

# (Revival) Part 1 - Phenomena

by Martyn-Lloyd Jones

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*Martyn-Lloyd Jones explores the nature and effects of revival, addressing its phenomena and the varied reactions it elicits from both believers and non-believers.*

**Duration:** 38:20

**Scripture:** Joel 2:28, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:12-13, Acts 2:15

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the purpose and object of the Holy Spirit's work in the world. He emphasizes that the Holy Spirit's work is meant to draw attention to God and His kingdom through unusual phenomena. The preacher also highlights that the Holy Spirit affects the whole person, not just their emotions or intellect. He uses the example of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, who were mistaken for being drunk because of the extraordinary things happening to them. The preacher concludes by referencing the prophecy of Joel, where God promises to pour out His Spirit on all flesh in the last days.

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## Transcript

The words to which I should like to call your attention this morning are to be found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 12 and 13. Verses 12 and 13 in the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this? Others mocking said, these men are full of new wine.

Now we've been considering together on the last Sunday mornings this great phenomenon that has been seen in the Christian church from time to time throughout the centuries, and to which we give the name of revival, or a spiritual awakening, or a visitation of the Spirit of God. We've looked at it as we see it described in the scriptures. We've looked at its character in general.

We've looked at its object and its purpose. And we have seen clearly that this is a great and a striking phenomenon, which is designed to revive the church, and secondarily to call the attention of the world that is outside, that men and women may be led and brought to salvation. It is a kind of sign that God gives in this way, in order to confirm his work in the church and establish his people, and build them up and encourage them, and at the same time, as I say, it overflows in mighty blessing to those who are without.

Now then, having described it in that way, and having seen its leading features and characteristics, and especially having considered last Sunday morning what is its object and its purpose, it seems to me that

the next logical step is this, is to ask this question. What effect then does it have, and especially upon those who are without? It is meant to let all the nations of the world know that the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, as we saw it there in the book of Joshua. But the question arises at once, does it have that effect? Are all convinced by it? And it is in order that we may consider that question, I call your attention to this famous and well-known section in the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Here an answer is given to that question, which is of very great value to us, and should be of urgent concern to all who are looking for and longing for revival. Here at Inuit is a possible reaction, and we find it not only here but elsewhere in the Bible, and as you read the history of the church and of revivals throughout the centuries, you find that this kind of thing is constantly repeated. Here is one effect at Inuit.

They were all amazed and were in doubt saying one to another, what meaneth this? What is this? You remember the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples and others with them there in the upper room, upon the hundred and twenty, and as the result of this mighty outpouring of the Spirit that came upon them, they began to speak in other tongues, and undoubtedly there were many other similar phenomena as well. And this was noised abroad, and the people gathered together from everywhere and observing and hearing this, they said, what meaneth this? What is this? They were amazed, some doubted, and these said, what meaneth this? Others mocking said, these men are full of new wine, they're drunk. Now there, you see, is a reaction on the part of certain people to this mighty phenomenon which takes place when God pours forth His Spirit.

Now this, I say, is a reaction which is due, as we have told here so plainly in the context, to a certain phenomena that may sometimes accompany revivals. It is no, there is no doubt at all, but that it was the phenomena that accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost that led to this reaction. It was this speaking in tongues and other phenomena, I say.

That was the thing that attracted and caused people to doubt and to be amazed and some to mock and to say that this was just due to the fact that these men were full of new wine. Well now, in the history of revivals, you will find the same sort of reaction, practically without any exception at all. There are people who disapprove of the whole notion of revival.

There are people like that in the Christian Church, as well as people who are outside the Christian Church. So it seems to me that it is very important that we should deal with this question of the phenomena. Now they can be subdivided into various groups.

First, there are the tendencies, undoubtedly, in most revivals to an emotional element. I don't think there's ever been a revival but that that has been present. Some people have been moved very deeply and profoundly and sometimes others in a very excitable manner during a period of revival.

