

CHAPTER 7

The Church and the Spirit

We have seen that the 144,000 is the total of the redeemed community. It is 12 multiplied by 12, multiplied by 1,000. This conveys to us the completeness of God's community. These are God's warriors, the Church militant. They are the Church on Earth with this one desire, to honor the King and bring in His Kingdom. It tells us in chapter 14 that they follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and the thing that distinguishes them as the people of God is that they are marked with a seal—they are full of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that person of the Trinity who now abides among the redeemed people of God. He is here. He is among us.

The Sevenfold Spirit

When John writes the Revelation, he begins the first chapter, "John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace

and peace to you from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits before His throne" (Rev. 1:4). He brings greetings to the Church from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but he represents the Spirit as the seven spirits that are before the throne. I am sure that you realize and appreciate that there are not seven Holy Spirits. I am sure you understand that when John speaks of the seven spirits, he is meaning the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We have seen already that the number seven continually and repetitively, through the Book of Revelation, means the fullness, the plenitude of whatever is being spoken about; and so when he speaks about the seven spirits, he is speaking about the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Later he tells us that, before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are, he says, the seven spirits of God (Rev. 4:5). This fullness of the Spirit is actually represented to us way back in the Old Testament in Isaiah, where the prophet is describing the coming of the Son of David, the one whom God will give to be Savior and Redeemer. Isaiah describes Him like this: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:2). Note that there are seven characteristics listed. The Son of David is to be anointed with the sevenfold Spirit of God. He is anointed with the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

One of the great examples for us in the Old Testament is a strange man, full of enigma and mystery. His name is Samson, and the name means sun. Immediately we can relate him to Jesus, who is the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2). Samson, too, is a sun who shines. His life is described like this: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power" (Judg. 14:6,19; 15:14). He is a very charismatic character. In fact, in some ways, he is like

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Jesus because, in his death, he brought a greater delivery to the people of God than he ever did in his lifetime. Just as Jesus, through His death, destroyed the power of the devil, so Samson, in his death, pulled down a satanic empire as he destroyed their temple. It is also interesting to note that on the roof were people who came tumbling down to their death as Samson overcame that kingdom of darkness. And there were three thousand people in all who were destroyed in that one act, just as centuries later three thousand people are swept into the Kingdom by the preaching of the good news of the Gospel, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Samson represents many things to us. One of the great things about Samson is this. Nobody could understand where he got his strength. That means he probably didn't look like Arnold Schwarzenegger because, if he did, then everyone would have known why he was so strong. But it was a mystery. They were mystified by his strength. He was probably just a regular-looking guy, and they could not understand why one so ordinary looking should exercise such strength. It was because his strength did not come through his physique; it came through his anointing. You will remember how he is foolish and plays around with the truth until he finally gives away that the power of his anointing is in his hair. But here is an interesting thing about Samson. When he hears that the Philistines are upon him and his head has been shaved, he says he will shake himself as at former times. He was a man who, when the Spirit was on him, shook himself. Now he actually had his long hair braided into seven locks so that, when he shook himself, seven locks of hair flew from the top of his head. It looked like flames of fire, seven of them, sitting on his head, demonstrating the anointing of the sevenfold Spirit that was on him in

power and that enabled him to work the miracles of God. It is the fullness of the Spirit, His totality, that comes upon the people of God.

When we meet the Lamb of God in the Book of Revelation, we might think that the name "Lamb of God" portrays Jesus as cuddly, but when you actually read the description, it is rather scary. It says this:

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth (Revelation 5:6).

Certainly a disturbing image, if it is taken literally. But symbolically we are being told that Jesus has the fullness of the Spirit. He is all-powerful and all-perceiving. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Jesus is the ultimate anointed one.

Seven Horns

He has seven horns. Horns in Scripture always represent power, or strength. "[God] will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed" (1 Sam. 2:10). This means that God will make the king strong. David was anointed with oil from a horn because the horn represents strength, and it is strength that comes by the anointing. From that day on, the Spirit of God came upon him. He was strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Jesus has total strength. Jesus is ultimately vigorous. He has seven horns.

