

REVIVAL AT JERUSALEM
Great Revivals
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The evens which in a matter of a few days and weeks propels this church from 120 committed followers of Jesus to a band of well over 10,000 in number. The most far-reaching revival, in fact I think the most far-reaching revival ever in the history of the world for we still feel the benefits of this meeting.

As we look at this revival today and we look at the early part of the book of Acts, I want to share three aspects of this revival with you. The purpose of Jesus for his church, the presence of the Spirit in the church and the formation of community in the church.

As a leaping off point I want to look with you at Acts 1:6. “So when they had come together they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’” That’s an awfully good question. They knew he had the authority to do it. He could bring back the kingdom of David. He could reign from Jerusalem. The kingdom which had been in disarray and indeed non-existent for six centuries he had the chance now to bring back. And bring it back in a way that even David himself could never have brought it. Bring it back and in doing so become the power on earth.

They knew him in his ministry as one who had authority. He had had authority over sin. Thus he had said to a paralytic “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” He had shown authority over illness time and again. He’d shown authority over nature. Thus he turned water into wine or spoke to the wind and the waves and they ceased. He had authority over demons. He had authority even over the death of others, bringing them back to life as we know it. He had authority over persons. They rose up and followed him. All of his ministry was one in which he manifested authority.

But now in his rising from the dead he had manifested the supreme authority. They knew therefore then they asked him this question, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom?” That he had unlimited authority. He had authority to do exactly that very thing. They knew as a later Christian hymn writer would describe it, “Death cannot keep his prey, Jesus my savior. He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord. Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o’er his foes.” They knew that if he could do that that if he could come back from the emaciating experience of the cross and three days later stand alive in their presence and say to them, “See my hands and my feet. Touch them. See the wound in my side. Touch it. Eat and drink with me.” They knew if he had that authority, he had all authority.

It is a good question for in that moment Jesus could have begun his reign. He could have walked into the Sanhedrin, the counsel of the 70 presided over by the high priest and he could have simply ordered the high priest to go to the end of the table and he could have taken his position. He is the high priest of all time. He would have presided over the Sanhedrin from that moment forward. He could have gone into Pilate’s judgment hall and ordered Pilate back to Rome. He could have gone to Caesar’s palace in Rome itself and told the reigning Caesar, Tiberius, “The game is up! I’m in authority. I’m in control.” He could have ruled from Rome. He could have selected any capital of the world that he had wanted. He had absolute authority, unconditional authority. The Bible gives us an awesome glimpse of the authority of Jesus. In Matthew 26:53 we find that when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane and a contingent of soldiers come out with swords and clubs to arrest him that Jesus responds to them, “Do you not think that I can

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appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" We know that the term "legion" was a Roman military term embracing the concept of 6000 fighting men. Thus when Jesus says, twelve legions of angels, if we were to figure it literally he's saying, the father if I ask would send me 72,000 angels at this moment if I would send out the word.

If you think for a moment the power of angels as reflected in the Old Testament you know what an awesome thing this is for it took only two angels to have judgment brought upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

It took only one angel in 2 Kings 19:35 to defeat the whole army of the Assyrians and to leave 185,000 military men dead in their camp. One angel. Jesus says I have authority and if I ask my father he will send me twelve legions of angels and they will deliver me. He has that kind of authority and he is that kind of Lord as he stands before his disciples.

In the beginning Jesus had the creative word as John tells us. He spoke the word and everything came into existence. He simply spoke it and everything happened. In the end he has the capacity again to speak but a word and the heavens and the earth will melt with a fervent heat. And the kind of individual that the disciples stand before that day and say, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom," is the one who spoke the creative word and who can also at the end speak the word which brings everything that is created into reformation and out of it new words are created.

Jesus said, "All authority [not some, not a limited amount but all authority] in heaven and on earth is given to me." Ephesians reminds us of his measurable greatness of his power. It seems logical that at this moment that the disciples would be concerned about the exercise of Jesus' power. He has proven himself ready to assume the throne and to rule the world.

Why then does he not immediately move from his resurrection to his reign? That is a fundamental question in the New Testament and it is a fundamental insight into our purpose as Christians why at that moment Jesus chooses to tell the disciples "It's not for you to know. I'm not moving now into my reign, the earthy king of David. But you shall receive power when the spirit has come upon you."

