

Washington for Jesus- Anne Gimenez

On April 29, 1980, John and I woke up in our darkened hotel room at approximately 5:00 am. The day we had been waiting for nearly two years had finally arrived. As we hastily began to dress for the day on the Mall in Washington D.C., John quietly said, "Anne, I don't know if anyone will be there but us." I encouragingly responded, "Well let's go, we will be there!"

When we arrived, in the darkness thousands were pouring onto the mall from the subway system. By that afternoon, nearly 700,000 believers gathered to pray for America. Washington for Jesus, on April 29, 1980, became an unprecedented historic gathering of the church in response to national crisis that many historians point to as a turning point for the nation. Many credit the massive gathering of prayer for influencing the presidential election sending Ronald Reagan to the White House and birthing a national movement. Amazingly, all of this began as a simple prophetic word given to my late husband, Bishop John Gimenez.

John had been in Oakland, California in October 1978. While he was preaching one night, he had a vision of a man that he couldn't recognize but knew to be the president of the United States--prophesying the word of the Lord to the nation! Out of 1 Samuel verse 29 the words kept ringing in his heart, "*Is there not a cause?*" Just like David brought down Goliath, God showed John that the church had a cause too and a giant to bring down. Other enemies had arisen in the land-- double-digit interest rates, American hostages in Iran, and rioting on college campuses.--all seeking to destroy a nation that had been based on the Word of God. America was in deep trouble!

The first thing John did when we came home to Virginia Beach was to go see Dr. Pat Robertson and lay out the vision. Pat answered, "we'd need to get a hundred churches to each bring a hundred people, and by the way John, how would you feed that big of a crowd?" John had the answer ready, "let 'em fast!" Next he went to see Demos Shakarian, President of Full Gospel Business Men International. Demos quickly confirmed the vision and the rally was on! People were stirred about the condition of America and it gave them hope something could be done.

Pat Robertson and Bill Bright of Campus Crusade were chosen as program co-chairmen, with John serving as the national chairman. In a time with no internet or cell phones, John traveled continuously from one side of America to the other gathering support for Washington for Jesus. We began to believe that perhaps one million Christians would come to the nation's capital on April 29th to pray in the spirit of 2nd Chronicles 7:14 ("If My people..."). That day was specifically chosen for its historical significance. It was the anniversary of the 1607 planting of the cross by Robert Hunt, chaplain of the Jamestown Colony, in dedication of the country's first settlement.

Washington for Jesus amazed us all and exceeded everyone's expectations. We had a state-by-state parade around the Capitol Mall--thousands marching with American flags and colorful banners. Leaders from every background and denomination were on hand to speak throughout the afternoon. Some came from denominations that, under normal circumstances, didn't speak to other groups. But on that day, differences fell to the ground and they locked arms and prayed as one church.

Interestingly, then-President Jimmy Carter was unavailable to speak to the gathering, either in person or by phone. Ronald Reagan telephoned, declaring "I am with you." A number of men and women of God have often looked back at that day and concluded the prayers from Washington for Jesus was a turning point in the election. In fact, when Ronald Reagan was inaugurated on January 20, 1981, Dr. Bill Bright told the new President: "Some of us believe you were actually elected on April 29th when over 700,000 Christians came to Washington and prayed for America."

In time, we came to see the phenomenal results of answered prayer on that historic day: the release of the American hostages in Iran, the economic recovery of our nation, and the renewed unity among Christians from different denominations and movements. Washington for Jesus turned out to be one of the largest recorded gatherings in the history of the nation, outside of the Bicentennial celebrations in 1976. Many have credited the birth of the modern Conservative political movement to the network created there. Most importantly, we all witnessed the power of unified prayer and how a God-called solemn assembly can turn a nation.

John told me when we returned home, "We won't do this again." It seemed we came home with leftover bills which Rock Church had to pay. But eight years later, in 1988, the Church was in trouble. Scandals rocked the evangelical world and another Washington for Jesus rally was called. The political pundits said the Church would never gather again as they did in 1980, but they were wrong. This time the count on the mall was over one million believers praying and repenting for the church.

After that, it seemed we received a new prophetic call to a national prayer event every eight years. We went back to Washington again in 1996 and 2004 and saw God move mightily each time.

In February 2008, John was called home to be with the Lord and just weeks before, he told me, "Anne, someone is going to call the nation to prayer again, but it won't be me this time. I know in my heart this country will either have transformation or abomination."

I never dreamed God would speak to me to call a national solemn assembly for 2012. But God confirmed the word again and again; however, this call is different. We

are naming it America for Jesus and we are gathering for prayer in Philadelphia, the birthplace of our nation- where all of our foundational documents were ratified - the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution.

The word of confirmation we received is from 2 Kings 2:19-22 where God performs a miracle of healing in the city of Jericho. The men of the city explain to Elijah that the land has been barren because of contaminated water. The prophet has them bring a new cruse of salt to the headwaters where God heals the land by healing the water supply.

The symbol of Salt is vitally important in the context of this call to prayer. Salt speaks of personal holiness and purity. Jesus said "if the salt loses its saltiness, it is good for nothing." America has lost its saltiness as has the Church of the Living God. We are coming to Philadelphia to make a new Salt Covenant with God, and we are coming with "clean hands and a pure heart".

It is a Solemn Assembly (Joel 2:15-17) that God is calling for, and we believe as we come for such an occasion that God will answer (verse 19). We have seen it happen before. The rallies of 1980, 1988, 1996, and 2004 all bear witness to the intervention of God in the lives of His people. And surely, if the Lord can use a reformed drug addict from the Bronx like John Gimenez to call a nation to prayer and turn a nation to God, nothing is impossible.

Anne Gimenez

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