

God Gives Pastor Vision of European Revival on Same Spot Where Hitler Indoctrinated Thousands

Ben Fitzgerald believes that God is waking the sleeping, dormant churches of Europe to a new era of revival. A native Australian who pastored at Bethel Church in Redding, California, Fitzgerald may not have seemed like the natural pick to lead a European awakening. But in 2014, God gave him a prophetic vision that forever changed the trajectory of his life.

Fitzgerald was speaking at a 2014 conference in Nuremberg, Germany. While there, he and his friend Todd White felt oddly compelled to visit the field where Adolf Hitler had held Nazi rallies decades earlier. On that field, Hitler had indoctrinated tens of thousands of youth into the lies behind his murderous regime.

On that same field, God gave Fitzgerald a vision to impact millions of European lives. In the vision—which he and White shared—Fitzgerald says he saw the faces of people from every nation in Europe, and each person asked the same question: “God, when are you going to take back Europe?”

“It changed the direction of my future,” Fitzgerald says. “I knew my whole life was going to be different, and I had to adopt this vision. I told Todd, ‘We need to do something here. We need to do something in Europe.’”

“Not long after that, I actually had a dream where I was on my knees, praying for someone in Europe,” Fitzgerald says. “In the dream, [this person] held a sign above them that said, ‘No Plan B.’ I believe the Lord was asking me, ‘Will you give

yourself to this and not look back?’ Now that I am in Europe, I feel a sense of destiny, where it has come to an hour when God will bring millions to Him.”

Fitzgerald moved to Germany soon afterward and founded the ministry Awakening Europe, which is dedicated to seeing the entire continent transformed by the gospel. Annual events the ministry has spearheaded have led to hundreds of thousands attending and being trained in evangelism. And Fitzgerald’s efforts are only a small part of how the Holy Spirit is moving mightily in Europe.

The efforts of other kingdom leaders like Jean-Luc Trachsel of the International Association of Healing Rooms; Stephan Christiansen, co-founder of Jesus Revolution in Norway; the Gospel Forum’s Peter and Markus Wenz and others are beginning to reap a huge harvest of souls in Europe. Through training and discipleship programs, Spirit-filled churches and ministries like these, the Holy Spirit is sparking a transformative move of God.

Trachsel, who is also a core team member of Europe Shall Be Saved, believes the recent work of Spirit-filled Christians has put the continent on the brink of revival.

“It’s not yet a revival, but it’s the beginning of a very visible and powerful move of the Holy Spirit,” Trachsel says. “It’s a brand-new season, and God is doing something wonderful here in Europe.”

It’s an incredible turnaround in just a short time.

“A few years ago, the church here was dead,” Trachsel says. “This was the most difficult region in the world to bring the gospel. We all passed through this dark time, and by fighting, fasting and praying, something started to shift, and the Holy Spirit started doing some new things. What we are seeing now is that people are so hungry and thirsty for God here, and it’s happening in many denominations, not just in the

charismatic circles.”

Youth-Led Revival

Europe still has several huge obstacles to overcome en route to revival: the rapid decline of mainline denominations, the massive influx of Muslims and other world-wide religions in recent years, and the overall feeling of hopelessness and desperation Fitzgerald says many Europeans needlessly shoulder every day. Furthermore, economies on the verge of collapse and skyrocketing unemployment rates in many countries are a constant source of fear, if not panic.

“When you think about nations in Europe, particularly in the south, they have never really recovered from the financial crisis of 2008,” says Christiansen. “You have nations like Spain, Italy and Greece [where] you talk about a lost generation, where many believe they have no hope and no future. You have huge unemployment there, and that’s just one of the many tools of the enemy.”

A recent Pew Research Study revealed that 18 percent of Western Europeans are church-attending Christians, while 46 percent are non-practicing Christians. Another 24 percent are “religiously unaffiliated.” Those numbers weren’t satisfactory for Trachsel, who quickly assessed that time was running short.

In 2016, he called key leaders from around the world to meet for a roundtable discussion on how to better reach Europe for Christ. Laying down their own agendas at the last minute to attend, kingdom warriors like Fitzgerald, Heidi Baker, Paul and Sue Manwaring, Peter and Markus Wenz, and Daniel Kolenda converged on Switzerland and devised a strategy to bring 100 million souls to Christ.

