

The Lewis Revival:

Bill Kettles

1949-1952

During the years 1949 to 1952, a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place on the island of Lewis in the north of Scotland. It was so powerful that it was described as a 'visitation of God'.

Also, because of the spiritual truth associated with the revival, it was called a 'Covenant Engagement'.

The Rev. Duncan Campbell who was in charge of the Faith Mission in Edinburgh, was used as the evangelist in this revival over a period of two years.

The outpouring of the Spirit continued, however, in different areas for a number of years later.

He was deeply affected spiritually by his experience of the revival, and continued to testify of its power in many areas of the mainland and abroad.

As a young Christian, I also was deeply affected by this revival as a result of attending some croft meetings on the island at that time and of hearing Duncan Campbell preaching and testifying on the mainland.

REVIVAL DEFINED -Different from successful evangelism.

As a result of his experience, Duncan Campbell described revival as 'a whole community saturated with the presence of God.'

He declared that there is a difference between revival and successful evangelism. In the latter you can have 10 or 20 people saved here, and a 100 brought to Christ there, but the community remains unchallenged.

Men move on to a Christless hell. But when God steps down - when hearts are made clean by Him - then He finds an avenue through which He can move.

The community then becomes saturated with God, so that many of those who find the Saviour come into a saving relationship with Him before they come near any church or place of meeting.

A SCRIPTURE FULFILLED

Duncan Campbell was often heard to quote the following scripture in connection with this revival:

'O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down. That the mountains might flow down at Thy presence .

As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make Thy Name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence.

When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for - THOU CAMEST DOWN - the mountains flowed down at Thy presence.

For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, eye has not seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.

Thou meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways - in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.' Isaiah 64: 1-5

The above was descriptive of the scene at Lewis at the time of revival.

The reality of the fire caused many to tremble in the presence of God. There was great conviction of sin and travail of soul. The ordinary, mundane things of life became of little consequence in the light of eternity. It became of the utmost importance to know the destiny of one's soul. Time became the season to fly from hell and destruction, and seek for righteousness and heaven. Happy were those who found grace to repent of sin, and find forgiveness and eternal life in the Saviour.

Special points of interest:

- **The Lewis Revival was described as a 'Covenant Engagement'.**
- **Duncan Campbell said Revival was 'a whole community saturated with the presence of God.**
- **Intercessors laid hold of God's covenant for a visitation of God.**
- **A desire for holiness was present.**
- **God came down!**

THE INTERCESSORS

There were those, moreover, who had remembered Him in all His ways, and continued in them. They had received the blessing of the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation. #

In particular, it is on record that there were two elderly ladies, in their eighties, who were much used in this revival in intercession. They were described as having a relationship with God which the man of God and others, *did not know existed*. They knew Him as these men of God did not know Him. To them He was a 'Covenant-making and a Covenant-keeping God', who would without fail keep His covenant engagements.

They could use language like this with all reverence:

"Lord, You have promised to send revival. If You do not, how shall we ever be able to trust Your Word again?" # Psalm 24:5

They laid hold upon the God of the Covenant, and received the things

for which they prevailed.

It seems that Duncan Campbell was greatly impressed by the type of relationship with God he had found in these two old ladies.

I say this because, on occasions later, I heard him challenging Christians, including himself, with the question, *'Are you rightly-related with God?'*

At first, I did not understand what he could mean. I was born-again. I knew Jesus as my Saviour. My life had been changed for the good. Moreover, I had been wonderfully baptised in the Holy Spirit. Was there something else, a relationship with God, into which I had not entered, of which most Christians were completely ignorant?

In recent times, I have had to come to the conclusion that the concept of covenant relationship is a mystery to most Christians, and, incredibly, to many men of God today. I venture to say that this is

the reason we have in our day so many weak and faltering Christians, broken marriages, wayward children, lack of unity between Christian groups, and, of course, no revival visitation comparable to that which took place in Lewis.

THE ROOTS OF REVIVAL

Clearly, there were individuals on the island of Lewis, who by their lives and their relationship with God, had become the source, the foundation, the roots of this remarkable visitation of God. Surely we can learn lessons from their example. Indeed, it is more urgent today.

The adversary is pouring out his flood of iniquity in his bid for world domination. There is ever-increasing hatred and violence. Anti-Christian forces become more militant.

Surely, there is a need for ordinary Christian people to find a stronger, more stable and fruitful relationship with God.