That is just a sheer fact which I am putting before you. I'm going to deal with possible explanations in a moment, but I'm simply collecting the facts at the moment. But there are other phenomena also, and it is these others that generally have been the subject of most criticisms.

When I say phenomena, I mean that things happen over and above the fact that large numbers of people are awakened and large numbers of members of the Church are aroused and are quickened. I mean over and above the fact that thousands of people are converted, as I have been indicating to you. Now the phenomena I'm talking about are in addition to all that.

And this question of the additional phenomena is a very important and indeed a very fascinating one. Now let me make this clear. These phenomena do not always manifest themselves in a revival.

You can have a revival without the phenomena at all. But it is generally speaking true to say that in most revivals these phenomena do come into the picture. Now take for instance a very interesting fact like this.

Take a hundred years ago. I have reminded you repeatedly that this revival was experienced in the United States of America, in Northern Ireland, in Wales, in Scotland, and in partially in other countries. Now this is an interesting fact.

These additional phenomena that we're going to consider were very little in evidence in the United States. They were very little in evidence in Wales. They were almost non-existent in Scotland, but they were very marked and very striking in Northern Ireland.

Now there is an interesting fact before we go any further. Establishing the point I've just been making, that these phenomena are not essential to revival. They are not invariably present.

They may be, they may not be. So we've got to keep that in our minds. You can have a revival without these phenomena at all.

And yet it is true to say on the whole that they tend to be present when there is a revival. Though the extent and so on varies tremendously from district to district and from country to country. Well now then, what are these phenomena to which I am referring? It seems to me that the best way to classify them is to put them under two headings.

First of all, certain physical phenomena. And the physical phenomena are these. Under the influence of this mighty power, people may literally fall to the ground under conviction of sin.

Literally fall to the ground and or faint and remain perhaps for a considerable time in a state of unconsciousness. Now in the revival in 1859 in Northern Ireland, they referred to this as being struck. Because it exactly as if a person had been literally struck or hit upon the head and they fell to the ground in a state of complete unconsciousness.

This has frequently happened in revivals in other places and in different centuries. Then there are people who seem to go into trances. They're obviously in a state of trance.

They may be seated or they may be standing and they're looking into the distance. Obviously seeing something and yet they're completely unconscious. They're not aware of their surroundings.

They don't seem to be able to see anything nor to hear anything that's rounded about them. They're evidently seeing something with a spiritual eye which is not visible to others in a state of trance. It's the only word which we can imply with respect to it.

Well now there are some of the physical phenomena. There are others but there is no purpose in my giving you a full or a detailed list. There are a whole group of phenomena which belong thus to the realm of the physical and which have often been regarded as purely physical and have even been treated medically as purely physical phenomena.

Now you'll never read the story of a revival without coming across that. And those of you who have been reading and I trust you all have the books on the revival in Northern Ireland a century ago will have come

across this because as I say it was a very very prominent feature in that revival. But then in addition to these physical phenomena there are also certain mental phenomena.

What do I mean by mental phenomena? Well I mean things now which do not so much affect the body as clearly affect the mind. I am referring to for instance things like this. The most extraordinary gift of speech is given to people during revivals.

You hear of this kind of thing. People who if they did ever take part in prayer at all in the church were very halting and very hesitant. Suddenly begin to pray with an amazing eloquence with extraordinary language that they were never capable of before.

There are many instances of this. I was talking to a man only about two or three weeks ago who well remembered the revival of 1904 and five in Wales and he was telling me what happened to his own minister. They'd had this man as minister in that church for a number of years.

He was an able man, always preached to what they would call a good and a sound sermon but was always halting and hesitant. Coughed a lot. He was a poor speaker in every way in every respect apart from his matter.

Well this man attended a presbytery meeting one day. He'd been to the presbytery on similar occasions many many times. He went to this particular presbytery and in the presbytery reports were given by numbers of other ministers of the events which had been taking place in their churches during the revival.