I think the reason why simply Jesus does not move from his resurrection to his reign is the fact that if he had immediately begun reigning in the physical sense on earth, those that had been opposed to him would have been forced into one of two categories. They would have been forced on the one hand to have had a forced faith or required love for him. Or on the other hand, they would have been judged. It's striking as you read Jesus appearances after his resurrection that never one time does he appear to anyone who did not believe in him prior to his resurrection. Never once.

The reason is very simple, I think, a two pronged reason. First of all for himself to have gone in and stood in the presence of the high priest or the Sanhedrin would have resulted in one of these two alternatives. Either the Sanhedrin in seeing him would have been forced to kneel before him and crown him as Lord. And since the Lord has intended that we respond to him from the basis of faith and love we know that neither faith nor love if it is true faith and love can be coerced. It is impossible to coerce love. I would urge you not to try it. I would urge you not to say to your children, "Love me or else!" Or to your wife. Love must be freely given. Jesus to

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have stood in his awesome power before his opposition where on the one hand he either coerced their faith or since this is impossible from the standpoint of the gospel, since the Lord will not accept coerced faith or coerced love it would have resulted in the judgement of men. We read in the gospels, in the New Testament, that when Jesus comes from his resurrection to his reign these kinds of things will happen. Matthew 25:31-32 “When the Son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he will set on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats when the Son of man comes in his glory.” Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? The Lord could have. And had he at that moment his angels would have appeared with him and he would have begun his reign. But at the outset of that reign his reign would have begun with judgment on the earth.

Peter in preaching to Cornelius states this same theme. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. Paul in the intellectual city of Athens where he is mocked out of the place says “God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. Of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.” The only reason why I would suggest why Jesus puts a distance of time between his resurrection and his reign is the identical thing which Peter tells us in regard to the delay of the Lord’s return which will inaugurate his reign on earth. The only way that Jesus can avoid condemning the world and thereby save the world according to his promise in John 3:17 that he came not to condemn but to save, the only way he can do this is to have an interim of time between the resurrection and the reign. Thus Peter says in 2 Peter 3:9 “Not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance,” and this he submits as the reason why the Lord yet delays his reign – not wishing that any should perish.

What then is the task of the church given this promise of Jesus? That moving from this resurrection he will ascend to heaven and not reign on earth. And that there would be an interim of time between his resurrection and his reign. How does the church then fit in to this specter? This is the thing, which the Jerusalem church at the first of the church must begin to grasp. Jesus simply tells them: “You will be my witnesses.” You will be people who will stand between the times. You will be people who will announce the two comings. You will announce that I have come and you will announce that I will yet come. You will announce that I have won the victory and you will announce also that I will yet win the victory.

The God event, the incarnation. The experience of the cross and of the resurrection is for the Christians a kind of D-Day. The Second Coming is sort of a VE-Day. D-Day – June 6, 1944. What happened? The Allied forces under the command of General Eisenhower land on the beaches of Normandy. VE-Day did not come until May 8, 1945. Removed from D-Day by eleven months time. Yet when the Allied forces were successful in landing at Normandy and the invasion had come about it was as if at that moment the war had been won. People can still speak of World War II as having been won when the Allied forces had successfully implanted themselves at Normandy. D-Day was the decisive day. Oscar Kuhlman the German theologian the author of a book Christ in Time suggests to us that the decisive battles if fought in a war which turns the course of the war and from that time on it may be spoken as the war having been won because it was won at the decisive battle. There is often a period of time between the decisive battle and the actual armistice itself. The actual end of the war. He submits to us that this same strategy is employed by Jesus. That event on the cross together with the resurrection

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which followed was the already concluded decisive battle so that in a very real sense the New Testament may speak of Jesus as having won the victory over sin, over death, and over the devil in the cross and in the resurrection. It was D-Day. That which has happened offers the solid guarantee for that which will take place. The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place. It is the task of the body of Christ, the church, to announce to the world as the witnesses of the Lord He is risen and Lord. He has all authority and power. The only reason why He has decided to postpone His reign is to give us a chance to be a part of his reign, rather than to be judged and be put outside his reign. It is his mercy, which promotes him or incites him to return to heaven and sit down at the right hand of God in order that there might be a coming unto life in him.

It is this unshakable conviction in the church, the early church, which I think is the foundation of all Christian revival, the foundation of all personal spiritual life. It is the premise which can become a slogan or which can become a cliché. It is a premise that is absolutely foundational – Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord! There is nothing outside his control. He holds absolute power and authority. In that task of being his witnesses as the church moves out, the Jerusalem church here especially, there is a continual contrast that is made in the preaching of that early church between the treatment that Jesus received at the hands of men and the treatment he has received at the hands of God.

