival fires will not be hidden, but will be evident to all. I believe that the media will play a large part in spreading this message. The fire starters will mobilise God's church by lighting a fire under those who slumber. As Tozer lamented "Those who have the light, are peacefully at rest, asleep in it!" God is not at all happy with this situation, and will use his servants to light the Lord's fires, which will stir the people out of their slumber and onto the streets, into their given callings and ministries.

They will loose the people from their bondage. The place which was supposed to bring liberty, has brought bondage. A friend of mine had a vision several years ago in which he saw a giant man chained to the earth. A hand came and smashed the chains off, and the man rose. His name was "lay man". It is true that the current "Pastor/ flock" or "Minister/ laity" system has chained many. The pastor does the work, the church pays him to do it. Because of this, many have become captive to the religious spirit.

The religious spirit looks for outward adherence to rules, not inward relationship with the Lord. People look to performance rather than relationship. Following religion is rather like following other deities, which is explicitly spoken against in Deuteronomy 6: "Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you" (vs 14-15). God does not look at outward appearance, but rather to the heart.

Many follow in the traditions of men. We brand one another with labels, depicting which segment of the body of Christ we belong to. Paul lamented from some in the early church who followed after Paul, or Apollos or others instead of following Christ alone. Jesus also said "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men. You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."(Mark 7:8). This is as true in the traditional church as in Pentecostal/ Charismatic ones.

It is also an unfortunate truth that many ignore God's Son, and are ignorant of Him. This sadly happens when we serve a system instead of the Lord Jesus. Many in the church are busy, but they are running about like Martha's. Many of us are busy `about the Lord's business' which is not ordained by Him at all. Christ said "I do nothing except that which I see the Father doing. Likewise we must not do anything except His mandated will.

Mary however, chose to listen to Jesus and not busy herself with so called service. The Lord sternly rebuked Martha saying: "Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42). Intimacy with Jesus is sadly neglected in the church- for those who chase knowledge over relationship, and those who seek God's hand for blessing rather than His heart for acceptance.

Many commentators have remarked that we live in a Laodicean age. It is true that we live at a time when the church has unparalleled prosperity. But the rebuke Christ gives the church of our age is clear "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see." (Rev 3:15-17)

CONCLUSION

The fire starters shall be found shooting flaming arrows into the `establishment'! This will of course threaten to burn the work of man down and bring people out to the city of God. People need to come out of churchianity and into the kingdom! Churchianity, with all its trappings, is in fact a kind of Babylon. Many in the church are taken captive to Babylon by being wooed by worldliness and wealth. Jesus said that for some the seed would grow in the soil but the cares of the world rise up and choke it. This leads to becoming captive in chains. When the cares of the world have crowded out our prayer life and we have become enslaved to our debts we are in danger of being captive to mammon. It is for this reason Christ warned, "You can not serve two masters".

God's fire starters will bring the bride of Christ back into what she was called for- as described in the closing parts of verses 6 and 7... "and [then] you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of their shame my people will receive a double

portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs." We are coming to a time in history, when the church will be shaken, and the establishment of man will be burned. God is going to 'test the work of man by fire' and only that which is made of gold, and jewels will last. Many will come through this period, but only as through the flames (1 Cor 3:13-15)
