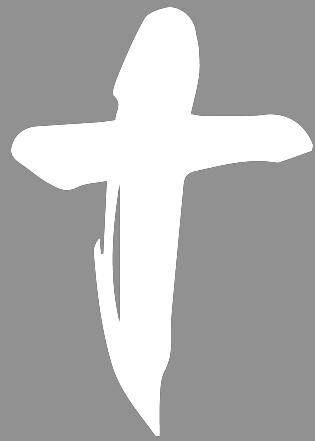


REVIVAL



Revival

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Revival

Lesson One

What is revival?

Introduction

“I know of nothing in my own experience that has been more exhilarating and helpful, and that acted more frequently as a tonic to me, than the history of revivals. Church history, and especially the history of revivals, is one of the best antidotes to a preacher’s discouragement and depression in the time we are living in”.

(Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones).

We are going to look at something of the theology and principles of revival and not just their history, but we trust that it will be a dose of the tonic prescribed by the good doctor!

While it is useful to understand the concept of revival, let us not get too preoccupied with analysis and definition.

“Revival in a definition”, said one preacher, “is like David in Saul’s armour - it just doesn’t fit”.

“If you can explain a revival, then it is not a revival” (Selwyn Hughes).

Revival is more than evangelism

Words can be devalued. In some books, we read phrases like “we were holding a revival”. What they mean is an evangelistic campaign, but revival is more than evangelism.

- ❖ In EVANGELISM, man takes the initiative
In REVIVAL the initiative is God’s.
- ❖ In EVANGELISM, the organisation is human
In REVIVAL it is divine.
- ❖ EVANGELISM is part of the continuous programme of the church
REVIVAL is a thing of special times and seasons.
- ❖ EVANGELISM is the work man does for God
REVIVAL is the work God does for man.
- ❖ EVANGELISM produces little to no change in the heart of Christians
REVIVAL produces a deep work in the heart of Christians.

Revival is more than an unusual sense of God's Presence

The moving of God's Spirit can be experienced in big meetings, conventions, conferences and camps. On occasions supernatural things happen and a church experiences an impulse of the Holy Spirit and a harvest of converts. A personal filling of the Holy Spirit.

We can have all these things without revival, yet revival includes them all.

SO WHAT IS IT?

Isaiah 64: 1-3 "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!! For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you."

Habakkuk 3: 1-4 "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On what to answer when I am rebuked. Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendour was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden."

Verse 4 "God came". Revival is a visitation from God and the characteristics are "His glory, His praise, His splendour, His hand (the Holy Spirit), His power".

**"Revivals are supernatural in character and wrought by the Spirit of God".
(EJ Poole-Connor)**

Revival is God visiting his people in ways far beyond anything they normally experience. God breaking into the consciousness of men in majesty and glory. God's power and holiness borne in on peoples hearts.

When we talk of God here, we mean God the Holy Spirit. Revival can be said to be times of the outpouring of God's Spirit. This makes the account of the first Pentecost in Acts 2 very significant. This first outpouring tells us certain things characteristic of every such outpouring.

Acts 2: 1-2 "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting."

Revival is "from heaven".

Revival always starts with God's people and then reaches out to the unsaved. It does not start by regenerating the non-Christians, but by reviving the Christian.

**"Revival is the inrush of the Spirit into a body that threatens to become a corpse"
(D.M. Paton).**

Some use the word "revival" to apply only to Christians and "awakening" to apply to non-Christians. Probably wise not to focus too much on precise definitions.

When the church is at a low ebb, it is hard to tell the difference between those who are believers and those who aren't.

Luke 10:30 "They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead."

This man could be said to represent the backslidden Christian and he is described as "half-dead".

Luke 15:32 "But we have to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again."

The younger brother was described as "dead".

Ephesians 5:14 "This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Believers are exhorted to "wake up".

Acts 2: 17-21 "In the last days,. God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

An outpouring of the Spirit on Christians which so affects non-Christians that many are awakened to call on the name of the Lord.

Lesson Two

Why is revival necessary?

It is important to see revival in the context of the spiritual struggle for the souls of men which has been going on ever since creation.

One of God's titles is "The Lord Almighty" (The Lord of Armies) God is a military commander.

1 Samuel 1: 3,11 "Year by year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty.....And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty....."

