

# Personal Revival

by Graham Harrison

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*Graham Harrison's sermon emphasizes the necessity of personal revival as a precursor to broader community revival, illustrated through historical examples and personal testimonies.*

**Duration:** 1:01:39

**Scripture:** Psalm 115:1, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 3:16, John 3:34, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1-4, Romans 8:15

**Topics:** "Personal Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses how God has used individuals throughout history to bring about significant changes. He references the example of John the Baptist, who preached repentance and baptism for the remission of sins. The speaker then highlights the impact of Martin Luther, who nailed 95 theses to a church door and began preaching and writing, leading to a transformation in Europe. He also mentions the influence of George Whitfield, Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland, Charles Wesley, and John Wesley in spreading the message of repentance and faith. Lastly, the speaker shares the story of three young men in the 18th century who were used by God to bring about a revival, resulting in countless people coming to know God and altering the course of history.

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## Transcript

Right, the subject I've been asked to speak on is that of personal revival. And I suppose had I had a bit more wisdom, I would have come back to the committee and asked them what essentially they were asking me to do. For one reason or another, I didn't do that.

And so I was just left to my own devices. But I hope that my thinking runs along the lines that their thinking was running along. Because I don't think you can have revival unless there is such a thing as personal revival.

We don't think of revival in the abstract. It's wrong to think of revival as being something that just happens to a community of Christians. It's something that happens to individuals.

Usually when it happens to individuals, it doesn't stop with an individual here and another few individuals there. But it spreads very widely. There's something contagious about it.

And before very long, you're into the realm of what historically is known as revival. So there isn't really any contradiction between revival and personal revival. Each of them is really integral to the other.

Revival means God dealing with individuals in the depths of their souls, God making such a change in those people that can only be accounted for in terms of a deep work of the spirit of God. God is the God who deals with individuals. And that really is what revival is all about.

And indeed, I think you could say that the whole of Christian history could be written in terms that really relate to what I've just been saying. Think, for example, of the event of the Protestant Reformation. I think you can say historically that goes back to what God did in the heart of one individual, a man, Martin Luther, who was a monk, a theological professor, a man who was deeply dissatisfied, increasingly so, with what he'd been brought up to believe as being the authentic truth about God.

And as he was searching the scripture and praying, God dealt with him and dealt with him in such a way that I do not doubt that none of us would be here tonight doing what we are doing, except God had come to that individual and wrought such a mighty work in him. And indeed, the very face, not only of his own nation, but the face of Europe, the face of the world, historically has been altered because of what God did in the heart and life of Martin Luther. You might say he's one of the great examples, but it doesn't stop with him.

Think of the year 1735. I want to make a number of historical references in the course of what I have to say this evening. And I think perhaps if there were one year in particular that I'd like to concentrate upon, it would be that year, 1735.

It was a time that was truly dreadful as far as the moral and spiritual condition of the country was concerned. Indeed, I doubt if the depths that were experienced, the depths of sin and iniquity and public violation of the revealed will of God, I doubt if those have been equaled at any time since then until the very day and age in which we live. Many people were concerned about what was happening.

Many well-intentioned people tried to do something about it. They looked at the moral mess, the terrible confusion that the nation was in. And there were organizations, for example, one was called the Society for the Reformation of Manners that were established and good, well-meaning individuals sometimes poured money and great effort into seeking to take hold of the nation by the scruff of the neck, as it were, shake it out of its moral torpor and wickedness and turn it to something that would be more pleasing to God.

But they failed and God's answer was most remarkable. He came to three young men. They were only 21 years old, each of them.

One of them in the University of Oxford, two of them here in South Wales. And he dealt with them in a way that was most marvelous and that resulted not only in them being blessed in their own souls, but in countless thousands of people, not just in this country, but across the Atlantic Ocean and indeed in other countries as well, being brought to a true knowledge of God, a saving experience of Jesus Christ. And once again, I think you could say that the course of history was altered by what happened in 1735.

It was the beginning of what historically is known as the Methodist revival. And John and Charles Wesley, they weren't really on the scene spiritually at that point. They were clergymen of the Church of England, but they were unconverted clergymen of the Church of England in company, probably with the vast majority of clergymen of the Church of England at that time.

