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Strange Fire Recap: Day Two
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John MacArthur – "Testing the Spirits"

John MacArthur kicked off the second day of Strange Fire with an exhortation to "test the spirits" of the charismatic movement. He explained that true spiritual warfare is a fight for the mind, and that "for the charismatic movement to succeed," it has to "turn discernment into iniquity." Preaching out of 1 John 4, he highlighted several biblical principles for testing the spirits, focusing primarily on the Holy Spirit's role in exalting Christ. By contrasting the biblical truth about the Person and work of Jesus with the spurious version proclaimed by many charismatic leaders, John made the clear point that a true movement of the Holy Spirit wouldn't preach an inaccurate Christ.

Tom Pennington – "A Case for Cessationism"

Tom Pennington provided us with a biblical case for the doctrine of cessationism. He began by defining cessationism as the belief that God ended His use of the miraculous gifts that existed during the first century. He went on to explain that miracles were unique in Scripture, showing that they only appeared during profound moves of God, particularly during the ministries of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus Christ. Miracles validated those specific ministries, as well as the ministries of the apostles who laid the foundation of the church. When God finished that crucial work, the miracles ceased because they were no longer needed. That teaching has been the church's standard position on signs and miracles throughout its history.

Phil Johnson – "Is There a Baby in the Charismatic Bathwater?"

"Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater." That simple maxim has been the knee-jerk defense for charismatic apologists against criticism of their movement. Their reaction to Strange Fire is just the latest example. In his first breakout session, Phil Johnson attempted to identify anything salvageable from the doctrinal sludge of the charismatic movement. He pointed out a smothering fear within the movement that any criticism will quench the Spirit, noting that discernment is labeled as sinful rationalism. He said the "open but cautious" crowd cannot be content to wait and see what is of the Lord and what is not—and that in fact they should be the loudest critics of charlatan prophets and phony miracle workers. He concluded that the movement doesn't produce good fruit because it is actually a bramble bush.

Justin Peters – "The Devilish Puppet Master of the Word-Faith Movement"

Justin Peters's breakout session was loaded with video clips and quotes from Word-Faith and prosperity preachers. Letting the charlatans' words speak for themselves, Peters was able to easily illustrate how far the movement's core doctrine is from the truth of Scripture. Focusing specifically on key tenants of Word-Faith teaching, he exposed several damning inaccuracies that color the movement.

Nathan Busenitz – “A Word from the Lord? Evaluating the Modern Gift of Prophecy”

Nathan Busenitz tackled the issue of modern prophecy in his breakout session. He focused on one of three tests that any true prophecy must pass: Does the prophecy possess predictive accuracy? (The other tests focus on the doctrinal orthodoxy of the prophecy and the moral integrity of the prophet.) He explained how those in the charismatic camp—as well as many in the noncharismatic, continuationist camp—have created a second tier of prophecy, one that is not held to the test of absolute accuracy. Busenitz debunked the supposed biblical support for this second, lesser level of prophecy and warned against any teaching that permits and promotes fallible prophecy. He concluded that the “self-proclaimed prophets who fail any of the three tests should consider the serious biblical warnings against falsely claiming to speak for God.”

Panel Q&A

Christian radio host and commentator Todd Friel moderated a lively question-and-answer discussion between John MacArthur, Justin Peters, Tom Pennington, and Steve Lawson. The focus of their discussion was primarily the theological foundation—such as it is—of the charismatic movement. Friel played several video clips of various charismatic worship services, focusing on key words, phrases, and practices that show up frequently in charismatic teaching. The speakers had visceral reactions to the video clips, which vividly depicted the aberrant theology and brazen manipulation of Scripture that permeates the charismatic movement.

Steve Lawson – “The Puritan Commitment to *Sola Scriptura*”

Day two of Strange Fire closed with Steve Lawson’s excellent examination of the Puritan devotion to the sufficiency of Scripture. He began with a thorough examination of the Westminster Confession of Faith and its assertion of the perfect and complete quality of God’s Word. He then traced the dilution of that doctrine in Quaker teaching, showing the similarities between its theology and that of the charismatic movement. He closed his session with several quotes from the writing of John Owen, who was a staunch Puritan defender of Scripture’s sufficiency. Quoting Owen, he concluded, “As the teachings of the fanatics contain matter alien to . . . the Scriptures . . . shun them as diabolical, execrable, useless, groundless, and false.”

That’s just a brief glimpse of Day Two. We hope you’ll check out other media from the Strange Fire conference **here**.

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