Revivals are part of God's military strategy to:-

Counteract spiritual decline

Naturally, decline and decay seems to be a principle of human experience and can be seen in individuals, societies and creation itself. It applies to individual Christians and the church too.

Examples

- In America in the late 18th century". It seemed as though Christianity were a waning influence about to be ushered out of the affairs of men." (Latourette).

One Episcopal Bishop thought the situation hopeless and simply ceased to operate.

- In England in 1739: The church was "asleep". Both Anglicans and non-conformists seemed at least agreed on one point - to leave the devil alone and to do nothing for hearts and souls."

The result?

"The whole population seemed given over to an orgy of drunkenness which made the very name of Englishmen stink in the nostrils of other nations". (Popular History of Free Churches - Horne).

"The theatre was shockingly vulgar and depraved. Polygamy, fornication and homosexuality were not considered sinful. Gangs of drunken ruffians paraded the streets and subjected women to nameless outrages and defenceless men to abominable tortures. The constables shared the drunken habits of the time and were mainly corrupt. Sport was cruel and brutal such as bear baiting and cock fighting. Pugilism was savage and murderous - and even women took part". (Great Revivals - Whittaker).

Create Spiritual momentum

God counteracts this principle of decline and decay by seizing the initiative and working at times in unusual power revivals counteracting spiritual decline and creating spiritual momentum. **“Most of the great forward movements of the church have been born in seasons of spiritual awakening”.** (Arthur Wallis)

“God sends revival to arrest the attention of an unbelieving world”.
(Selwyn Hughes).

Restore New Testament Christianity

They always tend to restore the church to apostolic Christianity. For this reason, the book of Acts could be seen as a model of revival preserved by the Holy Spirit.

“The church always looks like the church in the New Testament when she is in the midst of revival.....revival is the church returning to the book of Acts, it is a kind of repetition of Pentecost.”
(Martin Lloyd-Jones).

“The apostolic times seems to have returned upon us, such a display has there been of the power and grace of the divine Spirit as the assemblies of the people and such testimonies has he given to the work of the gospel”. Jonathan Edwards speaking of the revival in New England in the 1730’s.

Do what we could never do

We certainly have our part to play in bringing people to Christ
John 1: 41-42. “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”

We should not despise this as “the day of small things”.
Zechariah 4:10 “Who despises the day of small things?.....”

“Reconnaissance and patrolling, harassing and skirmishing are all essential to the big offensive”.

BUT (“where normal means are failing it is no use adopting extra special means: it is to the supernatural we must turn.” (Wallis))

What the efforts and ingenuity of man cannot accomplish is but the work of a moment to the outpoured Spirit.

New England 1734 “there was as much done in a day or two as at ordinary times is done in a year”. (Edwards)

Lesson Three

The role of Christians in bringing revival

**“Before there can be a blessing, somebody has to bear a burden”.
(John Wallace).**

Are revivals something God does or are they the result of what we do?

Revivals involve the sovereign will of God, but also the preparedness of believers. We need to hold these two truths in balance, not over-emphasising one or the other.

“God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility are like the two lines of a rail-track. If we veer too much to one side or another, we fall off.” (Hughes)

Over-emphasis on sovereignty encourages passivity. It relieves us of the responsibility to obey and to submit.

Over-emphasising man’s role can lead to presumption and arrogance, or the reduction of revival to mechanics. **“If we do this and this, then revival must happen”.**

Charles Finney likened revival to farming - you prepare the soil, plant the seed, water it and the result is a good crop. But what if you plant in the summer?!

We must always remember that revival is GOD AT WORK and at the end there will always be an element of mystery in it.

Acts 2 again helps us:-

“When the day of Pentecost came.....” this was God’s sovereign timing. He decided this.

“they were all together in one place” - there was spiritual preparation in the hearts of the disciples.

Arise, call on your God

2 Chronicles 7:14 The Lord said **“.....if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land.**

Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones speaking in the context of can a revival be manufactured? said **“A revival is a miracle, it is a miraculous exceptional phenomenon, it is the hand of the Lord and it is mighty.....a revival is something that can only be explained by the direct action and intervention of God.....these events belong to the order of things that men cannot produce. Men cannot produce them. Men can produce evangelistic campaigns, men cannot and never have produced a revival, oh, they tried too many times.....a revival by definition is a mighty act of God, and it is a sovereign act of God, it is as independent as that. Men can do nothing, God and God alone does it!.....if you can explain what is happening in a church, then it is not revival.....if you can explain a thing then it is not a miracle. A miracle is the direct sovereign, immediate supernatural action of God and it cannot be explained**

and that is the essential truth about a revival.....there are no methods used in a revival. If methods are used, you can understand the results; if you do certain things you will get your results”.