And it was to be three years or so before Charles and then John Wesley were converted. And they are the names of course, who are markedly associated with the Methodist revival. But it began with George Whitefield, Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland.

And they were only 21 years of age. Your pastor has mentioned that there was a time when, I won't say he sat at my feet, he sat under my nose because he used to sit in the front row sometimes. And I think if he'd been a 21 year old, as those three men were, and had applied for admission to the London Theological Seminary, we probably would have sent him away, perhaps not with a flea in his ear, but to tell him to get a little bit more experience of real life in the world.

And then perhaps come back in a few years time. Thank God that was not the Lord's attitude with either George Whitefield or Howell Harris or with Daniel Rowland. But God came to them.

God not only saved them, but he did something that was decisive and dramatic that changed them forever. You might say, well, doesn't conversion do that? Isn't that the meaning of regeneration? And in one sense, I suppose you can say, yes, that results in a man or a woman going to heaven. And in one sense, there's no greater blessing than that, is there? And yet what George Whitefield, Howell Harris, and Daniel Rowland would say is that there is something even beyond regeneration.

Let me give you the first of the quotations that I want to use. It comes from the journal of George Whitefield. It refers to the year 1735.

And actually at the top of the page, it says age 20. So perhaps I was being optimistic in describing him as a 21-year-old. He was an earnest man, a spiritual man in many senses.

He'd belonged to what was called the Holy Club in Oxford led by the Wesley brothers. And he'd given himself to doing the sort of things that the members of the Holy Club did, visiting prisoners in Oxford jail and seeking to engage in good works. And then eventually he came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But that's not what made him the mighty preacher and evangelist that he became. Listen to how he puts it in his journals. Soon after this, he said, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me.

The spirit of mourning was taken from me and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God, my Savior. And for some time could not avoid singing psalms wherever I was, but my joy gradually became more settled and blessed be God has abode and increased in my soul, saving a few casual intermissions ever since. Thus were the days of my mourning ended.

After a long night of desertion and temptation, the star which I had seen at a distance before began to appear again and the day star arose in my heart. Now did the spirit of God take possession of my soul and as I humbly hope, seal me unto the day of redemption. And a little later he expresses it like this.

After having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan and many months inexpressible trials by night and day under the spirit of bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load to enable me to lay hold on his dear son by a living faith and by giving me the spirit of adoption to seal me as I humbly hope even to the day of everlasting redemption. But oh, with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory was my soul filled when the weight of sin went off and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God and a full assurance of faith broke in upon my disconsolate soul. Surely it was the day of my espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance.

At first my joys were like a spring tide and as it were overflowed the banks. Go where I would, I could not avoid singing of psalms aloud after which it became more settled and blessed be God, save a few casual intervals has abode and increased in my soul ever since. And from then on Whitfield began to preach.

Remember what happened the first Sunday that he preached in Gloucester? Several people, well, a complaint was made about them. He'd driven several people mad. They were converted in other words and an appeal was made to the bishop that they stop this young enthusiast before he filled any more mad houses.

And the wise bishop sent back the reply that he hoped that the effect would be increased the next time that Whitfield preached. Well, that was the story of George Whitfield. He was converted and then subsequently something happened to him.

The same story could be told of Howell Harris. You remember the story perhaps of Howell Harris. It's worthwhile out of men reminding ourselves of him because it really is a very extraordinary story.

He turned up in Telgoth Parish Church on Easter Sunday, 1735 and the vicar there, hunting, shooting, fishing type of man so we are told, was rather concerned that the following Lord's Day, Easter Sunday, he was to hold the Lord's Supper and he was afraid that he might have a very meager congregation. And therefore he exhorted the people there in the service on Palm Sunday to be sure to come to the Lord's table the following Sunday. He told them that if they were not fit to come to the Lord's table, they were not fit to live, they were not fit to die.

And Howell Harris, an unconverted man at that time, was gripped by what the vicar, Price Davis, said. And he spent much of the rest of the week trying to remember his sins, confess them, and he turned up at the Lord's table the following Sunday, took communion still as an unconverted man, but God had laid his hand upon his soul. And it was several weeks before Howell Harris came to an experience of salvation and then and then only did he know Christ as his Savior.