It is fascinating to recall that when God has brought His people out of the wilderness, when they have actually taken

their first steps into the land of promise, when they are going to defeat all the nations of Canaan, to bring in the Kingdom of God, to inhabit a land flowing with milk and honey, they still have to fight for it! Although God had promised that He would give to them every place where the souls of their feet trod, that did not mean it was going to be a walkover. They had to fight. They had to overcome. The first obstacle that they had to overcome was the huge and heavily fortified city of Jericho. God had a very strange strategy, not one that would have come from Joshua's ingenuity. It was a divine strategy, and it was this: the walls of Jericho would fall flat when the priests blew seven horns. No Jericho, no city, no kingdom, no empire, no power of darkness can stand before Jesus, who has seven horns that bring all opposition crashing down. He is anointed with power.

Seven Eyes

Not only does Jesus have Holy Ghost vigor; He has Holy Ghost vision. He has seven eyes. That really is bizarre. Six eyes we could cope with, three each side, but where does the seventh one go? He has seven eyes, but not literally, of course. This is a symbol. It is a picture. It is conveying something to us. He has seven eyes because He is the all-seeing one. In fact, the concept of seven eyes comes to us from the Book of Zechariah:

"See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day (Zechariah 3:9).

"Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

(These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the earth.)"(Zechariah 4:10).

The Jesus whom we serve sees everything. There is nothing going on in our world, nothing happening in our universe, nothing occurring in the darkest recesses of the whole of creation that He is unaware of. It is one of the constant and repetitive certainties of Scripture that God is the all-seeing God. The Psalms tell us that "from heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind" (Ps. 33:13), that "He rules forever by His power, His eyes watch the nations—let not the rebellious rise up against Him" (Ps. 66:7), and that "the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love" (Ps. 33:18). This is good news. When you think you are alone, when you think you are isolated, when you think you are lost and abandoned, when you think nobody knows the condition you are in or nobody cares about the pain you are bearing, His eyes are on you. The eyes of the Lord are everywhere.

On one occasion in the history of the kings of the Old Testament, a prophet rebuked a king who had once walked faithfully with God, but now had compromised. Not confident in the ability of God to help him in his latest crisis, he compromises with the enemy. A prophet confronts him and the prophet says this to him, "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him" (2 Chron. 16:9). I like that. The idea that God sees everything could be intimidating and, in fact, if you are being sinful, should be intimidating. You can do it in a corner, but God sees. You can do it in the darkened room, but God sees. And yet God does not tell us that He has the all-seeing eyes, that He has eyes that roam throughout the earth, to scare us. God tells us that to encourage

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us. The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen the hearts of those who are fully committed to Him. When you think you are lost and abandoned, He sees, and He sees not just as an idle observer, He sees not through the microscope of some bizarre heavenly experiment. He looks down and is moved with compassion for you. He sees, and having seen, He comes to deliver.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us this: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13). When we see Jesus, we see Jesus as the ultimate Christ. We see Jesus as the absolute anointed one. He has seven horns and seven eyes. He has all power, and He sees all things. He sees where you are, and He is not fazed by your problems. His eyes examine. His eyes see all the repercussions. His eyes see all the elements. His eyes see your situation more fully and more clearly than you see it yourself. But the difference between Him and you is that He has power to resolve it. He has all power to change it because He is the anointed one, because He has the Spirit without measure. He has the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Seven Lamps

In chapter 1 we noticed that the churches were represented by seven golden lampstands. Now, here is a great revelation and deep insight: a lampstand is designed specifically and expressly to have a lamp stood on it. In fact, it has no other function at all. It has no purpose other than to have a lamp on it. So down in Asia we see seven churches, and those seven churches are represented by seven lampstands. In chapter 4, John goes up into Heaven and, before the throne, he sees seven lamps blazing. Can we make the connection? Down here on Earth, seven lampstands. Up there

before the throne, seven blazing lamps. Now, this isn't exactly a Mensa challenge, but do you think perhaps that there may be some kind of connection between seven lampstands and seven blazing lamps? It isn't rocket science. You see, the church was designed to be the place where the Spirit abides, because just as Jesus is the ultimate anointed one, it is this Jesus who presents Himself among the lampstands. To one of the churches He introduces Himself as He who holds the seven Spirits of God and His word to them is this: "Wake up!" because He wants to come with revival. He wants to bring the Spirit to them. They have a reputation that they are alive, but they are dead. Reputation is a terrible thing. We do not want reputations. We want the Holy Ghost. We might get a bad reputation if we get a lot of the Holy Ghost. We can cope with that. But you see, Jesus is not satisfied with the lampstand if it does not have a lamp on it.