IF A LOCAL CHURCH OBEDIENTLY DOES CERTAIN THINGS IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT, RESPONDING TO THE LIGHT IT HAS, THEN IT MAY WELL COME TO KNOW A MEASURE OF REVIVAL LOCALLY, BUT VERY SELDOM WILL THIS LEAD TO REVIVAL OF THE KIND WE ARE DISCUSSING - REVIVALS WHICH TOUCH WHOLE NATIONS OR EVEN CONTINENTS.

View the film ‘A Diary of Revival’ the outbreak of the 1904 Welsh awakening.

Lesson Four

Signs which we should look for, pray for and be sensitive to

A spirit of deadness and lawlessness

It is a fact of history that revival often breaks out at a time of deadness among believers and abounding sinfulness in the world. Remember the background of Acts itself. The people in Jerusalem rejected and crucified the Lord and, before his crucifixion, Jesus spoke words of judgement over the city.

Luke 19:41-44 “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and your children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you”.

Yet within a short time, a great revival broke out in that very place! (and note it was not preceded by repentance on behalf of the chief priests and elders).

Psalms 119:126 “It is time for you to act, O Lord; your law is being broken”. To the Psalmist, the hopelessness of the situation was one of the strongest arguments in favour of God moving.

“How dead a time it was everywhere before this work began”. (Jonathan Edwards in 1742)

“If I had been asked a month ago whether a revival was probable in Wales, I should have answered ‘No’. It seemed to me that the “higher criticism” had wrecked the ordinary machinery of a revival”. (Liverpool Daily Post, 1904)

Isaiah 59:19 “From the west, men will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along”.

Alternative Isaiah 59:19 “Or when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will put him to flight”.

Spirit of dissatisfaction among God’s people

A spiritual restlessness becomes evident. Believers begin to view with growing concern their spiritual ineffectiveness. They begin to say, “Surely God must have something better than this for his people”.

A thirst for God begins to grow. A desire for GOD to take the stage and display his power and glory.

This thirst is fed by the accounts in Scripture of what God has done in the past and by reading of what he is doing today.

Isaiah 64:1 becomes the cry “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you”!

“The Welsh Revival of 1904” page 78 - Roberts was despondent over the Church’s impotence to reach the unconverted:

“For days he had been brooding over the apparent failure of modern Christian agencies; and he felt wounded in the spirit that the Church of God should so often be attacked. While in the ‘Slough of Despond’ he walked in the garden. It was about 4.00pm. Suddenly, in the hedge on his left, he saw the face full of scorn, hatred and derision, and heard a laugh as of defiance. It was the prince of this world, who exalted in his despondency. Then there suddenly appeared another figure, gloriously arrayed in white, bearing in his hand a flaming sword borne aloft. The sword fell athwart the first figure, and it instantly disappeared. He could not see the face of the swordbearer”.

A desire to “break up the fallow ground” (followed by doing it).

Hosea 10:12 “Sow for yourself righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you”. Note the fallow ground is not desert-land which has never borne fruit (representing unbelievers). It was not land which was fruitful, but which has been abandoned and returned to desert (the backslider).

It is land which has borne fruit in the past, but which now lies idle through lack of cultivation.

It is HARD ground: we can be quite correct in our doctrine, yet hard. We can sit under great ministry week in and week out and yet never change or progress.

It is WEED BOUND - weeds choke the crop. Weeds like carnality, laziness, materialism, apathy.

It is UNFRUITFUL - no matter how good the seed and how much rain.

Note that WE are to break up the fallow ground. WE are to bring our hearts into a humble and contrite state before God.

1 Peter 5:6 “Humble yourself, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time”.

James 4:10 “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up”.

We begin and then God begins to work in us by his Spirit to make our response effective. Pride goes as we expose our hearts to God. God shows us ourselves as we really are and CONTRITION (deeply felt remorse) follows.

There are no excuses. We agree with what God says of us. We repent and confess.

“Contrite” in Hebrew means “bruised or broken in pieces”. God always responds to humility.....

