

Community Church Huddersfield
Roots of Restoration Notes

Session 7 – The Hope of Revival

1. In our last session we considered the importance and nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in general; in this session we are going to look at a specific work of the Spirit – revival.

- a. The hope and longing for, the belief in and prayer for revival has been a key aspect of our history and vision.
- b. Central to this has been the belief that there have been many seasons of revival throughout history since Pentecost, and that there will be a great, world-wide revival that will herald the return of Jesus Christ.
- c. A key book: Arthur Wallis, *In the Day of Thy Power*

2. We must start by clarifying what we mean by revival.

- a. Revitalising or an awakening of the church¹
 - i. Not to be used to support the idea that the normal state of the church is to be one of spiritual slumber.
- b. Times of refreshing (see Acts 3:19 below)
 - i. Rains of blessing after periods of relative barrenness
 - ii. Mighty outpourings
 - iii. It might be suggested that as with natural rain there have been rainy seasons of varying intensity over the years.
 - Some have even distinguished between refreshing and revival
- c. A sudden and sovereign move of God
 - i. God's tornado – a mighty rushing wind
 - ii. Disrupts the time-honoured patterns (Is.66:7-8/Amos 9:13) and accelerates God's purpose
- d. A pent-up flood sweeping multitudes into the Kingdom (Isaiah 59:19)
 - i. Revives the church but also convicts the lost – a central work of the Spirit (John

¹ *A mortal blight, a creeping lethargy, a spirit of slumber has constantly invaded the life of the church: born in the fire, it has continually languished in the embers. Divine realities have dimmed, pseudo-religious realisms have taken their place: synthetic spirituality, plastic piety, forms of godliness which deny his power. Revival might be described as a divine intervention which halts, and reverses this spirit of creeping death. It is a springtime of new life following a cold winter of decay. It is life asserting its ascendancy over death: indeed, that the God of revival is the God of resurrection. (Ivor Hopkins, Restoration Magazine, 7-8/78, p.6)*

- ii. The normal steady stream of conversions becomes a flood
- e. A visitation of God

God came from Teman the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah 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.
Habakkuk 3:3 - 5 (NIV)

- i. As God is omnipresent and already dwells among his people this must mean coming in a particular manifestation of his power and glory
- f. A reasonable definition: *a season ordained by God in which the Holy Spirit awakens the Church to evangelise the lost, and the lost to their dire need of Jesus Christ.*²

3. It is also worth being clear what revival is not.

- a. Not just successful evangelism
 - i. In evangelism man takes the initiative but in revival God takes the initiative
 - ii. Evangelism is organised but in revival God moves sovereignly
 - iii. Evangelism should be continuous but revival is a thing of special times and seasons
 - iv. Revival may break out during a work of evangelism
- b. Not 'revivalism'
 - i. Associated with Charles Finney, this is the belief that you can organise and create a revival by the use of 'special means.'
 - So would often be used in US to refer to a evangelistic crusade like a tent-meeting
 - ii. I would also use the word about an unhealthy focus on revival to the point that people don't engage in the normal ongoing activities of building the church and advancing the Kingdom, or recognise the power of God already at work within them.

4. Though it is good to try to get clear like this we must recognise what has been called the mystery of revival.

- a. God came and who can understand God³

² Mark Stibbe, *Revival* (Monarch 1998)

³ *You cannot explain revival because you cannot explain God* (Arthur Wallis, *Restoration Magazine*, 7-8/78, p.18)

- b. The wind blows where it wants

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.

John 3:8 (NIV)

- c. Also there is a mystery about how the sovereignty of God works alongside the responsibility of God's people in revival (see below).

5. We must now provide the biblical basis for this belief in revival.

- a. Prophetic promises (e.g. 2 Chron.7:14)

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. "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD.