There are churches around the world, and all they do on a Sunday morning is polish the lampstand. They stand back and admire the lampstand. They talk about the history of the lampstand. They look at the lampstand from different angles. But if there is no lamp on the lampstand, then it has not function! In fact, all you can do with it is murder Reverend Green in the library. The lampstand was designed to take the lamp. The church is designed to be full of the Holy Ghost. That is what it is for. You see, sometimes the truth of God has been hijacked. What God determined to be a demonstration of the Spirit has been turned into an intellectual exercise.

When Jesus came and taught that great Sermon on the Mount, He said to His disciples,

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a

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bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

In the Bible, good works are clearly defined for us when Peter speaks to Cornelius. He said: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and.... He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). This kind of good works is not selling flags on Memorial Day. That may be a good work, but that is not the good works that the Scripture is talking about. The good works that Jesus did were works of power. The good works that Jesus did were Holy Spirit works. The good works that Jesus did delivered people from the power of satan, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and raised people from the dead. Those were the good works, and our good works are supposed to create repentance and faith in the sight of those who see what is going on.

It is true that God’s Word is also a lamp and a light: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Ps. 119:105). John the Baptist was described by Jesus as a lamp that burned and shone. The writer of the Proverbs tells his son that the instruction and the commandment is a lamp (Prov. 6:23), and so actually Scripture brings together two concepts: Word and Spirit. In actual fact, they are not two concepts. We sometimes hear people speaking like this: “He is a Holy Spirit man,” or “He is a Word man.” But if you are a Word man, the Word will take you to the Holy Spirit. If you are a Holy Spirit man, the Spirit will take you to the Word, because He is the author of the Word and He is the instigator of every demonstration.

The Church is to be the place where the Word is declared in clarity and where signs and wonders are performed in power. The church is the place where the Spirit comes and makes Himself known. The seven spirits that blaze before the throne of God want to come down and settle on the seven lampstands that are the Church. The Church without the Spirit is not a church. The Holy Spirit is looking for somewhere to feel at home. He came out of the sky in a bodily form like a dove and He rested Himself on Jesus. Now the Church is Christ in the world since Jesus went back to the Father, and the Spirit is looking, like the dove out of the Ark, for somewhere to set down His feet, looking for somewhere to rest and abide in order to manifest His power.

If we are going to be God's overcoming people, if we are to be God's triumphant and conquering people, if we are to be the people who bring the Kingdom into this hostile world—and that is what we are called to do—it will not be by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit, and the Spirit will always demonstrate Himself by acts of power.

Before the Throne

These seven spirits are said to be before the throne. This is the place where men stand in readiness to serve the Lord. The Spirit is the great servant of God. That does not diminish Him in any way. He comes to serve the purposes of God, and He stands before the throne of God in order to fulfill the purposes of God. Let me picture it this way. Here is the throne, and the Father sits upon the throne; and here are seven lamps blazing before the throne, and there is a sense of something not right. There is a sense of something missing, for the Son had gone down into the world to redeem lost humanity. He has paid the price for our sin. The Lamb had been slain, and

on the third day He rose again. His work on the earth has been completed. He has been down into the bowels of hades and preached the good news to those who were waiting in anticipation of their own redemption. He has led the vanquished hosts out of their captivity. He has led captivity captive, and the great procession of Jesus has swept up through the skies.