2 Chronicles 7:14. *“.....if my people.....” He responds to the contrite heart -*
Psalm 51:17 *“My sacrifice, O God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”.*

Remember - humbling doesn't mean speaking disparagingly of ourselves, or denying gifts which God has given us. It means taking our rightful place before God and exposing our heart to him. **“Revival comes to a desperate church, not a triumphant one”.** (Peter Lewis)

Awareness of God's time

A feature of revival is “suddenness” - see **Acts 2:2** *Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven.....* but God always speaks beforehand to those who have ears to hear and reveals to them what he is about to do.
1 Chronicles 12:32 *“men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.....”*

A good prayer: **“Lord, let me be a son of Issachar. Give me an understanding of what you are doing, of your times and seasons, so that I can co-operate and flow with what you are doing”.** (Ralph Mahoney)

“The Welsh Revival of 1904” page 79 - Roberts speaking of a vision the Lord gave him: At another time the arm and the hand were indistinct, but the piece of paper which it held had the figures **“100,000”** written on it. After that, whenever he prayed, he had no peace until he had asked God specifically for that number of souls.

Understanding God's promise

Even prayer is not the first step in revival (though it is vital - see below). The first step is a scriptural promise. Without such a promise, there is no basis for effective prayer. If we pray outside God's promises, we pray in vain.

Acts 1:5 the promise *“For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit”.*

Acts 1:14 the prayer *“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers”.*

So part of the preparation for revival is believers being convinced that God has promised it and that promise being quickened in their hearts.

Isaiah 35: 1-2 *“The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy”.*

Psalm 68: 1&7 *“May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him. When you went out before your people, O God, when you marched through the wasteland”.*

Acts 2:17 *“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people”.*
(the “last days” began at Pentecost and still continue).

Prayer

Revival never comes without the forerunner of prayer. “When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is to set them a praying”. (Matthew Henry).

Acts 1:14 *“They all joined together constantly in prayer.....”*

Acts 2:1 *“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place”.*

“From the Day of Pentecost, there has not been one great spiritual awakening in any land which has not begun in a union of prayer, though only among two or three; no such outward, upward movement has continued after such prayer meetings have declined”. (Dr A.T. Pierson). This prayer is concerned and passionate, not cold and lifeless. It is born of the Spirit - but God will birth it in us if we ask.

- This prayer is concerned and passionate, not cold and lifeless. It is born of the Spirit - but God will birth it in us if we ask.
- It is persevering prayer - **Hosea 10:12** *“.....until he comes and showers righteousness on you.”*
- It is praying in faith. “Faith is the key which unlock the door of God’s power”. But instead of asking God for more faith, use the “grain” you’ve got!
- It is praying in unity - **Matthew 18:19** *“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”* However Scripture and history show that it doesn’t have to be unity of a great number.
- Often, fasting is involved - **Nehemiah 1:4**. *“When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”*

A willingness to accept all that revival entails

This means being open to God and being prepared for change. “To be unprepared for change is to be unprepared for revival”. (Dunnett) “Revival means moving on with God, willingness to abandon everything that God shows us is a hindrance, to embrace whatever new light he causes to break forth from his Holy Word”. (Arthur Wallis)

- Examples
- (1) Peter in Acts 10&11 taking the gospel to the Gentiles.
 - (2) Paul and the truth of salvation by faith

This often leads to persecution/opposition from other Christians

- Examples
- (1) Methodists in 18th century
 - (2) Pentecostals in 20th century

Lesson Five

The characteristics of revival

The first outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts and what happened afterwards, will give us certain characteristics of every such outpouring.

God working in his own way

A characteristic of revival is that God works as he chooses and through whom he chooses. Revival is God visiting his people (not a committee). Scripture and history show that this can be a problem for believers. We are very wedded to our ideas, our plans, our views, and the experience of the past shows that, very often, we object when God works as he chooses.

Luke 2: 34-35. “.....This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed....”

1 Peter 2:8. “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message - which is also what they were destined for”.

We can earnestly pray for revival and then, when it comes, bitterly oppose it because it does not come as we anticipate.

“If you find a revival that is not spoken against, you need to look again to be sure it is revival’. (Arthur Wallis)

**“People are very ready to be suspicious of what they have not felt themselves ... thus effectively making their own experience their rule of judgement”.
(Jonathan Edwards).**

This does not mean that it is “unscriptural” to assess things biblically.

