

GOD MAKES THE FIRST MOVE

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that HE sent His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14.

We can be prone to trivialize the Christmas celebration when we reduce it to what’s familiar or a traditional experience.

Thank the Lord for the emphasis we see on the Birth of Jesus in the various expressions such as Nativity scenes, plays, songs and candle-lighting services, Christmas card blessings.

But let’s step back for a moment and consider the very purpose of the Christmas season—

It was God moving toward humankind

The Incarnation, the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, represents the eternal protocol of Heaven—

- God moves first, then we move in response to His movement.
- We only love Him because He first loved us 1 John 4:19.
- We can only draw near to God because God first drew near to us James 4:8.
- We can only respond to God because while we were dead in our sins and trespasses, God sought us—we didn’t seek Him Romans 5:8; “God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us.”
- Ephesians 2:1-4 “You were dead in your trespasses and sins. At that time, you walked in the way of this world, in conformity to the ruler of the domain of the air – the ruler of the spirit who is now operating in the sons of disobedience. We too all live among them in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind. By nature, we were children of wrath, just like the others. BUT God was rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.”
- He stepped into our darkness and flooded it with His redeeming light.

Throughout church history, the great “moves of God” that we identify as revivals, awakenings, or outpourings of the Holy Spirit were the combination of two key elements:

1. The sovereignty of God
 2. The stewardship of humankind.
- God moved, but it was due to the supernatural intensity of the collision of humankind moving toward God.

Often people are waiting on or praying for a “move of God” when they fail to realize that God has already made the first move!

There are three key biblical illustrations that display how God moved toward humankind through the Man and Messiah, Christ Jesus:

The Incarnation, The torn veil, The day of Pentecost:

The Incarnation

The Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son - John 1:14 NLT.

During Christmas, we celebrate the ultimate move of God—the Word condescending from Heaven, taking upon Himself frail humanity, and serving as the Messiah-Man who was 100 percent God and 100 percent Man.

God came from Heaven to earth to live a perfect life, die a perfect death, and then rise from the dead, granting humanity access to God in three realms:

1. Through the perfect life of Jesus, we receive sanctification because it’s no longer us who live, but Christ in us - Galatians 2:20 “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the body, I live by trusting in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
 - It’s faith in His perfect life that we can be considered sanctified by God.
 - Becoming more like Jesus while we walk this planet.
2. It’s faith in His perfect death that redeems us spiritually.
 - We are delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and translated into His Kingdom as sons and daughters of God - Colossians 1:13 “He rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son whom He loves.”

3. It's faith in His resurrection which affirms that one day, we too will share completely in His resurrected glory by also having glorified bodies – Romans 6:5; “For if we have been joined together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also will be joined together in His resurrection.” Philippians 3:20-21 “For our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus – the Messiah.”

The Torn Veil

Jesus passionately cried out, took His last breath, and gave up His spirit. At that moment, the veil in the Holy of Holies was torn in two from the top to the bottom.” Matthew 27:50-51 NLT

The key cataclysmic moments during the death of Jesus was the tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom.

It was though the invisible hand of the Lord tore apart this exceedingly thick fabric, proclaiming that a physical building would no longer restrain or contain the presence of God.

- Now we all have access to receive the presence of the Messiah's atoning work on the Cross & we would become the temple of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19 “Don't you know that your body is a temple of Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that your are not your own?”

It was the Lord who asked David through the prophet Nathan: “Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in?” 2 Samuel 7:5.

We see the Lord ask a similar question: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; what is the house that you would build for Me, and what is the place of My rest?’” Isaiah 66:1.

God had long sought a resting place on earth, but not one created by human hands—one that He Himself had fashioned.

This resting place would become redeemed humanity.

The Old Covenant pointed to another dimension.

The Scriptures of the old spoke little of Heaven, the Old Covenant pointed to a day when the barrier of sin was removed so that humankind could become the new resting place for the Spirit of God.

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness’s, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules Ezekiel 36:25-27.

The Day of Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. There was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting - Acts 2:1-2 NLT.

The Old Testament prophecies that spoke of Holy Spirit came to a dramatic fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost.

God’s home address had changed! No more Ark of the Covenant.

- No more tents or tabernacles. The Spirit of God officially moved out, changed locations, and now, because the work of redemption had been performed and the sins of humankind had been absorbed by the spotless Lamb, it was possible for sinful flesh to become a house for the Holy God – as it originally was.

The Son of God ascended to the right hand of God the Father.

Prior to leaving His disciples, Jesus made a promise that He would not leave them alone as orphans - John 14:18.

He promised to send the Comforter, the Helper, the one called the Holy Spirit.