“As we are taking the gospel to the people of Europe, we are discovering that these people are hungry and thirsty for God,” Trachsel says. “As they are coming into His presence, the Holy

Spirit is coming upon them, something they've never experienced before. And, as the Holy Spirit is coming to them, the Holy Spirit is telling them to go to the mission field. That's where we are seeing a huge difference."

Other ministries like Jesus Revolution are sending individuals into the mission field in droves. Founded in 1997 in Norway, Jesus Revolution has targeted the youth of Europe with the gospel for the past 22 years. Programs devised by founders Stephan and Anne Christiansen include evangelism and concert teams that tour across Europe, discipleship programs, summer mission tours and even New Year's festivals.

As a result, Jesus Revolution has sent out more than 8,000 young people from 30 nations to spread the gospel through its summer teams program. This summer's program—titled "Impact the Alps"—will bring students to Stuttgart, Germany, for five days of teaching, training and workshops. The ministry will then send groups of students to Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Italy to share the gospel on the streets.

"What we're really about is releasing a whole army of gospel preachers who make Jesus available for young people," Stephan Christiansen says. "What we have seen through the years is that believing, trusting and releasing young people to preach the gospel has really been the key to release its power."

Christiansen says his ministry has seen thousands of European young people come to the Lord.

"There are so many open doors, and so many young people want to respond to the call of salvation," Christiansen says. "What we are doing at Jesus Revolution is to mobilize the body of Christ to stand together for massive evangelization. We do that at many different levels, through our training schools and good old-fashioned revival crusades. We had an event in Rome two years ago where we had 6,000 people hit the streets, and we saw about 1,500 young people receive Jesus in that

scenario and several hundred healings take place. They're hungry, but the need for workers has never been greater."

Transformative Prayers

Another indication of potential revival in Europe in recent years is the emergence of numerous houses of prayer, similar to the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, and others found throughout the U.S. Houses of prayer have spread to most major European cities, including Brussels, Belgium; Wien and Vienna, Austria; Berlin, Munich and Heidelberg, Germany; Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland; Stockholm, Sweden; and Reykjavik, Iceland. Additional 24/7 houses of prayer have even opened in Prague, Czech Republic; Oslo, Norway; and Warsaw, Poland.

Dr. Johannes Hartl founded the International House of Prayer in Augsburg, Germany in 2005. Today, it's the largest house of prayer in Europe. Hartl says the growth is driven by the next generation.

"The level of prayer is rising," Hartl says. "With the House of Prayer movement and ministries like 24/7 prayer, the topic of prayer is much more prevalent than it used to be. The younger generation loves worship and is drawn to real Spirit-filled worship."

Prayer and the worship of God have not ceased at the International House of Prayer in Augsburg since 2011, which Hartl says is a tangible sign the Holy Spirit is moving mightily in Europe and especially in his home country of Germany. And that has resulted in yet another encouraging byproduct—unity among churches.

"Amidst pervasive secularization, the level of unity in the church is probably higher here than anywhere else on earth," Hartl says. "Evangelicals, Protestants, charismatics, Catholics—without neglecting the differences, there is an overall sense of need to cooperate and help each other in a

measure we did not see a few years ago.

“With the large influx of immigrants from the Middle East, many churches have successfully started to reach out to Muslims. Thousands of previously unreached men and women have heard the gospel. The overall situation remains challenging, but to hear so many conversion stories—many involving dreams and visions of Jesus—is definitely very encouraging.”

One such conversion story involves a popular and respected Czech architect named Frantisek. He was invited in 2017 to Awakening Europe’s Prague gathering by a young woman who gave him a free ticket. Though Frantisek’s job was restoring churches (in addition to government and historic buildings), he was hardly a candidate to become an evangelist. He had tried other religions, like Buddhism, but none gratified his soul or drove away the hopelessness. He later told Fitzgerald he only accepted the ticket because of the “pretty girl” who invited him and because he believed alcohol would be served at the event.

Frantisek felt like he had nothing to lose when he walked into Awakening Europe. What he gained there was the greatest gift he could ever receive: his salvation.

“He told me he walked into the stadium and thought, ‘Wow, this is incredible,’” Fitzgerald says. “The worship music, which he first thought was rock, was pretty strong and he loved it. He said he was simply standing there when he began to feel something touching his life.

“I got up on stage and did a quick 10-minute altar call—a short, clear gospel message. [Frantisek] told me he felt the presence of God all over him, and he responded. ... People prayed for him, and this man got completely transformed. He doesn’t really remember what happened or how it happened, but he left that stadium a completely different man.”