1 Thessalonians 5: 19-22 “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold onto the good. Avoid every kind of evil”.

Signs and wonders

This characteristic should not surprise us. Revival is God visiting his people and our God is a supernatural God.

Acts 2:19 “I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.”

God's purpose through the centuries has been to restore New Testament Christianity and revivals have been one of the means he has used. In Acts when God poured out the Holy Spirit on the early church, signs and wonders and the supernatural were an integral part of the blessing from start to finish.

The Biblical testimony is that signs and wonders are strategically linked to the preaching of the gospel and the winning of many converts for Christ.

Mark 16:20. "Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them confirming his word by the signs that accompanied it."

Hebrews 2:4. "God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

"Praying for the sick has been the key that has opened hundreds of villages and thousands of heathens here in Congo". (William Burton).

Signs and wonders themselves are not enough. We need to test their source.

Matthew 24:24. "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible."

Acts 8: 9-11 "Now for some time a man named Simon had practised sorcery in the city and amazed all the people in Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed. "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic."

Two simple tests will help us:

- 1) Counterfeit signs and wonders are hardly likely to co-exist with the clear preaching of salvation through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God.
- 2) We should look for fruits of righteousness in the lives of those who are used by God in this way and those who work with them.

Physical manifestations

Physical manifestations often accompany revival.

Ulster 1859 - "Through the instrumentality of the word and prayer, convictions, often the most powerful, even to the convulsing of the whole frame, the trembling of every joint, intense burning of the heart and complete prostration of strength, have been produced." (Presbyterian minister).

This presents us with a challenge - to maintain openness to God, while recognising abuses when they occur.

Some quotations that might help us to maintain a correct balance:-

- God is bigger and greater than all our concepts of revival. We must learn to accept him through whoever he comes and whatever accompanying manifestations.”(Len)Len Moules, WEC)
- Conviction is not conversion, nor is awakening repentance. There were many who had been on the crest of a wave of jubilation for well-nigh a whole year, and when the jubilation subsided sought to regain it by artificial means, not realising that the Holy Spirit works through the imagination and the emotion to the conscience to produce repentance, and through the conscience to the will in order to lead to conversion.” (Keri Evans, 1904 Welsh Revival).
- “The divine purpose of religious feeling is revealed to be the formation of Christian Character, the production of the fruit of the Spirit. Religious feeling, then, is a spiritual luxury for indulgence, much less a spectacle.” (Bishop John Owen, 1904).
- “We should distinguish the good from the bad and not judge the whole by the part.” (Jonathan Edwards).
- “A danger is that when there comes a pause in the services someone begins to swing the pendulum instead of raising the weights.” (Evan Roberts).

What test can be applied to determine whether a manifestation is of God or not?

- Is Jesus being lifted up?
- Is this creating a greater hunger for God and his word?
- Is this leading people to love God and each other more?
- Is this bringing truth and greater spiritual depth?
- Is there any practical change taking place in the persons concerned (what fruit is there?). Sometimes this must be judged over a period of time. (“Feast of fire” by John Kilpatrick).

Conviction of sin

Conviction of sin is a hallmark of genuine revival.

John 16: 8-10 “When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer.”

Acts 2:37. “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles. “Brothers, what shall we do?”

“Cut to the heart” means “pricked, pierced, stabbed, stung, stunned, smitten.”

Again this is logical. Revival is God visiting his people in power, glory and holiness. People are conscious GOD is there - and often think that he is there to deal with them alone.

Such conviction often produces public confession of sin (which should not be allowed to become unedifying i.e. sensational, attention seeking, or going into graphic detail).

“Conviction of sin is, perhaps, the outstanding feature of revival. To cleansed hearts it is heaven, to convicted hearts it is hell, when God is in the midst.”
(Wallis).

“Friday night’s meeting was characterised by the intensity of conviction felt in it. Scores found themselves on their knees, unable to utter a syllable, and quite overcome with a sense of guilt. Some of these fell in a heap and others cried out pitifully and loudly in their desire for mercy.”
(“The Welsh Revival of 1904” page 94).

Inspirational and prophetic preaching

For example, Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 - spontaneous, inspirational, prophetic (i.e. speaking out as God directed), focused on Jesus (his person and work), relevant and pointed, rugged, bold. “Not mouth to ear, or head to head, but HEART TO HEART. Preaching “with a grasp on the conscience.”