This man listened and he came back to his own church completely transformed as a preacher. He went into his pulpit the next Sunday and they rarely could scarcely believe he was the same man. All the hesitation had gone.

All the impediment had disappeared. He spoke with freedom, with authority and with power such as they'd never known from him before. Well now that kind of thing, a gift of speech is given in prayer or in conversation or in description.

Not only that, there is very often a gift of prophecy given. I mean by that a literal ability to foretell the future. Now we must face these things because it does seem to me that we are in grave danger with all our learning and knowledge of quenching the spirit.

I am putting facts before you. You will find this phenomenon of prophecy, this ability to foretell the future, frequently present. It takes many forms.

I knew a man personally who had had this gift again in 1904 and 5. It disappeared completely afterwards but he was told beforehand of something that was going to happen in his church, not once but morning by morning, awakened out of his sleep at half past two in the morning and given direct and exact information of something that was going to happen during that day and it did happen. There's another part of this mental phenomenon. And then you get knowledge given to people which is quite inexplicable.

There were cases in Northern Ireland for instance of people who couldn't read, who couldn't write, who'd never been able to read the Bible. But suddenly they were given an ability to find places in the Bible though they still couldn't read and to make known the contents. Well I could keep you endlessly and for hours in giving further illustrations along this particular line.

Abilities have been given, gift of discrimination, gift of understanding, gift of planning. Here I say in this realm of the mental, quite astonishing powers have certainly been given to people for a temporary period. Well now then there are the main phenomena to which I'm directing your attention, the physical and the mental.

These things occur, may occur during a period of revival. And here is the confrontations. What is this? How do you explain it? Now that's why I'm putting it in the context of Acts 2. You see this thing happened, the Holy Spirit was poured out and the results followed and here are these people at Jerusalem gathering together and saying what meaneth this? What is this? And some said what are you asking a question for? The thing's perfectly obvious.

These men are full of new wine, they're drunk. Obvious explanation. Ah, and people have continued to be like that throughout the centuries.

There are various explanations that are put forward. They were put forward a hundred years ago as they've always been put forward in every period of revival and they are still being put forward today. And that is why I'm calling attention to all this.

There are people I say who dismiss and denounce the whole notion of revival because of these phenomena and therefore when they're exhorted to pray for revival they say most certainly not. We don't want that sort of thing. We are not interested in that type of experience.

And thus without realizing it they're often conscious, they're often guilty of quenching the spirit. Now then let us look at some of the explanations that are put forward and especially today. And may I add this? That I am particularly concerned about this because as you know there is great interest in this matter at the present time.

And I know of nothing that is such a complete answer to some of these modern psychologists who would explain conversion and everything else along their physical lines. There is nothing which is such a complete answer to them particularly as revivals. Now then let me show you what I mean.

There are some who would suggest that all this is just some form or kind of what is now called brainwashing. You know how they put it. They compare it with a technique that is being implied at the present time by the communists.

They compare it with what was so obviously implied by a man like Hitler in pre-war Germany and even during the war in that country. What is this they say? Well they say this is quite obvious. What is happening here is this.

That the minds of these people are being bombarded. They're gradually being worn down. They're brought together in crowds or they're dealt with and kept in cells and they're given insufficient sleep and insufficient food.

Everything is done to break down these people and their resistance. And you speak at them. You shout at them.

You bombard their minds and then when you've brought them to the point of collapse you do it still more with a greater intensity of pressure and they do collapse. And then in the state of collapse it's the simplest thing in the world to indoctrinate them. You can insinuate your own teaching into their minds and they will

believe it and accept it.

They'll become devotees of it and they will go out and they will try to convert others in turn. Well now there is their explanation. Let's be clear about this.

That kind of thing of course can be done and is being done. There is no question at all that that is precisely what Hitler did. There is no doubt at all that that is exactly what the communists are doing at the present time.