It was again in the parish church at Talgarth. He describes it like this. He speaks about it as a very sweet experience.

But that wasn't the end of God's dealings with him and in fact, I think one could say that was not the decisive dealing that God had with him. Just a couple of weeks, about a month ago, I think it was, I went to a little church on the borders of Fangorse Lake, Fangusty, Tullifinn, in order to see the place where this remarkable event happened to Howell Harris. Listen to what he says.

Doubtless the experience of forgiveness in Talgarth church was sweet, yet it left a feeling of further need in his soul which he could not define. But when he was at secret prayer in Fangusty's church, the sacred spot where he had given himself to God, God now gave himself to him. There his earnest prayer was answered.

There was heard his urgent plea and his hungry soul was sated by Jehovah, one in three. And then the author continues like this. The richest biblical terms are heaped one on another in an attempt to give expression to his experience at that time.

He was there cleansed from all his idols and the love of God was shed abroad in his heart. Christ had come in previously, but now he began to sup with him. Now he received the spirit of adoption, teaching him to cry, Abba, Father, and with it a desire to depart and be with Christ.

All his fears vanished for months and pure love took their place. And what he started doing was not preaching, reading some old books from the previous century to whoever would listen to him. And sometimes his congregation consisted of a very elderly man over 90 years of age.

Howell Harris would stand on the hedgerow and read from the book to him. And amazing things began to happen. People were convicted of their sin.

And this 21-year-old man became one of the greatest soul winners that Wales has ever known. The story of Howell Harris. Not very far away and about the same time, we're not so precise about the dates, over the hills in Cardiganshire in the village of Llangeithel, there was Daniel Rowland, an arrogant young curate who loved his sports and was obviously the heart and soul of the party.

But he was an unconverted clergyman. He was actually curate, first of all, to his own father and subsequently to his own brother. He was never given the incumbency of the parish by the bishop.

I think his distinctive theological views ruled that possibility out. And what happened, you remember, to Daniel Rowland was something equally remarkable. His conversion was amazing.

He'd come to listen to the man who was the great advocate and founder of the circulating schools, Griffith Jones of Llandowra, preaching. And there was arrogant Daniel Rowland standing right at the front, studiously disregarding everything that the great man was saying, until the preacher stopped, looked at him, and prayed for him, and that man was saved. And he became what Lloyd-Jones used to call the greatest preacher since the Apostle Paul.

I don't think he'd heard all that many, but I think he would have prepared to argue very strongly for his case. So through those three men that I suppose we would have passed by, God began to do something most amazing and truly remarkable, not just in England and Wales, but not merely through the English-speaking world, but across the seas and in other countries as well. And the great Methodist awakening began.

And you can see what was happening. God was dealing personally with individual men. You can move on in history.

Come, if you like, to over a century later, and this time not in Britain, but in America, New York to be precise. And there, I don't know if you've read this book, it should be on the bookstore afterwards, is *The Power of Prayer, The New York Revival of 1758*. And the story is told of how Jeremiah Calvin Lamphere, who was an evangelist and who'd gone round door to door for many years witnessing in New York, he was burdened, burdened with the great need of that city.

And he'd worked his, well, he'd worked so hard at seeking to bring people to the Savior. And he'd known some measure of blessing in that, but he wanted more. And he decided that he would pray.

And on July the 1st, 1857, he arranged for there to be a church opened in New York at 12 o'clock noon on the 23rd day of September. And the door of the third story lecture room of that church was thrown open. And at half past 12, the steps of a solitary individual was heard upon the stairs.

Shortly after another, and another, then another, and last of all another, until six made up the whole company. We had a good meeting, he wrote. The Lord was with us to bless us.

But before many weeks had passed, that prayer meeting held each day at that time had expanded beyond the wildest dreams of those men. And what became known as that great revival, 1857, 58, 59, that had begun. And of course it affected Wales as well, because there was a Welshman, a young Welshman, Humphrey Jones, who came from up near Aberystwyth.