As you have read the book of Acts have you noticed that there? Let me trace it with you for just a moment.

Peter in the first sermon of the Christian church in Jerusalem, Acts 2:23-24, speaking to his audience says “This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up.” Notice the contrast – Jesus at the hands of men crucified. Jesus at the hands of God raised up. When Peter is done with his theme the audience is cut to the heart and pleads for forgiveness.

Peter again preaching, Acts 3:13-14. The second crowd in Jerusalem. “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him but you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead.” The treatment of Jesus by the hands of men, the treatment of Jesus at the hands of God.

Acts 4:10 Peter preaches to the Sanhedrin, the ruling establishment in Jerusalem and in Judaism. He says to the distinguished audience “Be it known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.”

Once more again before the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:30-31, the God of our fathers, raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree, God exalted him at his right hand as leader and Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

You say, “But I was not responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.” That’s not the point. The point is when you compare how God the father has treated Jesus his son, overlay that against

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your treatment of Jesus and say “Is there any responsiveness in me that points toward my treatment of Jesus as being in accordance with the treatment that God the Father has given toward him. Have I exalted him as God the father has exalted him? Or am I indifferent to him? Have I been casual toward Him? Is he not Lord of my life? Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the one by whom we love. He is the one through whom our sins are forgiven. He is the one by whom we receive eternal life. He is the one who will work the mighty miracle of the resurrection of our bodies from the dead or he is the one who will catch us away to be with himself unto the ages. He is the one who will rule the world in righteousness. We are identified with the Lord.

Helping us as a church to understand that fundamental purpose of the Lord in regard to himself and in regard to the church is foundational for revival. He is Lord and he has permitted a time of grace between his resurrection and between his reign in which we may be his witnesses and say “He has won the victory at D Day and Victory day is yet ahead.”

The second thing which is going on in the Jerusalem church is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was very firm about this – unequivocal as he states to them in response to their question Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom? He said, “It’s not for you to know but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses.”

Striking that the word “witness” is the word “martyr.” So that an actual definition of a witness is one who is so strongly convinced that what he has seen and heard is truth that he will allow his witness to be tested even by death itself. He would rather die than relinquish his testimony. Jesus said to his own, you will have power to be witnesses. If we carry that one step beyond we will say that Jesus is telling them they will have such power in their witnessing that they will have power to be martyred for their truthful witness. If the church’s task is to witness for Jesus between his resurrection and his reign then how is the church, how is the people of God to go about this responsibility. On their own? No. The disciples don’t have any plans. They don’t know how to handle this awesome truth – Jesus is risen. What does Peter do? At one point he gets discouraged waiting around for one of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus and he says, “I go fishing.” That’s the plans that he has for the expansion of the gospel.

We know from 1 Corinthians 15 that after his resurrection Jesus appears to a total of 500 people. Yet by the time you come to the day of Pentecost there are 120 persons gathering in the Upper Room. An attrition rate of 500 to 120. It’s very clear the church did not have plans. They did not know how to go about it. What were they to go about and say? Other than Jesus is risen, what kind of program would they inaugurate? Would they try to set up the political mechanism to bring about the Davidic kingdom so that Christ could return and take over the political conditions, which they had set up? How were they to go about this? Jesus was going to let them know through the giving of the Spirit that in the time between the times what the disciples of the Lord were to do was not to build a political structure, not to build a physical empire. But they were to depend upon his invisible presence, the presence of the spirit, who would reign invisibly but really in our lives and hearts so that a people would be prepared for the Lord.

Somehow I think in regard to the giving of the spirit to the church and to us as individuals that the spirit makes the difference in our lives. Not only does the spirit provide us direction. But the spirit provides an acceleration of direction. The spirit provides that the church accelerates it’s growth both internally and externally so in a matter of days and weeks more is done than ever

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could have been done by the ingenuity and organization of man. The Spirit gets the church to the task of Jesus in a supernatural manner.

When the spirit comes upon the disciple two things are released in them. Acts 2. One thing that is released when the spirit comes upon the people of God is that praise is released toward the Lord. So that in other languages not previously learned the 120 are speaking some fifteen different languages of the world. What they are doing with these languages is very clear. They are extolling God. They are praising God. They are absolutely delirious in the sense of being lost in love, wonder, praise and adoration towards God. In the first bestowal of the spirit the spirit whom Jesus pours forth from the Father's throne it is said that when Jesus made the promise the father was to bestow the spirit but Acts 2 tells us that when Jesus ascended into heaven the father gave him the promise and he put it forth. What's the spirit's first inclination when he comes into the dwelling place of mortal man? His first inclination is to release praise to the throne where he's just come from the throne. It's not surprising therefore that when the Spirit descends upon the people of God it inevitably lifts us first into praise in worship.