Isaiah 59:19 - 20 (NIV)

- i. Note that it begins with the people of God and with their repentance
- ii. Read on into Isaiah 60 and you see it leads the church rising up in her glory and multitudes coming and being added to her.
- iii. Remember that such prophecies have multiple fulfillments.
 - Peter knew that the prophets had prophesied times of refreshing, the return of Jesus and restoration of all things (Acts 19:21)

- b. Prophetic patterns

- i. The Feast of First-fruits
 - Partly fulfilled at Pentecost
 - First-fruits points to a greater harvest
- ii. The Former and the Latter-Rains (Deut.11:11-14; Zech.10:1; James 5:7-9, 17-18; Amos 9:13)
 - Pentecost – the former rains
 - End-time Revival – latter rains
- iii. The Completion of the House (Ex.40:34; 2 Chron.5:14)
 - When the church has risen up and come to maturity then we can expect God to come and presence himself in and even more glorious way than the usual.
 - The former house and the present house (Haggai 2:1-9)

c. Prophetic prayers

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. Since ancient times no-one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

Isaiah 64:1 - 4 (NIV)

d. New Testament Principles

i. Times and Time

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Acts 3:19 - 21 (NIV)

- Note there is a time (singular) when Jesus will return but there will be times (plural) of refreshing – seasons of revival!

ii. Day and Days (see Amos 9:11-13 and Acts 15:13-18)

iii. The end of the age seen as an ultimate harvest (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Rev.14:14-16)

6. Let us consider further some of the characteristics of revival.

- a. The reviving and rising up of a strong, vibrant and triumphant church (see prophetic picture of Ezek.37)
- b. Judgement, conviction and repentance
 - i. Begins in the house of God
- c. An overwhelming sense of the presence of God (Ex.40:34 and 2 Chron.5:14)
 - i. There have often been extreme emotional responses to the presence of God
- d. Man's agendas get set aside and there is often dramatic and noisy demonstration of the Spirit
- e. Multitudes coming into Kingdom (see Pentecost and book of Acts as a model for this)
 - i. Whole towns/villages
 - ii. All groups within society

- iii. In 1858-60 Awakening – 1 million in US and 1½ million in UK turned to Christ
- iv. In several countries in Developing World, the rate of conversion exceeds population growth.
- f. God in the street - again see the Book of Acts
- g. Social and moral impact
 - i. See affect on Ephesus in Acts – may produce reaction
 - ii. 'healing the land'
- h. Renewed missionary outreach

7. The important place of the supernatural and divine power in reaching the lost and furthering God's purpose.

- a. We see in the ministry of Jesus and the book of Acts that demonstrations of the Spirit's power in signs and wonders were a key to reaching the lost
- b. Revival has been called 'the day of God's power.' (Ps.110:3)
- c. The longing for revival is a longing for God to come and show his power and his glory

8. A Key Question – if revival is a sovereign move of God, can we prepare for and even precipitate revival?

- a. Although revival is a sovereign move of God it does seem that God may be moved and provoked by the faith and prayers of his people, and that part of God move is to begin to prepare his people for revival.
- b. There are also examples where man's resistance or wrong attitudes brought a promising revival to a halt (see below)
- c. In the coming of Pentecost we see God's sovereignty and man's responsibility working together – they were altogether waiting on the Lord as he had instructed them!
- d. God can be provoked to move, yet the initiative is always God's and even if you fulfil certain 'conditions' then it does not guarantee that God will come
- e. Equally, we must never use the sovereignty of God as an excuse for our own resignation or complacency.

9. History shows us that there has been plenty of resistance to revival.

- a. Revival strikes at the heart of religious pride and independence as God comes and takes over central stage and messes up our agendas
- b. In 1904 revival there were many communities that were completely untouched by revival though there were professing Christians there – perhaps to do with their attitude!

- c. We have to be very careful that we don't have pre-conceived ideas of what revival will involve or think that it must happen according to our traditions or within our churches.
- d. Also revival can be hindered and even halted where people try to control it, or get glory from it
 - i. God alone will be exalted in that day
- e. And unless revival leads to change and restoration (see below) traditional ecclesiasticism and religious institutionalism reassert themselves
 - i. As in Isle Lewis just a few years after the Hebridean revival
 - ii. This is a quenching of the Spirit
- f. Resistance to Pentecostal phenomena in 1906 revival caused many to leave churches and to subsequent splits into different denominational allegiances

