

When Heaven Invaded Scotland

A handful of intercessors in the Hebrides, off the coast of Scotland, came together to pray in the late 1940s. When God answered their prayers, revival swept the islands, and entire communities experienced the Holy Spirit's power.

Mention the word "revival" among modern-day charismatics, and you're likely to call up associations such as Toronto, Brownsville, Smithton and other well-known "hot spots" in the current move of God. Though some of these locations may not be quite as "hot" as they once were, they still seem to be our standard for defining a powerful visitation from the Lord.

But even in their heyday, these places of refreshing did not produce nearly the results seen in true revival. They certainly didn't fit the definition of this phenomenon given by Owen Murphy in his book *When God Stepped Down From Heaven*:

"When men in the streets are afraid to open their mouths and utter godless words lest the judgment of God should fall; when sinners, overawed by the presence of God, tremble in the street and cry for mercy; when, without special meetings and sensational advertising, the Holy Ghost sweeps across cities and towns in supernatural power and holds men in the grip of terrifying conviction; when every shop becomes a pulpit, every heart an altar, every home a sanctuary and people walk softly before God—this is revival!"

Today, the manifestation of God's presence is generally confined to a church setting. We don't see people falling under conviction in the streets or deserting bars or pornographic theaters in large numbers because God has showed up.

Have we become satisfied with too little?

Consider Murphy's description of the Welsh Revival of 1904:

“Like a mighty tornado, the Spirit of God swept across the land until mountains and valleys, cities and villages were filled with the mighty manifestations of God. Churches were crowded, and meetings went on day and night. Prayer, singing and testimonies would sweep over congregations in torrents and hundreds turned to Christ. Never in the history of Wales had such indescribable scenes been witnessed.”

Murphy tells how G. Campbell-Morgan, after witnessing the scenes of revival in Wales, returned to the congregation he was pastoring at Westminster Chapel in London and declared, “‘Here is revival that comes from is sweeping over hundreds of villages and cities, emptying saloons, theaters and dance halls, and filling the churches night after night with praying multitudes.

“‘Go where you will—into the bank, the store, the trains. Everywhere men are talking about God. If you could stand above would see the fire breaking out here and there and yonder and somewhere else without any prearrangement. It is a divine visitation from which God is saying to us, “See what I can do without the things you are depending on; see what I can do through a praying people who are prepared to depend wholly and absolutely upon Me.”’”

Murphy continues: “Like a tree shaken by a mighty storm, Wales was moved by the power of God until almost every home in the nation felt its impact. Newspapers in bold headlines carried the news of the amazing scenes taking place. So great was the fear of God that in some communities crime virtually disappeared. In more than one place the post office’s supply of money orders was exhausted as people sought to make restitution by paying their debts.

“Saloons and theaters were closed, and stores were sold out of Bibles and New Testaments. Members of Parliament postponed their political meetings. Theatrical companies found no audiences. All the world was praying.

“Now that’s what I call revival: a mighty God moving on behalf of men and women who have cried out to Him.”

I believe God wants to release His awesome power on the earth today as He has in other eras. He is already preparing the way through dedicated, praying, believing people. But as a body we need to get hold of His promise—and the truth that He is a covenant-keeping God who fulfills His Word.

Earnest Prayer

This was the key to the Hebrides Revival of 1948-1952. God poured out His Spirit in the Hebrides, a small group of islands off the west coast of Scotland, in response to a handful of men and women who pressed into Him and would not let Him go.

Before the revival, the churches in this area were virtually empty. Most of the young people had stopped attending, and many churches were about to close their doors.

But there were some who weren’t ready to give up. Among the people concerned about the state of the Church of Scotland was a small group of men from Barvas, the district that was to become the center of the revival. They agreed to meet regularly in a barn by the side of the road to pray.

At their first meeting these men were given the revelation that God is a covenant-keeping God who has made covenant promises. “If this is true,” they reasoned, “we can enter into a covenant with Him, and if we keep our part, then He must keep His.”

They asked, “Has God given us a covenant promise for revival?” Immediately the words of 2 Chronicles 7:14 came to them, “‘If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and

heal their land'" (NKJV).

That same night they entered into a solemn covenant with God to humble themselves in prayer until revival came.

Three nights every week for five months they prayed and waited on God until 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. One night, a young deacon rose and began to read Psalm 24:3-5: "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure shall receive blessing from the Lord."

In response to this searching challenge from God, the men fell on their knees in confession and rededication and began to pray even more earnestly. An hour later three of them were lying prostrate on the floor, exhausted. By 5 a.m. revival had come! The barn was suddenly filled with the glory of God, and the power that was let loose filled that little barn and shook the whole community.

Around the same time in a little cottage in the village of Barvas two elderly sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, were also praying. Peggy, 84, was nearly blind, and Christine, 82, was bent over with arthritis. Like the men in the barn, they were seeking God for revival, and to them came the promise, " ' "I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground" ' " (Is. 44:3).

One night, knowing that the others had gathered in the barn to pray, the sisters sat before their peat fire to spend the night in prayer. Peggy suddenly had a vision of the church, crowded again with young people. She sent for the minister, James Murray Mackay, and told him what God had shown her, asking him to encourage his elders and deacons to come together for special times of waiting upon God.

