

Suddenly, all heaven broke loose!

Bryn Jones

By now the campsite was almost empty. Most of the couples had piled their children into the cars and taken off. Those of us who remained intended to relax for the rest of the day, making the most of the Spring break before leaving that evening. The sun shone brightly on the shimmering lake and, with peals of laughter we splashed into the water.

After a while I looked up and saw dark clouds gathering beyond the tree line. 'We can't stay much longer', I said, 'It looks as though rain is coming'.

In the middle of the lake there was a floating dock from which we dived happily and fooled around trying to pull ourselves on and throw others off. After a few more minutes in the water we decided we would pull the dock to the side and tie it to the shore before leaving. We left two strong swimmers to see to it while the rest of us ran to change and load the things into the van.

Suddenly I heard the wind in the trees. It was not a breeze, but a roar. Inside the next minute I was bent over, battling my way to the van. I turned and saw the men on the floating dock struggling to hold their own. The turmoil of the water was so incredible that I thought we were being hit by a tornado. Trees doubled over. Both men were hurled into the water, grasping quickly for the ropes at the side.

Then, just as suddenly as it arrived, it was gone. Within two or three minutes the lake was as calm as it had been before. We pulled the dock to the side and sat down, looking at each other, pallid and trembling. Then, more in relief than mirth, we began to laugh and swapped our stories as to what the others had looked like in the sudden wind.

Every revival has been preceded by anticipation, as was the storm I have described, yet when it has broken upon the church it has come with the suddenness and intensity of that violent wind.

Big Things In Store

Many of the great revivalists of the past have expressed their conviction that the generation to witness the return of King Jesus will see a revival far greater than anything previously witnessed. That must mean something of exceptional greatness, for many past revivals made an astonishing impact.

In the United States, in the great awakenings of 1858-1860, over a million souls were converted, while in the same period in the United Kingdom a million and a half turned to Christ. J Edwin Orr, in his history of revivals, has catalogued five such

mass movements between 1725 and 1905 that swept the church in America and the United Kingdom.

Dr Alexander Whyte, the 'Prince of Scottish Preachers', said, 'There is a divine mystery about revivals. God's sovereignty is in them... I may not live to see it, but the day will come when there will be a great revival over the earth'.

Revival and Revolution

Today evangelical Christianity is experiencing incredible numerical growth around the world. In several Third World countries the rate of conversion exceeds that of the population growth. Yet despite numerical growth, there is all too frequently a sense of disappointment with the appalling lack of spiritual depth. In many cases spiritual realities have been sacrificed to religious expediency and the righteousness of God devalued to accommodate human weakness.

The competitive spirit of our age has intruded into the redeemed community, setting church against church and minister against minister. One vies with the other in religious programmes, clever public relations and media manipulation of the people.

Different Next Time

The next revival will inevitably mean a radical revolution. Isaiah saw this and said, 'The proud look of man will be abased, and the loftiness of men will be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day'. There will be an overthrowing of all that is the result of man's ego so that what Christ has built will be seen. God intends to destroy all that is contrary to his divine purpose and to bring about his intended goal of a united church filled with his glory.

Many religious kingdoms will oppose such a radical spiritual awakening, for such restoration will threaten the very foundation of many religious enterprises that find their root source in the covetous heart of men or in the egocentric motives of their leader.

Revival & Renewal

Examination of past revivals reveals recurring patterns of recovery of spiritual life. They have been seasons of refreshing from the presence of God. Every great revival has produced such renewal. Webster's Dictionary defines the word 'renewal' as 'to make life new; restore to freshness, vigour or perfection, to make new spiritually'. Let's consider some aspects of this renewal.

...in Prayer

There has always been a fresh powerful spirit of prayer at such times. Not repetitious platitudes nor shopping lists addressed to God, but spiritual communication and fellowship with God. Suddenly God's people everywhere begin to express a new longing for God as well as confessing faith in his promises. From the youngest convert to the most mature saint there is a new fresh exhilarating reality in prayer. The heart is expressed fervently and the answer expected confidently.

...in the Word

The Word of God starts to become more than an encouraging scripture verse to support the day. It is the Saint's meat and drink, the supporting strength of their life as they walk in obedience to it. God's people start reading the Word, praying it, sharing it feeding from it and practising it daily. The Word becomes the measuring line of conduct and determines values in life.

...of Righteousness

There is a joyful rediscovery at such times of the law of God written in the heart. The desire to walk righteously is the rule of the inner man's nature. We are not struggling in vain to put down ungodly desires. We are renewed in faith to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. We joyfully yield up our members as servants of righteousness rather than as servants of sin. There is a ready response to the rule of Christ in our lives, in consequence of which we 'reign in life' with him.

