

SESSION: WATCHING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CHURCH

I am not prone to saying the Spirit has said something, unless I really believe the Holy Spirit has said something. Let me say before I say what I am about to say that my understanding of New Testament prophecy is that it is quantitatively different from Old Testament prophecy and it should always be presaged with the acknowledgement that you might be wrong and it should always be presaged with an invitation to the person over who you are prophesying to turn to the scriptures to see if these things are so, and it should always be presaged with the acknowledgement that you have got it wrong – so what I am about to say is said in that context – on the plus side that means you can't stone me!

So I was really praying about this and I wasn't expecting to be delivering this to you at all as we began on Monday – about three years ago! – with Ian talking about communion and as he was talking about communion Denis shouted “and brother I came into the kingdom in 1947”, and the minute he said it I thought “I think God is saying something to me.” I think Denis, I don't know if God uses you like this, I think he used you as a prophetic voice – and I want you to know that. So what came into my head was – “the Smith Wigglesworth prophecy of 1947”. I mentioned it the other day, and I turned to Pauline and said “did Smith Wigglesworth prophesy his prophecy in 1947?”, and she said “I don't know but I was born in 1947.” So I looked it up on the internet. I don't – a very controversial thing to say about us Pentecostals – I am not mad keen on Smith Wigglesworth. I think he was a bit of an odd bod myself! I am not sure I would let him preach at Gold Hill, I certainly would not let him pray for the sick – no way. (Malcolm made some boxing noises at this point). They would have looked like they had gone ten rounds with Mike Tyson – but I believe he was a man of God. Just as well God doesn't need my approval to use people isn't it? But as soon as I heard Denis, I thought of the Smith Wigglesworth prophecy, which was very unusual for me and made me think – “what are you saying Lord?” I went back and I read it again and thought – “there is something stirring in my spirit here.” That prophecy had several stages, some of you will know it, you will find it on the internet – an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the birthing of new churches and then the churches come together in Word and Spirit, and then the decline of churches – and then a fresh move of the Holy Spirit – going out into continental Europe.

2017 is seventy years after the prophecy was given. 2017 is also fifty years after Jean Darnell's prophecy, which was given in 1967, when she saw little fires across the UK ablaze and then a river flowing through the UK and into Europe. I don't talk like this. I'm a Bible expositor, I am a theologian. I don't talk like this. I thought is God saying something with these two things. The fiftieth year after Jean Darnell's prophecy, a year of jubilee. Seventieth year after Smith Wigglesworth prophecy, just like there were seventy years of captivity for Israel and I don't want to overstate this because I am trying to stay grounded in all of this, but I feel like Daniel must have felt like when he found Jeremiah's promise after seventy years and said – after seventy years I am going to do something.

I lead Spring harvest and for three years I have been working on an act of unity across the United Kingdom that will see all of the evangelical bible conventions and celebrations declaring that whatever our theological differences are, we are one in Christ Jesus. It is going to involve 130,000 Christians from March through to October next year – perhaps as many as a quarter of a million. It will begin with Spring Harvest and end with the Festival of

Life, perhaps the biggest gathering of Christians in Britain in the Excel Centre in October. They are all on board. It will be the biggest demonstration of Christian unity that we have seen in the evangelical church in the United Kingdom for almost two hundred years – and they've all said "yes" – there's the miracle! They're all on board, and I am sure the Bible says, "Where the brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commands a blessing."

2017 is also the 500th anniversary of the reformation. Martin Luther's moment on October 31st 1517, when he nailed the 95 thesis to the gate at Wittenberg and said "I have questions about where we are going."

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I think 2017 is a significant year, and I believe we are going to see a move of God in the United Kingdom in 2017 and I believe God is asking us to get ready. He is asking us to raise our faith and expectation, to raise our commitment to prayer, to raise our eyes off what we are seeing around us, to take our eyes off the feeling and the falling and the decaying and to lift our eyes to him; and I think that that move of God is going to have six significant elements to it.

1. The first is that he will expose the hearts of those in our churches who currently have been church-ed but not converted, Christians but not converted.
2. He will strengthen the hearts of those who love Christ, and I think strategically in that are people like Justin Welby and Pope Francis. I think that God is using these men and that there are some remarkable leaders in the Anglican Church, some remarkable leaders in the established churches, who are discovering new confidence, new passion, new energy for the Gospel and I think the hearts of those who love Christ will be strengthened in 2017 in a particular way.
3. I think God is going to revive and strengthen small local churches, that He is going to give new confidence and hope and purpose and meaning to what you and I would describe as ordinary church. That it is not going to the big central churches with thousands in them that will herald what God wants to do, but it will be a birthing of new hope and energy and expectation and passion in small local congregations. I don't think it will end in 2017, it will start in 2017.
4. I think that God is going to give us a fresh confidence in the Gospel. I think that God is going to give us a fresh openness to the Holy Spirit, as we delve into His Word.
5. God is going to give the broader Church a deeper yearning for prayer for the nation and the lost.
6. Lastly God is to birth a passion for the gospel to spread from the United Kingdom across the continent of Europe.

However He does it, I think there are three keys, the three steps in what I sense God is saying are very simple – these are to:

- Come before Him in repentance.
- Come before Him in dependence.
- Come before Him in authenticity.

I don't think it is going to be a signs and wonders movement. I don't think it is going to be all bells and all whistles. I think this is going to be the birthing of people living authentic lives in God. Lives that will be attractional to others and I think that God wants to birth something here that will spread across Europe and I think that you are privileged, not to listen to me, but I think you are privileged to be in this room, and I think you need to take that seriously and decide if you will sow in faith and prophetically call a movement of the Holy Spirit into life that He is waiting for us to respond to.