

Why the Cane Ridge Revival Holds Prophetic Hope for America's Third Great Awakening

It had been a long journey through the forest and hills of Kentucky just to make it to the log cabin church in Cane Ridge yet tens of thousands found the outcome to be well worth the effort. Barton Stone, the pastor at the Presbyterian Church there, had sent word far and wide inviting everyone to come "camp on the grounds" during their first annual communion service. He promised it would be, "one of the greatest meetings of its kind ever known." It didn't disappoint.

By Saturday afternoon it was estimated that more than 25,000 people had descended upon the fields surrounding the church. Stone had expected thousands, but this was more than he could have imagined. It was immediately apparent that the covered platform he had constructed outside the church would not suffice for so many. So Stone dispatched seven separate ministers into the fields to contend for a harvest among the people. Stumps, carriages, and fallen trees became platforms for preachers as they ministered to different sections of the multitude simultaneously.

In the crowd that afternoon was a mother with her two teenage daughters standing at her side. They were listening to a Baptist minister who stood before them on a stump. He preached with powerful words about the deadly consequences of sin. As they listened, the two daughters were suddenly seized with conviction. They cried out from the depths of their souls and then fell to the ground like two dead women. This was a new and strange sight for everyone in the crowd.

The mother, a devout woman who loved the Lord, became very concerned. She bent over the two girls, fanning their faces in a frantic attempt to wake them up, but to no avail. It was an hour later when one of her daughters finally stirred just long enough to cry out with a piercing scream, "Mercy, Lord! Mercy!" She then fell back into her trance-like state.

Both girls laid there motionless for hours upon the ground with the most awful look of terror upon their faces. From time to time they would awaken, let out a blood curdling cry for mercy and then return to their agonizing slumber. The wretched despair they carried on their countenance lasted for a few hours before it finally broke. It was suddenly replaced with the most beautiful, heavenly smile. "Precious Jesus!" one shouted as she rose to her feet. The whole of her being had been transformed. The encounter was forever life altering.

The young woman was filled with such fire and zeal that containing it was impossible. She opened her mouth and immediately began to preach the gospel to all those who surrounded her. Her voice belted across the crowd as if it were amplified with a supernatural force. It caused a stir, and a new crowd began to gather around her. As she spoke, dozens of men and women were struck down to the ground like men slain in battle, each experiencing a similar encounter as she had just had. This wasn't an isolated incident. Similar scenes were breaking out all through the fields that day. That weekend, countless souls were won to the Lord in the most incredible fashion (*Trail of Fire*, page 39).

Oh, that God would do it again in our nation and do it like Cane Ridge!

The story of the Cane Ridge revival is one that stirs something deep within the spirit. I found myself moved in a remarkable way as I studied and wrote about this extraordinary move of God in *Trail of Fire*. I know I am not alone. Every year thousands make the trek to Cane Ridge, Kentucky, to visit

that old log cabin meeting house. They go to learn about and to remember this remarkable move of God. Some go in hopes of capturing a burning ember of that ancient fire. All leave with the same prayer resounding in their hearts, "Lord, do it again, like Cane Ridge!"

It is very much like what the psalmist Asaph invites us to do. He writes, "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work and ponder on Your mighty deeds" (Ps. 77:11–12, MEV).

There is great benefit in looking back at the stories of the past to be encouraged by all God has done.

Consider the work of Cane Ridge for a moment. This was 1801. The United States was barely 25 years old, and Kentucky had just joined the Union less than 10 years earlier. The new nation was quickly growing as more and more people continued to venture West. The days of Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening had already begun to fade as the U.S. expanded. Once again the moral foundations America once knew were slowly eroding. Churches were few and far in this vast land. As people moved farther and farther away from their churches, they began to forsake the Lord. This was the wild frontier, where the only rule of law was a gun or a rope. It was a time when wickedness abounded and very few people professed real faith. It was a spiritually dark time for America.

Yet in dark times, the light of the gospel shines brightest. The fire that fell in Cane Ridge sparked a movement. Revival spread across the American frontier like wild fire driven by a stiff wind through the dry brush. In the years following, there was an exponential explosion of church planting. Similar camp meetings were organized in several states. Though none ever matched the attendance of the original meeting at Cane Ridge, the effect was undeniable. America was once again awakened!

I'm certain there are many who wonder if it is possible for God to move again in such a powerful way. They have concluded that America is too far gone to experience another great awakening. Cane Ridge shows otherwise. This revival that took place 215 years ago offers us great hope today. Look back at what God did and let it bring you to the revelation that He can and will do it again!

My friends, revival will always be God's remedy for an ailing land. Revival is the moment that the Lord Almighty invades a community, the slumbering saints are awakened and sinners are reborn. True revival offers total reformation for individuals, communities and even nations.

Yes, America is experiencing a spiritually dark time once again. The founding principles that brought us great freedom and prosperity have been forgotten. America is lost. But don't lose hope! Consider the works of the Lord. In times of great darkness or spiritual drought, these stories remind us that we've been here before, and when we finally turn back to God, He always revives. Look back at the times He has moved across our land. Remember and meditate on the times you've personally experienced the power of His presence. Let those stories fan the embers in your life back to flame.

We need God to do it again, and do it like Cane Ridge!

You can learn more about the Cane Ridge Revival along with nine other moves of God in my latest book, *Trail of Fire*. *Trail of Fire* tells true stories from 10 of the most powerful moves of God. However it is more than a book about what God has done, it is a call to what God is doing. Pick up this book and break free from the dry, dull routines of religion and become a catalyst for revival!