It might be a good thing for us from time to time to be so lost in the wonder of serving the Lord whose power and authority is unlimited that people looking at us say, "Something's wrong with them! Are they drunk with new wine?" I don't necessarily think the early disciples were out of order but they certainly were outside of themselves for joy.

The knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus coupled with that surging presence of the spirit in our lives brings praise to the Father inevitably must lift us to joy.

I think that's so significant about the giving of the Spirit. The Spirit does not first drive us into duty but drives us first into praise because it is the praise that provides us first for the motivation of the duty. Well might we say in the church if we try to do our duties before the praise how grinding the duty becomes. Because it is not elevated and inspired by the Spirit of God which is bearing witness to Jesus as Lord. Inevitably with that praise there comes following it in the function of the spirit power.

I have this peculiar view of the giving of the Spirit in regard to power. That is that the spirit powers us according to our potential as individual persons. All of us have different potentials. I'm not a Billy Graham. I don't think I have the potential to be Billy Graham.

There's one person on the day of Pentecost that had the potential of standing up and speaking to all of these thousands of people. Enough people hear him well that 3000 out of the audience give their lives to Jesus Christ. Great quality of Christian preaching. Peter stood up and he spoke up. He is filled with the Spirit. The Spirit actualized his potential. He was filled with power to speak.

What about the 119 others? I think the Lord gave the various realms of responsibility. One realm of power which they were to have I think is spiritual responsibility toward all the new people who were coming into the church. In that day 3000 would be added to the church. That means that about every one of the 120 had about 30 people that he or she would be responsible for. That was the level of their potential.

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As you look at your own life do you feel that the Lord all of a sudden will give you thirty people to be spiritual responsible for training, discipling and shepherding? How would you feel? Maybe you should start out with one. But it is the Spirit's task to give us the power and authority to spill out our lives with others so that we simply do not become an island to ourselves. Simply receiving. But it is the Spirit's task to change us from receiving individuals to giving individuals. And his church if it's to truly function, must function with the giving of the spirit. Else wise the church can so easily become a social organism – closed, tight, small groups and cliques like any other social organization. It is the spirit's responsibility as we are open to him to help us to become outward bound and open with others.

Promise of the Spirit, the presence of the Spirit. That is coupled finally with the formation of Christian community, which Acts 2 tells us about. Particularly the end, after Peter's sermon where he tells them in verse 38 after they are cut to the heart he says to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." There's something happening within early Christian community which is so vital to catch. The Christian community is based not only on the lordship of Jesus Christ which is the foundation but it is based upon as well forgiveness. The very persons who are responsible most for the death of Jesus are invited to repent of that sin and to be immediately accepted without any other precondition and without any time of being on probation. Absolute free, unconditional forgiveness.

In fact Peter when he is later preaching to temple audience and in fact preaching to members of the Sanhedrin perhaps themselves in the audience. Acts 3:17 says "Brethren I know that you acted in ignorance as did your rulers." The cold-hearted murder of Jesus of Nazareth was a murder that was done in ignorance. Premeditated. First degree. Yet the amnesty, the aspect of forgiveness in the gospel is such that what has been the calculated premeditation of men God now through Jesus Christ and his great love is willing to say it is done in ignorance. I would submit to you if Jesus Christ looked that way at persons responsible for his crucifixion he also has a way of looking at your sins and mine. And saying to us no matter how deliberate were our wrongs, we also did it in ignorance. There can be no Christian community without forgiveness. I love the bumper sticker: I'm not perfect, just forgiven. And because we are forgiven we also know how to forgive others ourselves.

Once the basic planks of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and forgiveness are in Christian community Luke hastens in the book of Acts to tell us the qualities of the formation of the early Christian community. These qualities are not simply a part of the Jerusalem church experience but I believe God intends them to be a part of every church's experience. I believe if we were to set ideals and goals for our experience as a community of God in this church the Spirit would have these as well. There are ten of them. Acts 2:42-47.

In the community of the Jerusalem church we find that this church was a learning church. Why do I say that? Because they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They'd had a great experience. They'd been converted. They'd been filled with the spirit. But there was the learning aspect. And notice the devotion to learning. Learning all of him. Learning the scriptures. Learning one another. Learning is a characteristic of a church, which is truly formed in the Spirit.

