

# New Testament Christianity – A View of Revival

MARK PELLOW

*Mark Pellow shares a picture of the Lord's work in his church which inspires us to pray, 'Lord, do it again!'*

The New Testament introduces us to Jesus of Nazareth and claims that he is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah (the Anointed One).

A Christian is one who has read these things and, through repentance and faith, has personally encountered this Jesus of history: crucified, risen, exalted, and now dwelling within the believing heart by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament church therefore, was composed of all those who had personally been changed – born again – through this experience.

In the twenty-first century, the church ('ekklesia' – called out ones) continues to be a growing worldwide body. The late David Pawson commented that scripture gives six pictures of the church: a body, a building, a bride, a field, a family and a flock. Jesus clearly said: 'I will build my church'. We need to

ask ourselves: is it the Lord that is really in charge, or have we taken it over? In Revelation 1, Jesus is in the midst of the churches, but in Revelation 3 he is outside the door, seeking admission. This passage in Revelation 3, and in various others in the New Testament, show us that the early church clearly had its faults, but the book of Acts shows that there was an anointing of the Spirit that often seems to be absent today. I believe that Jesus is saying 'I want my church back!'

Down through the centuries, various attempts were made to restore the church back to its New Testament roots. We think particularly of the Reformation and the recovery of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone.

In the eighteenth-century, John Wesley was convinced that

Methodism was returning to primitive Christianity. It is worth noting the description by Francis Asbury (the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the USA) of his introduction to Methodism. He commented: 'I soon found this was not the church, but it was better. The people were so devout, men and women kneeling down, saying 'Amen'. How behold they were singing hymns, sweet and sound! Why strange to tell! The preacher had no prayer book and yet he prayed wonderfully! What was yet more extraordinary, the man took his text and had no sermon book. Thought I, this is wonderful indeed! It is certainly a strange way, but the best way. He talked about confidence, assurance etc. of which all my flights and hopes fell short'. Asbury goes on to tell how he obtained a clear witness of his acceptance with God, free from guilt and fear and received power over sin.

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In the twentieth-century there was, of course, the Welsh Revival followed by the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, California – both witnessed the gifts of the Spirit, particularly healing and tongues released in the church. Unfortunately, there was much division among believers as a result of these things, but through the Charismatic Movement, the gifts of the Spirit have become more acceptable. However, I believe that there are some areas where we have not yet returned to the New Testament pattern. There is still a lack of the miraculous in most of our gatherings. In the church at Corinth, yes they were rather disorderly, which is why Paul wrote his first letter to them, but I do note some things of importance that I would love to see restored to the church. In the meetings at Corinth, there was informality, participation

and spontaneity. Lord, take your church back to New Testament Christianity!

When I was seeking the Lord in my teens, I read several books about revival, particularly about the Bible Christians. One of these was a story about John Maynard, a Bible Christian minister. He tells about a Sunday morning service at Lanner in Cornwall in 1844. He was preaching from the text: 'save others by snatching them from the fire' (Jude 1:23). He describes how a heavy sense of responsibility was upon him; when the glory of God flashed upon him and he could not continue. He said: 'Friends, heaven is open, the glory has come, you can have as much as you will'. He goes on to say, 'I sat down in the pulpit and began to laugh; while I was thus, filled with light and crowned with glory, the people too

were baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Some were shouting, some fell off their seats, some ran out of the chapel. I left the pulpit and turned the preaching service into a prayer meeting. What a scene it was: praying, singing, crying, shouting all over the place. Thus we continued until 3 o'clock in the afternoon.' The revival continued for nearly three months. More than a hundred persons professed conversion at that time.

I am sure that the response from all of us is 'Lord, do it again'.

**MARK PELLOW**

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