By means of a given technique they can thus break down the resistance of people's minds and insinuate their own doctrines into them. Well now here is the suggestion. The suggestion that is put forward is you see that what happens during these periods of revival is exactly the same thing.

Well now then how do we deal with this? Well let me make this quite plain and clear. I am concerned only to deal with revival. I am not concerned to deal with evangelistic campaigns.

It's very important we should draw that distinction and for this reason that in evangelistic campaigns techniques are used and used deliberately but not in revival. Now I do want to underline and emphasize that difference. I am concerned only about revival where no techniques are used at all.

My argument has reference to nothing but that. I'm not concerned at this moment this morning to deal with what happens in evangelistic campaigns. There is a clear distinction to be drawn.

So I go on and put it like this. This suggestion with regard to brainwashing to give it its general term completely fails in the matter of revival because it completely fails to explain the beginning of revival. Now take for instance what happened in Northern Ireland.

There it happened in the case of one man to start with. It was exactly the same in the United States. It all started in just one man.

There was no bombardment of the mind of this man. None at all. There was no technique employed.

It was just one man who himself became convicted of sin and was converted and then began to feel an impulse that he should tell others about it. There were no large crowds. There were no special techniques employed.

None whatsoever. That is the amazing thing about the story that it was just one man and then two others joining him and they prayed together for months. Just the three of them in a prayer meeting.

No bombardment of the mind at all. No particular technique brought to play with a desired result and effect in their minds. Nothing at all.

Just three men prayed and on and on it went for months and slowly others began to come in. Now this suggestion, this attempted explanation, fails completely to account for the beginning and the origin of a revival. Another thing it fails to explain is this.

That it should happen in several countries at exactly the same time. That was not only true a hundred years ago. It was true two hundred years ago when you had that great revival under Jonathan Edwards.

They were all amazed and were in doubt saying one to another what mean of this. Others mocking said these men be full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice and said unto them ye men of and all that dwell at Jerusalem be this known unto you and hearken to my words.

Then he brings out the negative. These are not drunken as ye suppose seeing it is but the third hour of the day. He deals first with the false explanations and he ridicules them.

He shows how utterly impossible they are and then he proceeds to the true explanation which is this. These are not drunken as ye suppose seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is what? Well this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

And he goes on to quote the prophecy of Joel. Let me put it to you like this. What is the true explanation? The first thing we have to do is to remind you that even saintly ministers of God have disagreed amongst themselves about the explanation of these phenomena.

The men in whose parish the revival began in Northern Ireland a hundred years ago the reverend J. H. Moore he disliked the phenomena and he discouraged them and there were practically none of them in their parish of colour. But there were others who didn't take the same view. And there have always been differences of opinion.

Jonathan Edwards defended them. He believed that in the main they were of the spirit of God. There was a man called John Berridge who preached in East Anglia two hundred years ago.

He even encouraged them. He believed they were a remarkable sign of the spirit of God. Wesley and Whitfield on the other hand were unhappy about them and uncertain about them.

I say this that we may see that this isn't a simple matter and that it behoves us all to approach the matter with caution and above all with reverence and with godly fear lest we may make foolish statements which we will regret later and become guilty of quenching the spirit. How do we approach it? Well let's approach it from the scripture. Has the scripture anything to tell us about this? Well of course it has.

What does it tell us? Well go back to your Old Testament and read there about the prophets. How did these men receive their messages and how did they deliver them? And the records tell us that they were in the spirit or a spirit came upon them. They were in a state of ecstasy.

They were sometimes in a state of trance. They were in an exalted mood. Read the stories about King Saul for instance.

How the gift came upon them and the people said it became a common saying. Is Saul also amongst the prophets? A spirit of prophecy. It's perfectly clear there.

Indeed there is another fact which is generally put in connection with this. Sometimes this spirit could be encouraged by the playing of music. How have you accounted for the prophecies? Peter tells us prophecy is not of any private interpretation but holy men of God speak as they were moved or carried along by the Holy Ghost.