He had emigrated, as many Welshmen had done, to America. And he was caught up in the revival and blessed by it. And he felt a great longing to bring the revival back to this country.

And he did come back. And God blessed his ministry and his testimony. And before very long, he came into contact.

He was a Wesleyan Methodist. He came into contact with a Calvinistic Methodist, David Morgan, who lived not very far away. You might say they're a bit like oil and water.

And in those days, they didn't mix. But these two men, they were greatly used of God to begin what became known as the 1859 revival here in Wales. And again, you see, there's an instance of God dealing personally with individuals, but dealing with them in order that through them, the blessing might expand in a fantastic way.

And ultimately, not merely thousands, tens of thousands in different countries of the world should be brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You could tell the story in the same terms in Ulster, where a man, I'm never quite sure how to pronounce his name, a Quilking, a country bumpkin, I suppose some people would describe him. He began meeting with a few of his fellows in a barn to pray.

And from that came the great revival in Ulster in 1859. So revival most certainly is a personal thing. Now, you may wonder, why did I ask for the particular reading that your pastor brought to us this evening, the third chapter of Luke's gospel and those first 17 verses, the story of how John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ comes onto the public scene.

And he really is a phenomenon. Has it ever struck you as peculiar that the gospel according to Luke doesn't begin with Jesus Christ? It begins with the conception, the birth of John the Baptist, actually a sort of cousin of the Lord Jesus Christ as far as the human nature was concerned. But that's largely what the first chapter of Luke's gospel is taken up with, the beginning of it, certainly.

Then you have the central portion in which the angel comes to the Virgin Mary and the annunciation is made to her of the coming birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. But after that, you revert again to John the Baptist to the end of the chapter and the story of his birth and the extraordinary prophecies that are made concerning him, they occur there. Then of course, in chapter two, you're on to the actual birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the one incident that's given to us when he was a 12 year old boy and went up to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary. But then when you come to chapter three, you've jumped on years and the Lord Jesus Christ is about to begin his public ministry. But first of all, John the Baptist is the focus of attention.

He's a national phenomenon. Nothing like him has been seen or heard literally for centuries. I wonder sometimes if we miss the significance of even the printed way in which our Bibles occur.

Go back to the beginning of Matthew's Gospel and most Bibles then have a blank page. And perhaps on the previous page, as in my Bible, you've got an announcement of the New Testament of our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ. And on the opposite page, there's the end of the Old Testament.

And we very often, I think, miss the significance that between the one page and the next page, there's an interval of approximately 400 years. And 400 years in which to all intents and purposes, God was silent as far as the nation of Israel was concerned. Malachi is the last of the prophets.

And right down from the century, certainly from Moses on, probably earlier than that, you have a series of men of God raised up to prophesy to the nation. Many of them wrote some of the books that carry their names to us. Others are nameless or are just mentioned in passing in some of the historical portions of the Old Testament.

And that had gone on for well nigh a thousand years. But suddenly, God stops. And there's no prophet until you come to John the Baptist.

And he breaks on the nation. They don't know what to make of him. Here's this man, he's come out of obscurity.

He was brought up in the wilderness. And when he must have been about 30 years of age, he suddenly appears on the scene preaching what ostensibly is a very unpalatable message. He's calling men to repent.

And the men that he's calling to repent are Jewish men and women. And it's for all the world as if he's preaching them as though they were Gentiles, not God's chosen people. He's calling upon them to repent.

And with extraordinary effect. I think it's Matthew in his account he tells us they went out to him, Jerusalem and all Judea to listen to him and in many cases to be baptized by him. And it wasn't a question of hiring a coach and going down to the River Jordan.

It's probably 20 miles or so through what is virtually desert country that you have to walk to get down there. And even if some people were left at home to look after the houses or were too old and feeble to make the journey, there must have been a fantastic multitude of people there not only listening to John, but doing what he was exhorting them to do, to repent and be baptized. And what a spread of individuals.

Some of them were mentioned to us here. Some of the soldiers, for example, and he told them what to do. The publicans or tax collectors.

And again, he spoke an apposite word to them. And even the Pharisees. And I don't for a moment imagine that they liked what he told them to do because it seems as if he sent them away very much with a flea in their ear and told them to bring forth fruits, meat for repentance.

