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Strange Fire: The Danger Of Offending The Holy Spirit With Counterfeit Worship



Synopsis

What would God say about those who blatantly misrepresent His Holy Spirit; who exchange true worship for chaotic fits of mindless ecstasy; who replace the biblical gospel with vain illusions of health and wealth; who claim to prophesy in His name yet speak errors; and who sell false hope to desperate people for millions of dollars? The charismatic movement has always been a breeding-ground for scandal, greed, bad doctrine, and all kinds of spiritual chicanery. As a movement, it is clearly headed the wrong direction. And it is growing at an unprecedented rate. From the Word of Faith to the New Apostolic Reformation, the Charismatic movement is being consumed by the empty promises of the prosperity gospel. Too many charismatic celebrities promote a "Christianity" without Christ, a Holy Spirit without holiness. And their teaching is having a disastrous influence on a grand scale, as large television networks broadcast their heresies to every part of the world. In *Strange Fire*, bestselling author and pastor John MacArthur chronicles the unsavory history behind the modern Charismatic movement. He lays out a chilling case for rejecting its false prophets, speaking out against their errors, showing true reverence to the Holy Spirit, and above all clinging to the Bible as the inerrant, authoritative Word of God and the one true standard by which all truth claims must be tested.

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Customer Reviews

I write this not so much as a review on Strange Fire as I do to simply address the counterfeit doctrine found in the WF movement. I speak from experience, being on the inside of this movement for 25 years. I don't claim to be an expert, but a burdened heart. I was a regular at Rhema church (Kenneth Hagin), camp meetings, and many other Word Faith churches in Tulsa. I sat under almost all the preachers/prophets/teachers that are mentioned in this book. I spoke in tongues, but was it a thing just taught by men? (whether it has ceased or not, I take this stand: God is sovereign. God can and will do as He pleases, Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6). As a Word Faith adherent, I named-it and claimed-it, "believed" for healing, "spoke it forth", commanded and demanded (read Lamentations 3:37) and stood in "my authority as a believer" (if this teaching were true, then why would you need God?). There was such a wrestling and straining and striving to have "faith" and to "believe". But isn't it about faith IN GOD; NOT faith in your faith as Hagin taught? (which, btw, is the same teaching of the New Age movement only cloaked in biblical terminology). I felt sorry for (and superior to) all the other churches that didn't have the "fullness of the Spirit." The WF teaching erroneously offers a quick and easy short-cut to sanctification and holiness. And in these short-cuts people assume they are very spiritual. The Spirit gives life, the flesh profits nothing. How burdensome this all is! Vanity of vanities. So much of what is called spiritual is really self-serving. Read Jonathan Edwards' 'Religious Affections'. Even back in the 1700's similar lies were deceiving souls. I read the bible, but not really.

"Strange Fire" will be controversial as Dr. MacArthur takes a very confrontational stance on the charismatic movement. MacArthur is a strident cessationist, believing that the spiritual gifts commonly referred to as "sign gifts" (healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues) and the office of Apostle ceased to exist at the end of the Apostolic Age (roughly the end of the first century AD). He also issues a stern warning about the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" â " the belief that those who are truly saved and who have enough faith will experience financial prosperity and physical health He calls out prominent charismatics and accuses them of fraudulent teaching about and use of these spiritual gifts and their teaching on "blessings" (the prosperity gospel), going so far as to say that they are completely unbiblical. A few times, he references a Pew

study that concluded that in some countries, 90% of all Pentecostals believe the same as these prominent figures. MacArthur paints with a very broad brush, splattering paint everywhere. He challenges the teaching of several non-pentecostal evangelicals and calls them to move to a cessationist position on these spiritual gifts. He concludes the book with an Appendix tracing cessationist thought from the 4th century forward. Best Chapters: In Chapters 3 and 4, MacArthur uses 1 John 4:1-8 to give a biblical method of testing the validity of any claim to the working of God's Spirit. This is excellent exegesis which builds on an exposition of Jonathan Edwards as he evaluated the Great Awakening of the 18th century. The appropriate questions to ask are: 1. Does the work exalt the true Christ? 2. Does it oppose worldliness? 3. Does it point people to the Scriptures? 4.

John MacArthur's *Strange Fire* is a fascinating look at the theology of the charismatic movement that examines the various supposed gifts of the Holy Spirit in the modern era, namely practices such as tongues speaking, faith healing, and prophecy, and examines all of these in light of scripture to explore how these particular gifts were for a specific time during the foundation of the canon of Scripture in the first century and are no longer relevant for today (namely, the cessationist view of spiritual gifts) versus the continuationist view (the charismatic practice of today). MacArthur examines the history of the charismatic churches from the earlier part of the 20th century to today and reveals how the continuationist view in the church actually diminishes the value of Scripture and instead emphasizes emotionalism and self-serving experiences which elevate the individual and don't follow a Scriptural framework. As MacArthur points out, all work of the Holy Spirit should be to draw the believer closer to Christ, and if these various charismatic works do not, and instead just focus on fantastic experiences that revolve only around the third member of the Godhead alone and His power, then they are to be held in question if Christ is not magnified. The book goes into detail exploring the practice of speaking in tongues, with the Scriptural understanding that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were already known languages, and not nonsensical, meaningless babbling. The fact that people today are not instantly given the ability to speak known languages helps establish why this particular gift is no longer at work, but instead is just a meaningless, emotional release of a non-language babbling.

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