Peter’s preaching produced an appeal - from the congregation!

Acts 2:37. “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles. “Brothers, what shall we do?”

The impact of such preaching does not depend on natural gifts. It is the power of the Spirit resting on the preacher.

A breakdown of denominationalism

The walls that divide Christians were built by men! God is against sectional interest and a party spirit. One result of revival is a breakdown in these human distinctions and a coming together of believers.

Acts 2:44-47. “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.”

However, history teaches us that, due to human failings, in the long term revivals generally have had a divisive effect on the Christian community.

Overflow to the community

Revivals start with God’s people and then, through them, reaches out to the unsaved.

Acts 2:41. “Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Acts 2:47. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 4:4. "But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand."

Acts 5:14. "Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number."

Acts 6:7. "So the word of the Lord spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

Scripture and history show us that revivals can have dramatic effect on large scale communities and whole countries.

Examples

- New England 1735: 50,000 added to the church out of a population of 250,000.
- USA 1830: 100,000 converts in one year.
- Britain 1859-1861: 1,000,000 people joined the evangelical churches.

It is the 20th century which has produced the largest crowds and the most astonishing numerical growth in the history of the church. In 1900, there were about 50,000 Protestants in the whole of South America. By the 1970's there were 20 million, today that number has grown to 86 million.

Lesson Six

The results of revival

Large scale spiritual and social impact

Revival is similar in concept and effect to the military tactic of “concentration of forces” - a sudden, overwhelming strike at a strategic point which breaks through the enemy’s defences and clears the way for a general advance.

Spiritual results

The spiritual results in terms of conversions we have already considered under “overflow to the community”. But other spiritual results stem from revival:-

- The raising up of great preachers and evangelists. The 1858-60 revival in the USA was a turning point in the life of D.L. Moody who later became one of the greatest evangelists the world has seen. In 1874 alone 2.5 million people attended his meetings in London. The 1858 revival in Britain produced Henry Grattan Guinness, who later founded a missionary training college which produced over 1300 missionary volunteers under 30 denomination in 40 societies in his own lifetime.
- Converts with a special stamp on them - “born in the fire.”
- An upsurge in evangelistic and missionary activity. “Every revival in the homelands is felt within a decade on the foreign field”. (Edwin Orr).

Examples

From the revivals of the 18th and early 19th centuries came -

- The Baptist Missionary Society (1792)
- The London Missionary Society (1775)
- The Church Missionary Society (1799)
- The Religious Tract Society (1799)
- The British and Foreign Bible Society (1804)
- The First Sunday school was established in 1780
- The First City Mission in Glasgow in 1826
- The YMCA began in 1844
- The Open Air Mission in 1853
- The Salvation Army in 1865 - William and Catherine Booth having been evangelists in the revival of 1858-60.

As an illustration of this definition of revival - **“Revival is the inrush of the Spirit into a body that threatens to become a corpse.”** (Panton)

Social results

Large numbers of Christians being revived and non- Christians being converted has a dramatic effect on the religious and moral life of a country.

Examples

New England in 18th century

The conversion of 50,000 people “revolutionised society and determined the destiny of the country.” (Conant)

Wales 1904-5

“Three months of the revival did more to sober the country than the temperance effort of many years.” During the revival the total Saturday night takings in one pub in Lloyd George’s constituency were 4 1/2d.

Ulster 1858

A large whiskey distillery in Belfast was put up for auction - the trade had so fallen off. In the Connor area two pubs had to close because the publicans had got converted, and a third closed for lack of trade. The Maze Racecourse in October 1859 drew only 500 people instead of the usual 10,000. Throughout Ulster, judges several times found themselves without any case to try.

Social action by Christians:-

William Wilberforce

The abolition of slavery.

John Howard & Elizabeth Fry

Prison reform

Henry Dunant

The Red Cross.

The Earl of Shaftesbury

Initiated more Royal Commissions on social conditions than any other Parliamentarian in British History. Reformed working hours, stopped the exploitation of women and children in mines, prohibited the use of boys to clean chimneys, transformed the lot of the insane from that of abused prisoners to protected patients, etc.,

Thomas Bernardo

Established the world’s largest private orphanage system.

The Evangelical revival was “the movement that improved the condition of the working classes, in wages, hours of labour and otherwise.” (Prime Minister: David Lloyd George).