No mere right was going to give them credit with God. And he obviously wouldn't baptize them. But the fact of the matter was this, that there were people flocking out probably in their tens of thousands to witness this phenomenon, the like of which they had never known in the whole history of their nation, not simply in their generation, but you can read right through the Old Testament and you do not have a parallel to John the Baptist.

And the query that was going around is this. Who is he? How do you account for him? And you know the various theories that were current. Some said that he was Jeremiah.

Some said that he was Elijah come back from heaven. Others didn't go as far as that. They said he was one of the prophets risen again from the dead.

Some even suggested that possibly this man must be the Messiah himself. And that gives you some impression of the tremendous effect that this man, John the Baptist was having as a result of God's blessing upon him. But I partly asked for that reading for the opening couple of verses.

Let me read them to you. Now, in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Aeturia and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests. Can you think of any comparable collection of villains anywhere in the word of God? Or indeed anywhere in history? The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

And he came into all the country about Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And I asked for that to be read because, well, because of the individuals who are mentioned. One of the things obviously that Luke has in mind in listing them is in order to establish the historicity of what he's saying.

If you don't believe me, he says, you can check my dates. Who were these men? When were they in power? Well, that is exactly the time when John the Baptist came onto the scene and had this amazing effect upon the nation. But when you work your way through them, what a rotten collection of individuals they are.

I want to read something on some of them at any rate. Tiberius Caesar. This is what one historian says about him.

The destinies of Rome were in the hands of one man who was at the same time general in chief of a standing army of about 340,000 men, head of a senate now sunk into a mere court for registering of the commands of Caesar and high priest of a religion which made him a god and prescribed that he be worshiped. That was this man, Tiberius Caesar. And if you want to know what Rome was like, listen to what that same historian goes on to say.

All religions were considered equally false or equally true. The sanctity of marriage had ceased. Female dissipation and the general dissoluteness led at last to an almost entire cessation of marriage.

Abortion and the exposure and murder of newly born children were common and tolerated. Unnatural vices, which even the greatest philosophers practiced, if not advocated, attained proportions which defy description. Now, that's a cold, rational, objective historian.

And when I read those words, I immediately thought, what period of history is he talking about? Rome 2,000 years ago or Britain today? I think you can draw the parallels with almost every phrase that he mentions there. Tiberius Caesar, Pilate being governor of Judea? Well, he's notorious, isn't he? Eventually, you know, even the Romans, after he'd been governor of Judea for about 10 years, they called him back. They reckoned that his rule was too vicious and cruel.

You get a hint of that, don't you, in the gospel? Remember, he sent his troops in to slaughter some of the Jews and it's mentioned later on in Luke's gospel. And of course, he's notorious as far as we're concerned. He's supposed to be the great administrator and the guarantor of justice.

And when the most serious case that he ever had to adjudicate came before him, what he does is sanctimoniously wash his hands of, as he thought, the guilt that otherwise would be upon them by handing the Lord Jesus Christ over to the Jews to be crucified. And then Herod, a poor man had a bad start in life. He came from the family of the Herods.

The Herod of whom we read when Jesus was a baby was his father, and this is the son. And if ever it was a case of like father, like son, it certainly worked out like that in the family of the Herods. Well, Herod was Tetrarch of Galilee and he had this distinction, if you want to call it that.

He'd stolen his own brother's wife. That's what immediately led, of course, to the execution of John the Baptist, as you know, as you're familiar with the rest of the gospel. John the Baptist had the temerity to tell him to his face that what he was doing was wrong in the sight of God.

Not that Herod was going to execute him for that, but you remember what happened, the woman that he was living with, legitimately his brother's wife, she couldn't stand John the Baptist. And after John the Baptist made that, after Herod had that birthday party in which the daughter of Salome, as Josephus tells us her name was, danced before them, he made the foolish promise that the girl could have anything that she wanted to the half of the kingdom. Off she goes to ask her mother, what shall I ask for the head of John the Baptist on a plate? And that's what she came back to demand, and that's what she's got.