On the same night God visited the barn, He also visited the cottage and spoke to the two elderly women, revealing to them the name of the man God wanted to use in the visitation—Duncan Campbell, a Presbyterian minister and a great man of

prayer. God said, "In two weeks I shall send upon this community the greatest spiritual awakening it has known."

A wire was sent to Campbell, who was ministering in the Highland town of Skye, but he was already booked for another meeting. He sent a reply, "It is impossible for me to come at this time, but keep praying, and I will come next year."

When they heard his reply, the sisters said, "That is what man says, but God has said he will be here in two weeks." In the meantime Campbell's meetings in Skye were cancelled. Within two weeks he was in Barvas!

Revival Begins

The first meeting was held in the old parish church. Many people had gathered in great expectation, but nothing exceptional happened. Campbell appeared discouraged. One of the deacons went to him and said: "Don't be discouraged, it is coming. I already hear the rumbling of heaven's chariot wheels. We will have another night of prayer, and then we will see what God is going to do!"

Thirty of them went to a nearby cottage and began to travail before the Lord. About 3 a.m. God swept in, and a dozen or so were laid out prostrate and speechless on the floor. Revival had come!

And not just to the group in the cottage. Men and women throughout the area were seeking God. Lights were burning in the homes along the road; no one seemed to be thinking about sleep. Three men were found lying by the roadside in a torrent of conviction, crying out for God to have mercy on them.

On the second night buses came from the four corners of the island, crowding into the church. Seven men who were being driven to the meeting in a butcher's truck suddenly felt the power of God, came under conviction and were saved before they reached the church building.

As the minister preached his message, tremendous conviction came over the people. Tears rolled down their faces, and men and women cried out for mercy from every corner of the church. So deep was their distress that some of their cries could be heard outside in the road. A young man beneath the pulpit cried out, "Oh, hell is too good for me."

The meeting closed when the people began to move out. As the last person was leaving a young man began to pray under a tremendous burden of intercession. He prayed for three quarters of an hour, and as he did, people gathered outside until there were twice as many outside as there had been inside.

When the young man stopped praying the elder gave out Psalm 132. The congregation started to sing the old hymn, the people streamed back into the church again, and the meeting continued until 4 a.m. The moment the people took their seats, the Spirit, in great conviction, swept through the church, and hardened sinners began to weep and confess their sins.

As the meeting was closing someone ran up to the preacher and said: "Come with me! There's a crowd of people outside the police station; they are weeping and in great distress. We don't know what's wrong with them, but they are calling for someone to come and pray with them."

The minister described the scene outside the police station: "I saw a sight I never thought possible, something I shall never forget. Under a starlit sky, men and women were kneeling everywhere—by the roadside, outside the cottages, even behind the peat stacks, crying for God to have mercy on them."

Nearly 600 people, making their way to the church, suddenly experienced the power of God falling on them in great conviction, and like Paul on the road to Damascus, fell to their knees in repentance.

Revival had come in power. For five weeks it swept across that one parish. Campbell conducted four services every night: in one church at 7 p.m., in another at 10 p.m., in a third at midnight and then back to the first one at 3 a.m.

After this, the revival spread to other towns, and what had happened in Barvas began to happen in other places until the islands were ablaze with the power and glory of God.

A Secret of Visitation

The Hebrides Revival was clearly a manifestation of God. But behind it there was a "secret": one minister and seven members of his church, in a little wooden barn by the side of the road, who got hold of God and were prepared to stand in faith, praying and believing for revival to come.

These men were fully persuaded that revival lay within their grasp through the covenant promises of God. A covenant is an agreement, binding on both parties. Had not God Himself declared that if His people would humble themselves and pray, He would forgive their sins and heal their land? (See 2 Chron. 7:14.)

The praying men knew that if they kept their part of the agreement, then God would have to honor His, for He is not a liar. His Word must come to pass, and they could absolutely depend on it.

With this understanding, the men who covenanted to stand for revival stormed the throne of God. They prayed until they travailed and travailed until they prevailed. The Scriptures suggest that travail must always precede prevail. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth" (Is. 66:8, KJV).

Indeed, every revival that has ever been birthed has been preceded by men and women on their knees travailing before God.

The wonderful visitation of God in the Hebrides is one of the most stirring and faith-building events of our generation. It also represents one of the greatest spiritual challenges to us now. Its scenes of divine power reveal the tremendous potential for a genuine move of God in our 21st century churches and communities. There is no reason that what took place in the Hebrides can't be experienced all over the world.

No town, city or village is exempt from the covenant power of the covenant-keeping God. Was Barvas a great city? No! Was the group praying a large company of experienced prophetic intercessors? No! Did they pray for years and years? No!

But if we desire to experience the kind of revival today that people experienced in Wales in 1904, in the Hebrides in 1948 and in many other places and times in history we must repent of our unbelief and complacency. We must get hold of God and in obedience do what He says.

We must believe He is a covenant-keeping God. And we must become men and women who are not simply casual seekers of God but desperate souls who mean business, like the men in the barn, and who will not let go until they receive the confirmation that He has heard according to His own covenant.

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