It is, therefore, my firm conviction that there has to be a revelation to the hearts of God's people of a God who is prepared to bind Himself to each individual by His Covenant oath and promise forever. He wishes to bring each one into a perfect union with Himself so that He can fulfil His plan to bring back His Son to take over the kingdoms of this world and reign for ever and ever. [See Rev 11:15-19]

It is evident that there were faithful ministers of the Church of Scotland who had not failed to proclaim the truth to some of these islanders

that their God was a 'Covenant-making God.' This truth is traditional to the teaching of the Church of Scotland, and was prevalent in the time of the Reformation. In the past it has produced strong and mighty men of God.

There were, however, other factors at work. There were certain adverse circumstances taking place in their lives which produced in their hearts a sense of failure and despair:

'A number of men and two elderly

woman were made conscious of the desperate need of their parish. All human effort had failed and had left them baffled. They realised that their one resource was to fall back on God. O how true it is that despair is often the womb from which real faith is born. When man comes to the end of himself - to the end of all human resources - he has reached the beginning of God. That is where I had arrived and that is where the men of Lewis had arrived. Duncan Campbell

THE MEN

They entered into a solemn covenant that they would not rest from prayer until He made *# 'Jerusalem a praise on the island.'* You found men waiting in confidence that God was about to manifest His power. # Isaiah 62:7

THE TWO SISTERS

You found the two elderly sisters on their faces before the peat fire three nights a week pleading one promise:

'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.' †

A promise made, as they declared, by a Covenant-keeping God who must ever be true to His covenant engagements. † Isaiah 44:3

A STIRRING CHALLENGE

As a result of his experience with such men and women on the island of Lewis, Duncan Campbell was impressed to issue the following challenge:

'Give me a people on their faces, seeking to be rightly-related to God, and when that happens, we will soon know the impact of God

realised in our country.

Now I am not saying the need is articulated everywhere, but the failure of man's best endeavours is apparent to all, and I believe the day is not far distant when, in a sense of desperation, at the end of her endeavour, the church will cry, and God will take it in hand. Are we there?'

Duncan Campbell

A DESIRE FOR HOLINESS

Along with the consciousness of the desperate need of their parish, and the overwhelming sense of human failure to meet that need, there was born in their hearts *a desire for holiness*.

This scripture came as a challenge;

'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O Jacob.' (Psalm 24:3-6)

To such a people it is inevitable that there should follow a revelation to their hearts, by the Holy Spirit, of the power of the blood of Christ, the blood of the Lamb, to cleanse and

purge away all sin and iniquity.

They can now stand in the Holy Place. They can now receive the blessing from the Lord. The God of their salvation can now clothe them with the garment of His righteousness.

AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

During the year 1952, I was taken to the parish of Uig on the island of Lewis, by some friends.

I was a young Christian, but I had been baptised in the Holy Spirit. We attended the meetings held each night in different crofts. They were led by the local Church of Scotland minister and attended by different members of the community.

The prayers and the singing were in Gaelic, which I did not understand. But what I did understand

was the presence of God, such as I had never felt before, nor have felt since. And that is after nearly forty years as a Christian. It is difficult to explain. We sat there in awe and reverence in the presence of holiness. The deep presence of God fell over us like an indescribable love and compassion.

I could only sit there and weep in gratitude and thanksgiving that I had found this One as my Lord and Saviour ...and Friend.

I still weep at the memory of this experience and say, *'O God, the world does not know You. This is what You can do - please do it again.'*

Bill Kettles

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the testimonies of people involved in this visitation of God on the island of Lewis:-

- 1 There was a sense of desperate need because of human failure. This great need motivated them to a committal to seek their God with all their hearts.
- 2 There was born in them a desire for holiness - a seeking to enter the Holy Place. There followed a revelation of the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse the heart from sin. They were now able to minister to the Lord in prayer and intercession.
- 3 There was an awakening to the possibility of an intimate relationship with God - a Covenant relationship. The scripture declares that: *'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant.'* Psalm 25:14
- 4 We have noted that this kind of intimate relationship may not be understood even by men of God whom God uses.
- 5 A release of God's holy presence and power upon whole

communities through human personalities. This is true revival - a visitation of God.

The first two steps can be brought about by circumstances in our lives - probably by adverse ones, and by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The third step requires a diligent searching of the Scriptures, along with prayer for revelation by the Holy Spirit.

Child-like humility and a desire to be taught would also be helpful ingredients.

A yearning to know God and to be bound to Him for ever in a secure, loving relationship, seem to be prerequisites for a revelation to the heart of the Covenant.

The fourth step comes through those who have given themselves to prayer and intercession, often involving hours of deep travail of soul.

There is a price to pay, but the reward is glorious and gives deep satisfaction.

A release of God's holy presence
and power upon whole
communities through human
personalities. This is true revival
- a visitation of God