A few months later, Frantisek discovered online that Awakening

Europe would conduct a training school in Germany for students to evangelize the whole of Europe. The training school is an intense, three-day session, by application and invitation only, that teaches students how to lead and run their own stadium and soul-winning events. Frantisek decided to apply and made his way through a highly scrutinized application process, where he caught the eye of school officials.

“He came to the school and thanked me for having him there,” Fitzgerald says. “I asked him where he was a pastor or an evangelist, and he said, ‘I’m not. I’m not even sure what an evangelist is.’ I explained to him what an evangelist is: somebody who wins the lost. ... Now this man preaches the gospel wherever goes. He’s since been filled with the Holy Spirit and is now a huge carrier of light. He’s one of our greatest examples of a person who was saved and is now bearing so much fruit.”

Ministry to the Unreached

The Balkan Peninsula in southeast Europe—comprised of countries like Romania, Serbia and the European part of Turkey—presents perhaps the biggest cultural challenge for evangelization, Christiansen says.

Islam is the primary religion in Kosovo (96 percent), Turkey (99 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (45 percent) and Albania (58 percent). In fact, Protestantism represents only 6 percent of the population in Romania and only 1 percent in Serbia.

“What is difficult for some in the Western world to comprehend is that you have some nations over here that lack even the most basic Christian infrastructure,” Christiansen says. “It’s like going into a third-world country and attempting to sell cell phones. There is not a functioning network, so you have to first establish a network, which is a tedious process.

“At the same time in that same region, Muslims and the officials of the religion of Islam know the strategic

importance of that area because it is the gateway between the East and West in Europe. The Saudi Arabian and Turkish governments are pouring in billions of dollars, building mosques everywhere. They are also targeting youth in those countries because they know the youth are important to the future of their cause.”

But Christiansen says there is hope for the region. In 2018, he and members of Jesus Revolution went into a Muslim-majority city in the Balkans of 150,000 people (unspecified here for security reasons). His team discovered only five evangelical believers, less than one-tenth of a percent of the population, in the entire city. Not one church existed.

Christiansen says he was told that Christianity had not been preached in the city, to the knowledge of the people he spoke with, since the Ottoman Empire came into the area and occupied it in 1389—over six centuries ago. His group stayed in that area for a week. Before they left, Christiansen says more than 1,000 people received Jesus. He says many miracles took place, including 285 “instant healings,” in just a few days.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” Christiansen says. “The blind were seeing, the deaf were hearing, and people were throwing away their crutches. This was happening in public—the Muslim towns and villages—in front of everybody.”

Christiansen says he knows exactly why this happened.

“People in these areas and these countries are hungry for something they can’t even understand,” he says. “A lot of them have a culture that is inclined toward the West, so it’s not like the youth are stuck in the traditional culture of the country. But they certainly don’t know Jesus. The door is wide open, but how can they believe unless they hear? How can they hear unless someone pitches it to them? That’s why we need a massive mobilization of workers, people who are willing to go there and bring the gospel to them.”

Awakening Europe, Europe Shall be Saved and other ministries intend to keep doing exactly that—and keep the momentum going for the remainder of 2019 and into 2020. Fitzgerald says God recently gave him yet another prophetic vision—he calls it “the callback”—in which individuals of European heritage now living in other parts of the world will converge on their cities of origin in summer 2020 for an opportunity to evangelize. That means believers of Italian descent will travel to Italy to share the gospel, or people of Dutch descent will come to the Netherlands to share Jesus with the lost.

“We’re calling the whole world back to Europe, not to attend a conference or an event, but to come to the nation of their heritage,” Fitzgerald says. “...We are encouraging them to begin to look at what God is doing here. We are encouraging them to look at the unity we share and the people’s focus on the harvest, and see the thousands upon thousands who are being saved here. If they cannot make it, we simply encourage them to pray for their country of origin and believe that God can turn Europe around and [the nations will] become some of the greatest missional sending nations of the world.”

The event, which kicks off in Amsterdam, is only the beginning of what Christiansen believes God will do in Europe.

“I really feel that Europeans haven’t said no to Jesus—they just hadn’t had Him made available to them,” Christiansen says. “When Jesus is let loose, He’s alive, and the gospel works everywhere. No exceptions.”

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