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They were a togetherness church. We find they devoted themselves to the apostles fellowship. In the Greek the word is *koinonia*. It stands for a vital dynamic relationship, which exists among believers which is comparable to family relationships or is even deeper than family relationships. A togetherness. The Lord wants togetherness in his church. Without programming and organization or being told to do something we all feel it quite natural to be brothers and sisters to one another and to be in one another's homes and lives.

A third characteristic – a praying church. I would classify, by the way, the breaking of bread as a togetherness church and prayer as they gave themselves to prayers. In this particular reference it probably refers to the set times of prayer at the Temple. We know that they had individual home prayer meetings and that they were individually praying as well.

They were a reverent church. Fear came upon every soul. Not a cowering kind of fear but a reverence. A kind of respect for what God was doing. There was no triviality. No building of the church on the basis (as someone has said) on noise, nickels and numbers. Reverent church.

Another characteristic of community – a liberating church. Signs and wonders were done through the apostles. Persons who were bound were being freed.

A sharing church. Those that believed were together and had all things in common.

While we find in the New Testament various life styles for churches and the Jerusalem lifestyle was community sharing. In all the churches we don't find that but the principle we always find. The principle of sharing – What's mine is yours if you need it. Close enough to one another to share.

The early church is a worshipping church. Day by day attending the temple and breaking bread in their homes. Worshipping in the home setting. Worshipping in the temple setting.

The early church is a happy church. They partook of food with glad and generous hearts. I like that reference in Luke. That is so down to earth and down to life. That we can really identify with. When the Spirit is poured out upon the church and the recognition comes to the church that Jesus is Lord and risen, I don't think that all of a sudden the church began eating better. It is simply that they began seeing their food in a different dimension than they'd ever seen it before. So that the church is a glad and happy church.

I believe a characteristic of the church is joy. And that joy is reflected in such mundane things even as mealtimes. Laughing and having fun around the dinner table in the presence of the Lord.

The church is an attractive church. We find that they had favor with all the people.

And it is a growing church. The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Sometimes in looking at the revival in Jerusalem we say be tempted to just focus in on these last ten characteristics and say, If we want a church like the Jerusalem church here's the ten things we've got to be. But as I prayed and asked the Spirit to help me fashion this sermon I started where I did because I don't ever believe that we should start with the ten characteristics. We

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start with the praise “Jesus is Lord.” If we don’t start with the premise that Jesus is Lord and that the Spirit is given then we’re going to spend an awful lot of time, burn up an awful lot of energy, have an awful lot of oil run out of the machinery and a lot of grinding because we’re trying to get something into being that we can’t under our own power and authority to be the church of Jesus Christ is to be lost in adoration and worship to the Lord who is risen and who is coming as the ruler of the world.

It is to enjoy and bask in his spirit.

I simply pray Lord Jesus that that which is a record in the scripture, the Jerusalem church, will also be written of us. That we will understand as did they that we are people between the times. Your resurrection is real and your coming again is real. I pray Lord Jesus that through this message this morning that your spirit who has been faithful all during this service witnessing to our hearts will search and probe into the inner lives of each one of us. Help us assess how we are treating Jesus with how you, heavenly Father, have treated him. How we look at Jesus as opposed to how you see him. We too come today as did those early citizens of Jerusalem who were to become the first members of your church. We come with confession in our hearts, confession that in the depths of our experience we have not owned you as Lord. From time to time we find it possible to assent to the creed of the church, the intellectual creed that you are risen and you are Lord. But in the fabric of our lives, in the day by day decisions and attitudes and values where it all really boils down as to whether or not you are Lord we confess that we have not treated you in our own lives as God our father has accorded you. We have not exalted you as God has exalted you. What can we say, our Lord, except in this moment to recognize we come to you as persons whom you long to forgive, whom you long to love, whom you long to receive. We are accepted in your family. There is a surge within our hearts that rushes up and out of us in praise and worship because you are Lord. What have we to fear? What circumstances have we to fear? What failures or reverses have we to fear? Even death itself we will not fear for thou art with us and our Lord. In the confidence of your identity we take our own. I simply pray for this Lord Jesus that you will increasingly pour out your spirit among us causing us to be community of praise and power manifesting the life fruit filled qualities which you have for us as the people which belong to you. I cannot form this church. While organization is useful I realize that it cannot for this church. You for this church. You bring it together. And promulgate it for your glory and for your honor. We give it to you and our lives to you and our obedience to you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.