10. One of the key emphases of our day has been concerning the relationship between revival and restoration.

- a. God doesn't just come to continually give the church a 'pick up' and then let it slip down again. He comes in revival to restore truth and reality and to move forward progressively toward restoration and the church to "fullness of stature."
- b. For some the 1904 Welsh revival gave birth for a desire to see renewed and sustained purity and power in the church; and true authority in leadership
- c. If revival just leads to more denominations and sectarianism then it will not accomplish all that is on God's heart in revival.⁴
- d. It is this which led to many of our recent fathers in the faith to call for a revival leading to restoration.⁵
- e. God may well revive traditional churches but he wants to restore his church.⁶

⁴ *The charismatic awakening that does not deal with the root of independence, sectarianism and denominationalism will be deficient.* (Bryn Jones, *Restoration Magazine*. 7-8/78, p.11)

⁵ *Thousands of us are committed to pray and work for nothing less than the great restoration of the Church of God to its spiritual foundation – God's spiritual government and Heaven's divine power. Revival must become a Restoration!* (Bryn Jones, *Restoration Magazine* .4/78, p.12)

⁶ *There may be churches far removed from New Testament church life, bound by unscriptural traditions, who experience a mighty outpouring and are powerfully revived, despite the state of the 'wineskin.' But if, subsequently, human traditions are not replaced by the lordship of the Spirit amongst God's people, then those very traditions will reassert themselves and in due course suffocate the work of God.* (Arthur Wallis, *Restoration Magazine*. 4/83, p.31)

- f. As well as the restoration of the church, God wants to extend his Kingdom – in fact that is what the church is to do. It is revived and restored in order to see all things restored through the rule of God.⁷
- g. Revival is an acceleration of the process of restoration that will culminate in the return of Jesus to finally restore all things (Acts 3:19-21)

11. We now need to consider what we can do now in terms of preparing for revival.

- a. See above on the key question of sovereignty and human responsibility – it is a sovereign move but we can and should prepare.
- b. Preparing the heart - breaking up the fallow ground

Sow for yourselves 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.

Hosea 10:12 (NIV)

- i. Ploughed ground is thirsty ground
- c. Prayer (see Acts 1:14)⁸
 - i. Not just in times of need but in times of blessing (Zech.10:1)
- d. Maintain faith and a good attitude – especially don't become cynical and proud.⁹
- e. Looking for the cloud on the horizon.¹⁰
- f. Being prepared is not just about precipitating revival, but being ready for whenever it does come so that we get the full benefits of it and are not disappointed with its fruit in terms of changed lives, a

⁷ *The purpose of revival is not simply to restore a backslidden church to her former glory, nor only to save the lost, but to restore the rule of God manifestly in the earth (Terry Virgo, Restoration Magazine 7-8/78, p.27)*

⁸ *When God intends great mercy for his people he sets them a-praying. (Matthew Henry)*

⁹ *It is not the godless attitude of the world or even the opposition of the unseen powers of darkness that hinders the work of revival. It is primarily the attitudes of God's people. (Arthur Wallis, Restoration Magazine, 7-8/83, p.30)*

¹⁰ *It is invariably the case that in the period preceding a visitation of the Spirit there were those who had prepared their hearts, and like the 'watchmen of the walls' were on the spiritual lookout to see what God would show them. The situation may have been grim, but they had heard God. The secret of the Lord is with them. (Arthur Wallis, Restoration Magazine, 7-8/78, p.19)*

radicalised and revived church, and a furthering of the purposes of God.

- i. Don't quench the Spirit
- ii. Eagerly desire the things of the Spirit
- iii. Don't have preconceived ideas or limited thinking
- iv. Learn to let God be God and know that he will not share his glory with another
- v. Be prepared to accept the lordship of the Spirit in all things.

12. It is very important however that the hope of revival does not us inactive now – we are not just waiting for revival.

- a. There is much that we can be getting on with while waiting for times of refreshing:
 - i. Building the house
 - ii. Evangelism
 - iii. Extending the Kingdom
 - iv. Moving in the power that is already within us

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20 - 21 (NIV)

- b. At the same time we must be careful of the attitude that thinks we don't need anything more.
 - i. There is a power at work within but it has still to come into the experience of more than we can ask or imagine!
 - ii. We should have faith to move in power in our normal, on-going life but also have a growing expectancy and longing for God to show his power through us in greater ways.

Trevor Lloyd Huddersfield June 2007