How did the prophecy come? How did this divine afflators come to the men? Be careful my friends lest you dismiss the prophets and the whole phenomenon of prophecy as we have it in the Old Testament with your intellectualism. They were certainly laid hold of. They knew something about an ecstatic condition.

But that's the Old Testament come to the new. Look what happened here. Look at what happened to these disciples themselves, these apostles and these other people.

Something so extraordinary happened that to certain people standing around they appear to be drunk. This is nothing but drunkenness. This is sheer madness.

And often this charge of madness has been brought forward. The very phenomena which are recorded in the second chapter of Acts. And then take the apostles explanation.

He says this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. This is what Joel said was going to happen. It shall come to pass in the last day saith God I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh.

The spirit had been given before but he'd not been poured out like this before. And a man here and another man there. I will pour out.

It'll be something overwhelming. It'll be en masse as it were. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams.

And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit and they shall prophesy. And it happened to the mill girls in Northern Ireland. Poor girls who'd been brought up in poverty and penury who were ignorant and who'd had practically no education.

They suddenly began to prophesy. They displayed amazing knowledge and were able to speak in an unusual manner. Doesn't it rather look as if the prophet Joel had anticipated this? Had prophesied that it was going to happen? Young men, young women, visions, dreams, prophecies, old men dreaming dreams.

That's what's happening said Peter. This is the pouring out of the spirit of God. And the results are exactly as they were prophesied.

But there are other effects. You will read in the 10th chapter of Acts in verse 10 that Peter was upon a certain housetop and that he was in a trance. The apostle Peter in a trance.

And he had a vision. The sheets sank down with the various beasts you remember. You will read in Acts 16 about the apostle Paul that he wanted to go and preach in Asher.

The spirit prohibited him. He then wanted to go to Bithynia. The spirit wouldn't let him.

And then he had a vision in the night. The men of Macedonia, the apostle Paul had a vision. You will read in Acts 22 that he says this.

I was in a trance. Let's be careful my dear friends lest I say with our supposed scientific knowledge we be found to deny the scripture. When the spirit comes upon a man he may be in a trance.

And then you've got nothing to do but to read 1 Corinthians chapter 12 to 14. And to see that there were all kinds of phenomena in the church of Corinth. And the apostle has to instruct them and guide them and restrain them and to say that everything must be done decently and in order.

Now there is the testimony of the scripture. Very well what is our attempt at an explanation? What is our conclusion? Let me put them in a series of propositions to you. Doesn't it seem clear and obvious that in this way God is calling attention to himself and his own work? By unusual phenomena.

There is nothing that attracts such attention as this kind of thing. And it is used of God in the extension of his kingdom to attract, to call the attention of people. I'm sure there is that element.

But secondly, we must never forget that the Holy Spirit affects the whole person. Other influences do. Any powerful stimulus affects the whole person.

Have you listened on your wireless to the broadcasts of football matches and so on, or have you been to such places? Haven't you seen people under the excitement shouting until they lose their voices? They stand up and wave their handkerchiefs. They hit people, they don't know what they're doing. Now it's not regarded as strange nor unusual when it happens in a football match.

But because it should happen in a revival people say, ah, this is all psychological. Haven't you seen people weeping in theatres and in cinemas? Haven't you seen people going beside themselves under the influence of music? Of course. You see, man is body, soul and spirit.

And you can't divide these. And anything which comes powerfully to any part of men is liable to affect the other parts of men. We all know what it is for our bodies to affect our minds.

If you're not feeling well, if you're bilious or if you're ill, your mind doesn't function so well. On the other hand if something happens to your mind it affects your body. If suddenly you're stimulated your whole body seems fit and strong and powerful.

You wouldn't have believed it at the beginning. Let's be very careful that we don't do violence to man's very nature and constitution. Man therefore reacts as a whole.

And it is just folly to expect that he can react in the realm of the spiritual without anything at all happening to the rest of him, to the soul and to the body. And so we must expect this kind of thing in a period of revival. We must expect different persons to react in a different way.