There He went at the front of the parade. Behind Him came Moses, Abraham, David, Elijah, and all the dead saints who had been looking for the city, all the dead saints who had seen His day and had known that they had been preaching and prophesying about Him, now here He was. Their day had arrived. They came out of the shadows. They came out of sheol, and they went up in His procession, and as He approached the great heavenly city, He called out to the gatekeepers, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in." And all the angels on the battlements said, "Who is this King of Glory?" He said, "The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up. I am coming in!" (Ps. 24:7-10), and He led captivity captive and took them into the presence of the Father. He came to the throne, sat down in the middle of the throne, took the seven blazing lamps and threw them down onto the earth. "Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

There is a demonstration when the Spirit comes. There are things to see and things to hear when the Spirit moves. May God help us! Help us to recapture the dynamic of the Gospel. Help us to become those who do not rely on our own strategy, organizational abilities, or oratory skills. Let us be those who rely on the Holy Ghost. Let us be those who know what it is to

be anointed. Let our churches be full of that sound of the mighty rushing wind, as happened on the day of Pentecost, that from out of us might flow the good news of the Gospel that will touch the ends of the earth. Fill us with your Spirit, O God. Let the water of life flow from the temple and bring life wherever it goes to our lost and hurting and hungry world. Let us take the lamp and set it on the lampstand. It is not just the word that we preach, but the works that we do that will give light to all who come into the house.

Isn't it good that everyone who comes into our house is going to be enlightened, that everyone who comes into our house is going to come out of darkness into His most marvelous light? Everyone is going to see the presence of God. Why? "But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (1 Cor. 14:24-25). How are people going to know that God is with us? They will know when the Holy Ghost manifests Himself. That is how. When God turns up in all His power and manifests His glory. God requires churches like that because that is how He designed them to be. They are the places where the Spirit is. They are the places where the Spirit makes Himself known. They are the places where the Spirit demonstrates His power. That is the kind of Church that Jesus died for.

Now many people point out that the Church is an eternal thing and that the Church was in the Old Testament; I believe all that, but just let me speak in a poetic sense. The Church, on the day of Pentecost, was brought forth in Holy Ghost fire, for

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not only was there the sound of a mighty rushing wind, there appeared tongues of fire that sat upon them. Just as Samson would shake his head and these great locks stood up in seven wonderful braids, so upon those in the upper room seven tongues of fire sat on each one of them as they were filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. One hundred and twenty people (ten multiplied by twelve) impacted the world in one moment of time. It sounds like God's strategy for success to me.

I believe in every effort that is made to win the lost. By all means save some (1 Cor. 9:22). There are many devices that have come. There are many strategies that have been devised. There are many methods that are happening in our world right now. You have user-friendly services. You have all kinds of things going on. That is fine, but I have a sneaky feeling in my heart that God's strategy, God's way forward, God's will to reach the lost is by a powerful anointing, by demonstrations of the Holy Spirit, by signs and wonders. It seems to me as I read the Scriptures that is what He designed the Church to be. That is the way that it came into visible being. It came with every accompaniment of Holy Ghost demonstration: fire and wind. He will baptize you, said John, in the Holy Spirit and with fire. He comes with power to equip us to be His people.

When Jesus, risen and among His disciples, began to give them commandments through the Holy Spirit, it was a new day. He did not just give them commandments from Himself, because He occupied a new place now. He gave them commandments "through the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2). The Holy Spirit was now the agent of the Son to communicate His will to the people. He was speaking to them about the Kingdom, and in their lingering ignorance they asked if it was at this time He was going

to restore the kingdom to Israel. Bad question. Jesus does not answer it, but He lifts it into a new dimension.

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

Two points are made here. "Lord, will *You* restore the kingdom?" Jesus says, "*You* will receive power." How? "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you." It's as if He said, "You are going to go out into the world and preach the Gospel, but wait in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." If this first-century Church is going to impact its hostile environment, if the Church of King Jesus is going to impact the empire of Caesar, it will not do it by cunning, or by craft; it will not do it by intellect, skill, or ability. It will do it by an anointing that is irresistible. It will do it by an anointing that is unanswerable, by an anointing that is unquenchable, by a blazing lamp that sits on a receptive lampstand: the church that knows that its only reason to live is because the Spirit has chosen to live among them.

O God, let every one of your churches, let every congregation of your people and every gathering of your saints, be marked by this one thing: demonstrations of the presence of your Spirit that will glorify Jesus.