...of Joy

The church in revival is so filled with joy that those hurting in the world seek out God's people to discover the source of such incredible happiness. It will happen again and we will respond that we are glad because he has made us glad. Because we have hated iniquity and loved righteousness he has anointed us with the oil of gladness.

...of Witness

The renewal of witness means that we no longer testify to Jesus out of a sense of obligation. He has so captured our affections that we speak of him readily, earnestly, enthusiastically, as the lover of our souls. It no longer requires urging upon us to witness; it is a natural part of daily living. We gladly tell 'what good

things the Lord has done for us' where we work, where we live, in the community, among friends, relatives and to each other.

...of Praise and Worship

Gone at such times are the stereotyped religious services with the usual four hymns, sermon and prayer. In their place is the spontaneous expression of the life of God among his people. Hearts are bursting with praise, new songs are born of the Holy Spirit and the prophetic song of the Lord is coming through in the church. Even the newest of converts finds songs of the Spirit, and when we find ourselves under pressure these same songs will strengthen us as 'songs in the night'.

When gathering together, God's people come into his presence with psalms of thanksgiving. Their spirits attuned to God, they extravagantly express their love. There are tears and shouts, clapping and dancing, praising with every kind of musical instrument. Those who are spiritual respond with joy and feel at home, whereas the religious are frightened by such displays of extravagant affection.

Revival & Restoration

Let me share with you a personal vision I once received, one that has deeply affected my life.

It was supposed to be the usual morning chapel hour before the start of an intensive day of Bible College lectures. Today, however, was not 'the usual'. Across the room, students and staff alike were falling to their knees before God. A deep and intense sense of his presence was amongst us. I lay prostrated on the floor before him, crying out that what we were now experiencing would continue and intensify until the church of God worldwide would feel the power of his presence. Suddenly all heaven broke loose! I found myself caught up in the Spirit, no longer conscious of a room full of people, but deeply aware of being granted audience with the King.

In a vision I saw great throngs of people, old and young alike, laughing and shouting, clapping, singing and praising as they moved along the roads. Everywhere they went they carried light into the darkness of their surroundings. Crippled people were jumping up and walking, blind people were being prayed for on the streets and their eyes were opening. Great industrial machines were coming to a stop as workmen prayed and found the Lord. Shops were emptying of people, astonished at the miracles taking place in the streets. And all the time the crowd kept getting larger until it was a sea of people praising God. The light increased until I could see no darkness at all. Everything was alive and exciting, everybody was happy and the power of God was everywhere, heaven was everywhere!

I found myself praising God in tongues, increasing in volume, then subsiding, then singing with the spirit, then subsiding. Then, just as suddenly as I had been caught into the vision and trance, I was back in the room, praying among the others.

Speaking God's Purpose

That evening as I walked in the garden of the college, a young Ethiopian girl came to me and asked me how long I had spent in Eritrea. Rather mystified, I replied, 'I've never been there'. Looking astonished, she then told me that in the visitation that morning I had suddenly broken out in her language, an Eritrean dialect, praising God for great signs, wonders, and miracles that were taking place. I had also, she said, prophesied of a great outpouring of God that would sweep the world and bring his glory into the streets. As she spoke I trembled and wept, for I knew that God the Holy Spirit had spoken.

For the next three days I sought God's face in prayer and fasting and was taken by the Spirit into some of the deepest experiences of communion with God that I have ever known. I was allowed in the Spirit a measure of understanding as to what Jesus had groaned and wept for; what he had seen in that cup in the Garden of Gethsemane; what was the true nature of the 'joy that was set before him' which enabled him to endure the cross. I was given a sense of God's great delight in fulfilling the travail of his soul so that he might see its outcome and be satisfied.

'How, Lord?'

Such was the glory of the church of the final generation seen that day in my spirit that it is as clear to me now as it was then, though 23 years have gone by since that time.

I remember crying, 'Lord, how can the church ever come into such glory? We are so divided, so defensive!' The words that the Holy Spirit spoke to me then have burned on in my own life, 'I will pour out my Spirit and I will restore'

Since that time my understanding of the great intention of God in revival and restoration has increased. Peter said, '...that he may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient time' (Acts 3:20-21).

This period of restoration of all things, spoken of by the prophets, concerns the church; the kingdom, Israel and the world - all to be fulfilled before the Father will send Jesus back to this earth.

Restoration of What?

The word 'restoration' in this context not only implies a recovery of, or return to the original practice of the church but beyond that, to the original intention of God for the church, and of going forward into everything included in that original intention.

For the church to return to the condition it was in following Pentecost would on the one hand be glorious, but on the other hand discouraging. For running parallel with the great manifestations of God's power and glory were the legalism of judaistic teaching, the divisive carnality of the Corinthian church and the many other evident imperfections of the first generation of Christianity.