So that's Herod. His brother, Philip Tetrarch of Ituria, not the man from whom he'd stolen his wife, but that man then married that Salome who conducted that infamous dance. Lysanias, well, he's the only one of whom we can say nothing because history doesn't seem to know anything about him.

So that's the Roman authority, whether it's far off in the capital in Rome, or whether it's in the local administration there in Judea and the surrounding areas. But what about the Jews? Annas and Caiaphas being high priests, and the very fact that it's spoken of there by Luke in the plural, it immediately should set the warning bells ringing in our mind, because if you know the Old Testament, you're aware of the fact that a high priest was appointed for life. You didn't have a parallel high priesthood, a man being made a high priest, stayed a high priest until he died.

But here, Annas and Caiaphas, who happened to be his son-in-law, they were high priests. And what had happened, of course, was that the Romans didn't like Annas, and so they deposed him. And there was a whole succession of Roman-appointed high priests right down to Caiaphas.

And really, the power behind that particular ecclesiastical throne still was Annas. And you remember how both of those conspired against the Lord Jesus Christ, and were implicitly involved in the accusations against him and in his death. So, as you look at that whole situation, it's a terrible sight that confronts us, isn't it? Whether you look at it from the point of view of the occupying power, whether you consider it from the state of Judaism and the religious leaders of the nation, it's just a mass of corruption and iniquity.

What are you going to do in a situation like that? Well, this is what God does. The word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And it's almost as if God is establishing a principle through that.

That's what he did through Martin Luther. This, relatively speaking, then, an obscure monk lecturing in a newly established university that didn't have any great kudos going for it. And God did something through

him that, as I reminded you, changed literally the face of history.

And what did Martin Luther do? Well, first of all, he nailed 95 theses to a church door for a public debate. But then he began preaching. And writing.

And a tremendous change came over Europe as a result of that. What did he do with George Whitefield and Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland and later with Charles Wesley and John Wesley? It was exactly the same thing. What did he do with David Morgan in 1859? You remember how he records that one night he went to bed like a lamb and he woke up like a lion.

And for two years he stalked the country like a lion. And then he went to bed again and woke up as a lamb. But God had used him so mightily.

You could come on to over a century ago now, 1904. And it's God touching individuals to remember the story of that young woman otherwise who would be lost to history, Flory Evans, in a place that perhaps some of you have still been for your holidays, Newquay in Cardiganshire. And suddenly one Sunday morning, she announces to her minister, I love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart.

And something happened, not just to her, but to the young people. And that was before Evan Roberts came on the scene. And read the story of Evan Roberts.

It's the same thing. God dealing with a man, dealing with him personally. He is a Christian.

He wants to serve God. But there's a mighty in-breaking into his soul of the Spirit of God. And he becomes the great instrument that God is pleased to use in the revival over a century ago.

It is as if I say that God is establishing a principle here. He does something that humanly speaking is ridiculous. He doesn't form an organization or establish a society or a political pressure group or anything like that.

He raises up a man who is to be a preacher of the gospel. And of course, the great task of John the Baptist was simply to be the announcer, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that indeed is what we're told in the remainder of the scripture that was read to us when they were speculating whether or not he were the Christ.

John answered saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the lecher to whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And it's as if what John is being given to see is not only is he the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he's being given to see what the Lord Jesus Christ in turn is going to do.

And sure enough, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes on the scene, it isn't very long before John slips off into obscurity, before ever Herod has him arrested and incarcerated. I suppose most of us, when we read the third chapter of John's gospel, we read it for what it tells us about regeneration and our Lord's interview with Nicodemus. But you know, if you read on to the end of the chapter, some very disconcerted disciples of John the Baptist came to him with a complaint.

Rabbi, they said, he that was with thee beyond Jordan to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth and all men come to him. And you remember how John ends his dealings with them. He must increase, but I must decrease.

He doesn't want the limelight. He doesn't want the center of the stage. He was just the announcer for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

And he has to increase and John has to decrease. He was a man that God could trust not to steal his glory. You remember the story that's told of David Morgan.

He'd been preaching out in the hills, east of Aberystwyth, near Asperty-Astwyth. And he was going back one night and there was a young lad with him who subsequently became a minister. And they were walking back to Coomastwyth.