“An outpouring of the Spirit will always re-charge the batteries of social concern.” (Dunnett).

Fellowship

‘Koinonia’ - the shared life. “One of the most beautiful fruits of the outpouring of the Spirit.” (Wallis).

Acts 2: 44-45 “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Acts 4:32. “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.”

This kind of fellowship (“communion - the state of having things in common”) has always tended to reappear in times of revival. Quarrels between Christians are healed. Hearts are melted and broken down.

In 1858-60 in America and Britain, “with scarce an exception the churches were working together as one man.” (Orr) One result was interdenominational and non-denominational faith mission such as the China Inland Mission.

In Wales in 1904-5 old church prejudices were broken down and man-made denominational barriers completely collapsed.

New structures

Matthew 9: 14-17 “Then John’s disciples came and asked him. “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. No-one sews a patch of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Luke 5:39. “And no-one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, “The old is better.”

This principle was certainly seen between Judaism and Christianity. The early Christians began by maintaining links with Judaism and worshipping regularly in the temple, but opposition soon appeared and then open persecution and they were compelled to withdraw.

History suggests that this principle is applicable within Christianity to - invariably, the old order is unable to assimilate the moving of the Spirit. There is jealousy, then hostility and, in time, new and separate groupings emerge.

Examples

- Anglicans and Methodists in 18th century
- Methodists and Primitive Methodists in 19th century
- Mainline denominations and Pentecostals in 20th century

“Without a change of structure it is virtually impossible to conserve the fruit of revival.” (Wallis)

Can we believe the next time, the axe will be laid to the root of sectarianism, that leaders will look beyond the reviving of their own churches or the prosperity of their own denomination and that there will be seen the true unity and maturity of the body.

Lesson Seven

Retaining the results of revival

Avoid criticism of God's methods and instruments

The attack on Evan Roberts during the Welsh Revival by a Congregational minister, Reverend Peter Price, had a negative effect on him and on the revival.

Keeping the ground of our hearts broken up

Pride is the deadly enemy of revival.

Psalm 139: 23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

One practical result of this will be the maintenance of humble, urgent, believing prayer.

Protecting the preaching and teaching of the Word and seeking to anchor all experience in Scripture.

This was the mistake of the Welsh Revival 1904-06 **“a culpable neglect of the divinely-ordained instrument of preaching.”** (Evans). Too much importance was attached to subjective experience and there was little or no attempt to instruct or catechise, the converts.

By contrast, in the 1858-60 revival, there was an insistence on preaching the Word. The spiritual experience of converts was rigorously examined before they were admitted to full church membership. An efficient programme of instructing converts was drawn up. Converts were specifically told that the Bible is the standard of religious faith and feelings, and **“admonished to seek a thorough change of heart and to furnish thereof in holiness of life.”**

This resulted in one estimate in 1897, 19 out of 20 converts in the revival had stuck fast.

“It is a divine principle that the Word of God is supreme in every work of God, especially in seasons of revival.” (Evans)

Realising that Satan will counter attack.

The century from 1815 to 1914 was one of glorious expansion in Christianity. One writer called it **“The Great Century.”** Protestantism was characterised by an abounding vitality and a daring unequalled in Christian history.

BUT WHAT ELSE HAPPENED

Book of Mormon	-	printed 1830
Spiritism	-	began 1847. The Society for Psychical Research founded in Britain in 1878.
Communism	-	Marx wrote the first trial volume of “Das Kapital” in 1859
Evolution	-	Darwin’s “The Origin of Species” published in 1859.
Jehovah’s Witnesses	-	Founded in 1872
Christian Science	-	Founded in 1875
Theosophy	-	(designed to preserve the ancient wisdom of the east) founded in 1878.

We must see revival in the context of the “battle of the ages” and be prepared.

In his book “Feast of Fire”, John Kilpatrick notes a number of scriptural examples where Satan counter-attacked after God had brought about tremendous breakthroughs for his people.

- ❖ After the Red Sea exodus came the golden calf (Exodus 32)
- ❖ After bread in the wilderness came Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16)
- ❖ After David’s kingdom was established came adultery (2 Samuel II)
- ❖ After Elijah’s fire came Jezebel’s attack (1 Kings 19)
- ❖ After Nehemiah built the walls, Tobiah gains position (Nehemiah 4)

We need to pray as much during revival as before it.