We've got a perfect proof of that of course in the scriptures themselves. The same Holy Spirit inspired Paul and Peter and John. And yet I could tell you every time if you read out a few verses to me I could tell you which of the three had written them.

The same Holy Spirit inspired the three. Yes pretty, the message comes to us through the men that have been used. Through their brains, through their temperament, through their mentality.

That's not done away well. You can see the different style, the different representation. The same spirit but the manifestations differ.

So it is in revival. And thus you see you would expect children in a time of revival to react more violently than adults. You would expect certain types of persons to react more violently than others because they're their type of person.

And so it proves to be the case. All therefore that can be proved is this, that these phenomena are indicative of the fact that some very powerful stimulus is in operation. Something is happening which is so powerful that the very physical frame is involved.

I go on to say that we must remember that the themselves. The phenomena therefore should not be sought, they should not be encouraged, they should not be boasted of. The phenomena if I may use a modern term are epiphenomena.

Epiphenomena. Incidental, occasional concomitance and not a vital essential part. And that is why the phenomena should tend to disappear as the revival goes on.

And actually they have generally done that in practice. And I would not hesitate to add this. That sometimes there are phenomena in connection with revivals which seem to me to be due to nothing but to a sheer breakdown of the physical frame.

You do get some people who become hysterical, actually hysterical in revival. There are people who manifest other psychic phenomena. There's no doubt about this it seems to me.

But I don't think there's any difficulty in explaining this. The body is weak. Some bodies are weaker than other bodies.

And so when this mighty spiritual power comes there are certain bodies that break down and they should be helped. They should be dealt with in a semi-medical manner. They should be prayed for.

They should be pacified. And that is how these great leaders of revival have always dealt with them. But let us also remember this.

Whenever the spirit of God is working in mighty power the devil always seeks his opportunity. If he can discredit it he will. And he has always tried to do so.

He's tried to bring in his counterfeits. He's tried to drive people to excesses. And he's often succeeded with particular individuals.

That is why you see you have so much in the Bible about testing the spirits and proving the spirits. We mustn't be misled. There are tests which are given and it is our business always to imply them.

So I would conclude by saying that the phenomena are not essential to revival. They're not vital to revival. They are not religious in and of themselves.

I believe that in their origin they're essentially of the spirit of God. But we must always allow for the fact that because of the very frailty of human nature and of our physical frames you will always have the tendency to an admixture partly along the physical, partly along the psychic, and partly as the result of the devil. But is there anything which is so foolish or ridiculous as to dismiss the whole because of the character of a very, very small proportion.

If you begin to do that you'll have to dismiss the whole of your new testament. Because here we are told that the other forces are ever trying to come in and we must realize the true and understand it and withstand the other. The new testament teaches us to expect this and to be on guard against the false and the spurious.

Very well then, we end by saying this. These phenomena as the whole revival is as the apostle Peter says, the result of an outpouring of the spirit of God. We mustn't seek phenomena and strange experiences.

What we must seek is the manifestation of God's glory and his power and his might. What we must seek is reviving. What we must seek is an outpouring of the spirit of God upon us.

And when that comes it will be so amazing that strange and unusual things may happen. But we shall always know that it is God moving amongst us. And we shall be ready to identify the false, the spurious, that which indeed belongs even to the evil spirit and restrain it.

Anybody who tries to work up phenomena is a tool of the devil. He's putting himself into the position of the psychic and the psychological. No, no, we mustn't be concerned about these things.

We must keep our eyes on the glory of God and the outpouring of the spirit and leave it to God in his sovereign wisdom to decide whether to grant these occasional concomitants or not. There should be no difficulty about differentiating between the work of the spirit and the work of fanatical men and the work of these unseen forces and powers and the work of the devil himself. Well, let us be careful lest we quench the spirit and let us keep our eyes fixed upon the glory of God and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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