

Near-Fatal Jellyfish Attack Turns Kiwi Atheist Into Evangelist

“Heathen” Ian McCormack claims to have died after being attacked in the Indian Ocean and says God’s love sent him back
Ian McCormack claims to have died—and had a vision of heaven and hell—before returning to life. Now the former self-proclaimed atheist is promoting a fresh vision for revival and shared his testimony on a recent tour of Great Britain.

It was while living on Mauritius, an island paradise in the Indian Ocean, that McCormack had his life-changing experience in 1982. While diving at night for lobster and fish, he was horribly stung five times by the highly venomous Box Jellyfish. The Sea Wasp, as the jellyfish also is known, has a bell-shaped body and tentacles so transparent as to be almost invisible. A fully grown specimen (about the size of a basketball) has enough poison to kill 60 adults.

“It felt like thousands of volts of electricity,” McCormack said. “My forearm was swollen like a balloon, and where the tentacles had stung, there were burn-like blisters across my arm. I felt on fire as the poison began moving round my body.”

McCormack was in complete paralysis by the time an ambulance arrived to transport him. Within a few minutes of reaching the hospital, it was too late for medicine to save him. A nurse who treated him discovered that McCormack had no pulse and that his veins had collapsed. He later would be told by hospital staff that he was clinically dead for 15 minutes before he revived without medical intervention.

While in that state, McCormack claims he saw startling visions of heaven and hell—even though he was an atheist, a self-proclaimed “full-blown heathen” at the time. Not surprisingly, the doctors and nurses recoiled in shock when he came back to life.

“I had an experience that totally transformed my life when the tangible love of God came into my heart. It brought me to tears,” he said.

Since then, McCormack, a 45-year-old New Zealander, has been a pastor in the Assemblies of God, a missionary among the poor of Asia, and now travels the world sharing his story. His strange and chilling testimony has gone around the world via audiotape and videotape. He has found British Christians to be hungry to win souls and already beginning to see “quite a number” of young people turning to Christ.

He became aware of how recent renewal movements have emerged from former countries that once were British colonies, such as Canada, South Africa and Australia. “Wherever England planted, those nations are still lighthouses for Christendom,” he told Charisma.

Pointing out that many of today’s key revivalists also came from parts of the British Commonwealth, McCormack said he believes the old empire will strike back—no longer colonizing nations by force but “colonizing with the gospel.” He has shared his own remarkable experiences with audiences in a range of locations across England and Scotland—from pubs and restaurants to churches and concert halls.

While traveling around the country from the fall of 2001 to

spring 2002, McCormack noticed that a much greater emphasis was being placed on evangelism than in the mid-1990s when the Toronto Blessing was hitting the nation's churches.

"That was a time of healing for the body of time of real closeness to Jesus," he explained. "Some of the churches have progressed from that—and are now in a position where they want to reach out."

He cites the London-based Pentecostal church Kensington Temple as an example of a new English "fire." The church had booked the city's world famous Royal Albert Hall for an Easter Sunday outreach—but the guest speaker could not make it in time. Kensington Temple senior pastor Colin Dye invited McCormack to step in.

"Thousands of people turned up to the meeting, and 200 got saved. Colin Dye ministered, and a bunch of miracles took place," McCormack said. The event also was recorded for later transmission to other countries.

"I got to speak to more people on Easter Sunday than I would in two months of ministry across the United Kingdom," McCormack said.

Touring the United Kingdom has encouraged him that a wave of revival could flow from Great Britain. "Some of the greatest moves of God I've seen have been in England," he said. "I feel the U.K. has a great place in the kingdom of God.

"It's still going to be a sending place of ministries to the world—and it has a depth of maturity, character, and of people and resources that can be powerfully used."

More about McCormack's dramatic physical recovery is available at his Web site, .

Clive Price in England