The restoration that will accompany this end-time revival will renew us in what has already been restored of faith and power and equip us with what is yet to be restored in revelation, experience, government, authority and the power of God. Next I will share with you four astonishing things that God showed me would happen in the coming revival soon to break over us. These will take the church beyond where any previous revival has taken it. Then the whole world will know that 'Suddenly all heaven broke loose!'

1. Quiet approach... sudden awareness

During a time of deep corporate intercession in 1961 God spoke clearly in my spirit, whilst in a vision, of four things that will characterise the coming revival. It is these features that will mark it as different from anything the church has previously experienced.

Any student of past revivals knows that they have been broken into generations that have largely abandoned God. They have come with the suddenness of Paul's experience on the Damascus Road, but engulfing the church rather than an individual.

This was the kind of revival I was anticipating for years as we prayed for a visitation of God's Spirit. As a Welshman, I had been bought up on stories of the great Welsh Revival of 1904-5. These were dramatic accounts of sudden, almost overnight changes in the whole life of towns and villages. In many places the chapels and churches had been virtually empty for years, like the dying embers of burnt out volcanoes.

This expectation was suddenly changed during the experience of corporate intercession in 1961.

Vision In The Spirit

The breath of the Holy Spirit crossed the gathering. We lay prostrate on our faces, overwhelmed by the presence and power of God's Spirit. Suddenly I had a vision of the hills of Wales with gentle, drizzling rain falling over them. I looked intently at what I was seeing, expecting the drizzle to yield to a torrential downpour. But the vision did not change; the steady drizzle continued.

In the natural I am uncertain as to how long the vision continued, but in my spirit I was aware that what I was seeing represented a prolonged period of time. There was neither let up nor increase in the intensity of the light, drizzling rain. Yet as I watched, the little streams tumbling down the mountains slowly became a rolling rivers that swelled and increased as they flowed through the valleys, until throughout the small towns of the valleys there were areas of flooding.

I realised that God was saying an astonishing thing: the coming spiritual visitation will be not so much a torrential downpour as a steady and continuous visitation of the Holy Spirit and one that will have a greater and more lasting impact than any that has gone before.

Day Of Visitation

I could not help comparing what I was seeing of God's visitation to the church with the visitation of God in the person of Jesus to a generation of 2,000 years ago. He came as an unnoticed baby, not as a king in pomp and ceremony. He came to an obscure village and an obscure family, not to Jerusalem or the king's palace. He lived for 30 years as God fully expressed in a man without any public recognition of the fact!

Then the time came when he emerged into public view and a movement of God began amongst the people that caused the streams of expectation to grow into rivers of fulfilment. Yet even in the midst of all that, he wept over the people of Jerusalem for their failure to see what was taking place in their time. He spoke of a coming judgement that would devastate the city, leaving not one stone upon another. This, he said, was 'because you did not recognise the time of your visitation' (Luke 1: 41-44).

Raindrops Falling

Already, for those who have eyes to see, there are the gathering clouds that signify coming rains. Indeed, many who are holding out their hands and turning their faces heavenward are beginning to feel gentle, fine raindrops. News is coming in

from many parts of the world of a quiet yet distinct growth of spiritual hunger and expectation. Cities 'even countries' that for years have been in deep darkness and spiritual death are beginning to find light shining ever more brightly in their midst.

The coming spiritual awakening, then, will not be like some sudden tropical downpour that soon stops, only for everything to dry out again. We are even now in the beginnings of what will be a sustained visitation of God on a global scale, visiting the elect of every nation. It will glorify God among his people and prepare the church for the coming of the King of Kings.

2. Church of the supernatural

Quietly the vision of the hills and the rains faded away, like some photographic slide dissolving on a screen, only to give way to the emerging of a new picture. This was a scene of vast crowds and movement of people. Everywhere I looked there were thousands of excited, happy people praising God. There was laughter and much happy talking and shouting, like some giant outdoor festival. It reminded me of the street parties we had throughout Britain for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

The focus of the people's attention was the things taking place in the streets of busy towns and cities. I looked intently, a transfixed spectator of astonishing happenings. Ordinary people were laying hands on the sick and the most incredible miracles were taking place.

Miraculous Healings

There was no sign of healing lines or of public buildings in which these meetings were taking place. Nor were there any people going away not healed. The crippled were getting out of wheelchairs, blind people were instantly receiving their sight., the deaf and dumb were finding they could hear and speak. And many of them were not being prayed for: they were experiencing miracles without the visible involvement of others.

Prosperity Ousts Poverty

While I watched all this I was also conscious in my spirit of the lack of evidence of poverty amongst these happy people. I found myself asking in the midst of this great spiritual awakening, 'Where are the poor?'