Lesson Eight

Can we expect revival

Through the centuries the Christian church has enjoyed a number of revivals. Impulses God has brought to his church to move her forward in his plan to prepare a bride for his Son.

There has been four of those distinct movements, the question is can we expect a fifth before Jesus returns?

The first movement - the Reformation

Between 1140 and 1564 God raised up a number of influential spiritual leaders to bring change and revival to his church. Men like Peter Waldo, John Wycliff, John Hus, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. They rediscovered the truth that Jesus is God's only means of salvation from sin.

The second movement - the Great Awakening

It was in this second great move of God that the truth was rediscovered by the church that Jesus Christ must be preached to every person so that everyone is able to receive and embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord for themselves. Between 1624 and the present day God moved powerfully in the lives of people like: George Fox, Philip Spencer, Nikolous Zinzendorf, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitfield, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey and Billy Graham. There were many more but these were the most influential between those years.

The third movement - the Holy Spirit

This movement was sent by God for the church to rediscover the truth that it needed to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Spirit on a daily basis. The movement is dated as far back as 1792 and continues until 1980. Those raised up by God to vanguard this movement were Edwin Irvine, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, Charles Parham, Evan Roberts, William Seymour and Aimee Semple McPherson.

Between 1940 and 2000 there have been a number of movements that God has birthed within his church. The Healing Movement 1948; The Latter Rain 1948; The Charismatic Movement 1960; Body Life 1965; The Faith Movement 1965; Third Wave 1980; and The Prophetic Movement 1987.

The fourth movement - the Father's Love

Again significant individuals moved upon by God created the fourth wave revival of God. A revival that emphasised that God is a loving Father who wants us to experience his love every day and to know that nothing can separate us from his love, Those involved in this move between 1956 and 2000 are Ian Thomas, Jack Winter, Floyd McClung, James and Denise Jordan, John and Carol Arnott, Peter Jakson, Ed Piorek, Ian Rose and Jack Frost.

The revivals associated with some of these leaders are Toronto 1994; Holy Trinity Brompton 1994; Pensacola 1995; Smithton 1995; Sunderland 1995; Pasadena 1995 and Redding California 2000.

What the years tell us

I have supplied you with the dates of these revivals over the past 600 years. On a closer examination it is clear that the years between each revival were diminishing. If that pattern is true the next significant move of God will emerge around 2040.

1517 (226)	1743 (163)	1906 (88)	1994 (42)	2036
Wittenberg	Aldersgate	Azusa Street	Toronto	?

What the fifth movement might be

Every revival of God brings us closer to the return of Jesus Christ. The Father's passion is for his Son and on his Son's return that his bride will be ready.

Revelation 19:7. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and the bride has made herself ready."

The last movement of God was Toronto 1994, the "Father's Love". The emphasis of Toronto which has continued to the present time is the Father's love for us. As the Father pours out his love on us so we will be able to love his Son passionately. Only then will the Father release his Son and present us to him. In order for us to be ready for the wedding feast of the Lamb, we need to have our hearts softened by the effect of the love of the Father, which will prepare us to lovingly embrace the Son in truth and freedom.

A picture of Christ's bride the church

Ephesians 5: 25-31 lists all that Jesus is doing in his church to prepare her to be the bride of Christ. Christ loves the Church and gave himself up for her (he paid the ultimate sacrifice).

- He set her apart and cleansed her with the washing of the water by the word.
- He is making his church gloriously presentable not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.
- He loves her like he loves himself.
- He nourishes and cherishes the Church.
- He makes us members of his Body, his very flesh and bone.

The final phase

At the return of Christ his church will be a glorious bride. The prayer that Jesus prayed for all believers at the last supper will be realised at the closing of this age.

John 17: 21-24. "That all of them may be one Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world".

The church will be one, knowing that God is within her. The church will stand out in this dark world as glorious. The glory of God in the church will do this. The church will be ready to be with Christ and to be presented to his Father.

This is the final picture of the bride. For 2000 years the bride has been preparing herself. With each forward movement of God she has been preparing herself for her husband. Over the centuries each born again believer has played their part in making themselves ready embracing the forward movements of God. Is it possible the next great move of God will be the last and the bride will be made ready and the millions of saints who have gone before will be a part of that body, the beautiful glorious bride of Christ.