We are not waiting for another Pentecost to come!

Only One Man will one day split the sky and return to planet Earth—**Jesus**. Until then, we are not really waiting for another outpouring to come from above; Heaven is waiting for this outpouring to come out of the temple and flow into the Earth, bringing healing, salvation, and transformation to the nations.

Where is this new temple?

It's **you** and it's **me**.

God has made the definitive move toward humanity.

Beginning with the Incarnation, continuing with the torn veil and then culminating with the Day of Pentecost.

God made the first move; how will you respond?

When studying the great revivals that have punctuated the past two thousand years of church history, it's discovered that a common denominator that seems nonnegotiable to catalyzing a powerful outpouring of the Spirit— is the people's determination to move toward God.

The following are but a few examples:

1. Evangelist George Whitefield and Methodist pioneer John Wesley persisting in prayer until the power of God fell upon them.
2. Charles Finney was frustrated over the lack of effectiveness in people's prayers. This frustration fueled his hunger and thirst to experience God at any cost.
As a result, on October 10, 1821, he experienced a powerful filling by the Holy Spirit. He urged the people to pray to God earnestly and expectantly for the immediate outpouring of the Spirit.
3. Phoebe Palmer opened her home for what became known as the "Tuesday meeting," making space for people to come and experience the deeper Christian life through a touch by the Spirit.
4. Jeremiah Lamphier was a businessman in New York City who felt led to start a noontime weekly prayer meeting.
 - He was willing to persist after the first few meetings were received by poor attendance.
 - As a result, he pioneered a great prayer revival that undoubtedly was responsible for birthing some of the most demonstrative and historical revival movements that would come in the decades to follow.
5. Andrew Murray longed and prayed for revival in South Africa. His desperation for God to move with power and demonstration is experienced when reading his various Spirit-filled works.
6. Dwight L. Moody became desperate and thirsty for God, crying out for a baptism in the Spirit. His cry for this filling was consistent and persistent.
7. Following Moody's power encounter with God, it is said that even though he

didn't radically alter his evangelistic methods, the fruitfulness of his ministry shifted significantly and many more people received Christ because of his outreach.

8. In Wales, Evan Roberts began to hunger and thirst for God as a thirteen-year-old boy. He had two requests of the Lord: 1) For God to fill him with the Holy Spirit; and 2) for God to send revival to Wales.
 - History books record that both requests were fulfilled, as Roberts was the key catalyst and noteworthy personality attached to the 1904 Welsh Revival.
9. Frank Bartleman was an intercessor who contended for a historic outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the United States.
10. William Seymour was a half-blind African American minister living in a very racially hostile era. Who would have thought that Bartleman's travailing intercession combined with Seymour's bold hunger for Holy Spirit baptism would have produced the Azusa Street Revival of 1906, birthing the modern Pentecostal movement.

From the 1900s onward, there are multiple examples—some local and some global—of men, women, and entire church communities who moved toward God in the place of prayer, desperation, and hunger.

**Not only did they cry out in the place of prayer,
but they were willing to make room for God to move in ways He saw fit.**

**Who will make room for the move of God?
Mary and Joseph did!**

In the lowest of conditions, they accommodated the prophesied plan of God.

WILL YOU EMBRACE HIS MOVE, HIS WAY IN YOUR LIFE?

It's one thing to claim to want God; it's another thing to accept His move on His terms.

He often comes in ways that we don't expect that offend our minds while drawing us into a place of intimate communion with Him.

It's always God's friends who recognize Him first. The way He moves might seem dramatically different from the anticipated or expected, but those who are His

intimates will always see His steadfast face through the often-unusual works of His hand.

We don't always recognize the Lord's manifestation of His presence due to our preconceived notions of how HE should come.

Jesus was a broken man on a cross- rejected by His own in His day and by many today.

He was born into the earth as a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and we know that He died a criminal's death on a Roman cross for the sins of the world, but the story did not end there—and we should not live, think, or function like it did.

Jesus rose from the grave, ascended to Heaven, and prayed that the Father would send another Helper to earth who would be the Spirit of Christ dwelling in our midst.

He's alive! He moves. He touches. He heals. His presence has a measurable, tangible impact on the environment around us.

God moved toward humankind, so that we might move toward God.

- Result? **A move of God through moving people.**

PRAYER

Lord, draw me close to You. I want to be Your friend. I don't seek You because of the benefits or blessing— You are my great reward.

I want to know You so deeply that even when You move in ways that might seem new or different, I will recognize it's You because I'll see Your face.

I'll see Your nature and character being revealed and unveiled.

Help me to be like the shepherds and wise men who were not offended by Jesus!