And about midnight, the lad said to David Morgan, didn't we have great meetings today, Mr. Morgan? And he got no response. And I think he thought that David Morgan hadn't heard him. And so he repeated it.

Mr. Morgan, didn't we have great meetings tonight? And suddenly David Morgan stopped and he spoke. And he said, oh, God would do great things with us if only he could trust us. If only he could trust us not to steal his glory.

And then at the top of his voice, he shouted out, quoting one of the Psalms, not unto us, oh Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory. And here, can I put it like this? Here was a true forerunner of David Morgan. He must increase and I must decrease.

But he announces the Lord Jesus Christ and he tells us something that Christ is going to do. I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the lecture to whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

And as you read through the gospels, you don't read all that much in the teaching of the Lord Jesus about the person, the work, the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are things, but you couldn't say that in the earlier ministry of Jesus, it was one of the central predominant themes. Certainly on the last night that he was with his disciples from chapter 13 of John's gospel onto chapter 16, again and again, he's speaking to them of the Holy Spirit.

You remember, particularly in chapter 14, I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless or leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

And then, do you remember on that resurrection day? You read about it in the 20th chapter of John's gospel and verse 22. The Lord Jesus Christ suddenly appears to his dejected disciples as they're hiding away in the upper room. All these rumors about resurrection, they're aware of those to some extent, but suddenly Jesus appears in the midst of them.

Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed them his hands and his side, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, peace be unto you.

As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. I think that was part of what John was prophesying.

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And if you've got any doubts, you can read on into the opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. And there, you remember how Luke begins the story of

this first history book of the Christian church.

He speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ being assembled together with the disciples, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, he have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized, this is Jesus speaking, ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. And then a verse or two later, ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.

And ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And as you turn over the page and you find yourself in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you're dealing there not with prophecy, you're dealing with history. Here is the fulfillment 10 days later of what the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to the disciples on that occasion, what John the Baptist had again prophesied that the Lord Jesus Christ would do, right as he prophesied it right at the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you were to ask me, what is revival? I would say it's nothing less than God coming and fulfilling that promise. It's veritably a baptism of the Holy Spirit. It can happen with an individual, it should happen with an individual.

And by the grace of God, again, it can happen with a whole community of individuals, with a church, with even an area even wider than the church, sometimes even on a national or even an international scale. It's God coming in the sort of power and with the degree of blessing that they'd not even dreamt of before. There are two great characteristics.

One of them is assurance of salvation. And the second is power in witnessing. You notice in those words of the Lord Jesus to the apostles shortly before he ascended to heaven, you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And the book of the Acts of the Apostles is simply the historical record of that happening. But of course, to mention baptism of the Holy Spirit is to enter a world of controversy. I'm perfectly aware of that.

It's sad, you know, in many ways that the issue has been reduced to a point of argumentation between Christians. And to say, therefore, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not to be equated with regeneration, conversion, becoming a Christian. I group all those phrases together to cover the initiation of a person's experience of Christ.

To deny that is to be looked upon in some quarters as the equivalent of a theological raving lunatic and somebody who's flying in the face of the teaching of scripture and the lessons of history. Because they say that those people who speak of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as something that isn't identical with regeneration, it's ridiculous. Put it like that, they say, and immediately you've got two divisions of Christians.

You've got the premier league and then you've got the rest of people. And that, of course, is something that we cannot contemplate. And so they argue and you've got some very eminent names.

It's not my purpose tonight to name and shame people. I trust you assume that to be right. But you have some very eminent names that would take that position.

And equally, of course, you've got some very eminent names that would totally deny that position. And although not an eminent name, I'd want to associate myself with them. Because, you see, it surely is impossible to say that to be baptized with the Holy Spirit is to be equated with regeneration.

It must be something distinct from it. It must be something that logically and maybe chronologically is distinct from it. You see, what is regeneration? When did regeneration begin? Is it a New Testament phenomenon? Surely not only New Testament.

Any person who has gone to heaven, whether he be somebody from the New Testament period and subsequently or one of the Old Testament believers has gone to heaven because of that working of the Spirit of God, which resulted in him coming from death to life and being born of the Spirit of God. The disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, while he was here on earth, they were regenerate men. Read our Lord's high priestly prayer in John chapter 17, if you're in any doubt about that.