Instantly my spirit received the inner response of the Holy Spirit's voice: 'I will restore all things'. I then realized that the restoration would be not only of things

we count spiritual, It would be a practical expression of God's glory in the healing of the sick and the financial and material well - being of the people of God. The absence of any special buildings was explained to me, in the spirit, as signifying that the visitation of God will be on such a scale that what we have built as facilities for the church will no longer be able to contain the harvest ingathering of God. The church of the supernatural will be a corporate expression of the life of Christ in the stream of daily life.

Christ Alone Exalted

Although there were people praying for the sick, there weren't any significant figures catching everyone else's attention - signifying that in that day of global visitation the Lord alone will be exalted. People everywhere will be so Christ-centred and God-conscious that, whatever wonders men are doing, they will be seen only as servants of the Most High. Indeed the involvement of the crowd in the praying suggested that It will be the norm for all believers to flow in the supernatural.

3. Overthrow of the powers of darkness

Once again the vision of crowds faded and a new picture emerged. This one was a scene of utter devastation. Great cities of the earth looked like decayed slums. Royal and presidential palaces, together with government buildings, were occupied by wasted looking figures, men and women with hopelessness written across their faces.

I became a listener to the conversations that were taking place in various government committees and official bodies and was astonished at the lack-lustre proposals being presented. The total lack of debate signified that no one appeared to have any viable alternative proposals to make, so why knock the ones tabled?

The Sword Of Death

Unlike the former visions, this scene kept changing. Not only did I see inside government bodies, but also into religious, philosophical and scientific institutions. All of them were in a state of drab decay. The whole scene was of the last greys of twilight. Everything seemed to be dying, already wrapped in a shroud of darkness. Surely, I thought, this is a picture of what the devil and his wicked spirits have done to the world But suddenly the Holy Spirit broke into my thoughts and said, 'This is what is happening to every institution that finds its origin in man and represents an alternative to my kingdom. It is not the devil that is destroying it; it is decaying because the devil and his forces have been destroyed. The powers of darkness, that

have motivated wicked men in their pursuit of power and their arrogant rebellion in spurning my ways, have been destroyed'.

Then I realised that it was because of the emerging of the church of God in strength and glory, clothed with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, that the powers of darkness had been cast down. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, was going out of the mouth of the believing church and destroying the works of the devil. Then I understood what 'the shaking of all things that can be shaken' really meant:

'His voice shook the earth then, but now he has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens'. And this expression, 'Yet once more', denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire' (Hebrews 12:26-29).

The same power of God that was making the church strong was also shaking the powers in the heavens. The forces of darkness were being overthrown. God was shaking the earth's visible institutions and systems, so that only the kingdom of God with its unshakable foundation would be seen as of lasting worth.

4. Shining City

Again the picture dissolved, to be replaced by one of a strong city, bathed in bright light. I was aware in my spirit that this was the city pictured in the Book of Revelation. What struck me was that it had now become the centre of attraction to the nations of the world.

There were streams of people coming across the globe towards the city, led by kings, presidents and heads of state. As I looked closely, I saw hope written across their faces, as though they had just left situations of pressure, confusion and turmoil which had reduced them to a state of despair. Now they seemed to be finding new hope as they streamed to the bright light of the City of God. In my spirit I knew that this is because the Church of Jesus Christ, through the visitation of the Holy Spirit in the final generation, will be the only visible hope amid a crumbling and disintegrating society. The church will not be viewed as the last hope, in a despairing kind of way, but as the bright hope of fulfilled promise.

Hope Of The Nations

The church will be as the 'mountain of the Lord's house, the highest of the mountains' (nations). It will be the hope of the nations! Such will be the manifestation of the power and presence of God that kings, presidents and heads of government will readily come saying, 'Teach us the ways of God'. There will be

an overwhelming reaching out from every nation towards the City of God - the redeemed community.

Again I was made aware that they were not streaming to an individual but to a city. God was saying to me, 'It will not be to one spiritual figure heading up the church that they will turn. The answer to the final generation's dilemma lies in the church - the alternate society, a new and secure community amid the bankrupt society of the world.

Gentle Rains

And so, as this picture faded, in its turn, there returned the original vision of the hills of Wales. The gentle, drizzling rain continued to fall. The voice of the Spirit whispered in my soul, 'It will start gently and continue until the whole world drinks of its waters from heaven. Then men will suddenly awake to know that I am visiting my people, restoring my church in readiness for my appearing'.

As the vision faded I found myself weeping and sobbing, not in anguish but overwhelmed by deep joy and wonder. My heart was pounding. I felt as though my breath was being taken away, for I knew I was seeing God come in all his glory in the earth.

Today, whenever people say to me, 'History will only repeat itself. Whatever revival may come will eventually subside. This is the inevitable pattern of history and there's no breaking that pattern', I remain unmoved for I know that 'my eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord'. That great revival will not subside, for the King is coming to receive his Bride. I am looking for that day when 'suddenly all heaven will break loose!'