And with the exception of Judas Iscariot, that clearly is something that encompasses all the Lord's disciples. And then when you think of what it was that happened to the Lord Jesus Christ when he was baptized, does that relate to this whole issue at all? I suggest it does. You remember how we're told that when the Lord Jesus Christ was baptized, something remarkable happened.

There was a voice from heaven, clearly the voice of God the Father, and he spoke, thou art my beloved son or this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And then as our Lord was coming up out of the water, so there was the Holy Spirit who had taken to himself the form of a bird, a dove, fluttering down, resting on our Lord's shoulder. And what was the significance of that? Wasn't it that here the Lord Jesus Christ is being equipped for his work as Messiah? You know, sometimes, I wonder if you've ever heard stories about the miracles that the boy Jesus performed.

Have you heard of that one, of one day he was playing with clay and mud and he actually fashioned it into the form of a little sparrow? And suddenly the mud sparrow flapped its wings and flew away. And people say there is an example of the miracle working powers of even the boy Jesus Christ. Now, isn't it significant that things like that are not recorded in the scripture? Why are they not recorded? Because they didn't happen.

Jesus didn't preach any sermons before he was baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit. He certainly didn't perform any miracles. But again, and perhaps Luke's gospel is the best of all the gospels for bringing this home to you.

You remember what happens immediately after his baptism. Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. And there he is tempted by the devil.

And at the end of that, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. There went out the fame of him through all the region round about. And you recall how immediately almost he comes to his home town of Nazareth.

And what does he do? He is on the Sabbath day. He is there in the synagogue as had been his custom. And he is going to preach.

And he takes the scroll that is given to him. We would describe it as Isaiah chapter 61, verse 1. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor and so on. And then he closes the book, gives it again to the minister, sits down and this is what he says.

This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. So, what happened when our Lord was baptized was he was sealed by God with the Spirit. God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him, so John tells us in his gospel.

Him hath God the Father sealed. And from then on, what Christ does, he does in the power of the Spirit. And there's amazing things that happen.

And yet I want to state this carefully because it could easily be misunderstood. Do you remember one of the promises that Jesus made to his disciples on that last night that he was with them? He said, greater things than these shall ye do. And he's speaking of what's going to happen after he has died, after he has risen from the dead, after he has ascended to heaven.

And he's really predicting what we can go on and read is actually happening in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Did Jesus ever preach a sermon that resulted in 3,000 converts? Peter did. Oh, there were miracles that the Lord Jesus Christ performed that you have no record of any of the apostles or at least not to the degree and in the numbers that we read of them in the case of Jesus, you don't have that sort of comparison between the Gospels and Acts.

But when it comes to the preaching of the apostles and the expansion of the church, there's almost a sense, and this is why I want to express it carefully, there's almost a sense in which even the ministry of Jesus pales into statistical insignificance. Far greater things happen through the apostles when it comes to conversion of sinners. Oh, there were crowds that followed Jesus, but where were they at the cross? Laughing at him, jeering at him, even his own disciples fled for their lives.

But the story of the Acts of the Apostles is of growth and blessing and expansion, persecution, yes, but how do you explain it? Well, isn't it what our Lord had promised? You shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. And so I say again, if you were to ask me what is the essence of revival, I would want to use this word or this phrase that Christians of former generations used to use unselfconsciously. They would speak of a man having been baptized with the Holy Spirit, and they weren't identifying him as a charismatic or a Pentecostal of some variety or another.

They were saying something has happened to that man. He knows God in a way that he never knew him in before. There's a power of God resting upon him, and God is using him mightily.

It's what the old Methodist fathers used to look for in young men who were aspiring to be preachers. Has he had the baptism yet? Has the baptism of fire come upon him? And they would often send a man away to seek God until that happened. And what revival is, is that coming not just to the great and the mighty men of Christian history such as I've been partly referring to, it comes to ordinary people.

Because as you remember, Peter makes quite clear as he preaches that mighty sermon on the day of Pentecost. Repent, he says, be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the promises unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

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