

## When Heaven Came Down - The Hebrides Revival

If we move to the center of the Twentieth Century, we travel in heart to the beautiful, rustic and majestic outer isles off the coast of Scotland called the Hebrides. On the Isle of Lewis it has been said that everyone on the island that was accountable and who was not saved received Christ in salvation during the Hebrides Revival. It began in 1949 and continued in fervency until 1952. One of the passages of Scripture that was claimed for the great move of God is Isaiah 64:1 and 2: "Oh 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!" And this is exactly what happened in the revival--God came down! The outstanding minister during these years was Duncan Campbell. Yet, by his own admission the revival was already there by the time he crossed the waters to the bonnie isle. During a meeting in Lewis in 1949, Campbell describes: 'The lad rose to his feet and in his prayer made reference to the fourth chapter of Revelation, which he had been reading that morning: 'O God, I seem to be gazing through the open door. I see the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, with the keys of death and of hell at his girdle.' He began to sob; then lifting his eyes toward heaven, cried: 'O God, there is power there, let it loose!' With the force of a hurricane the Spirit of God swept into the building and the floodgates of heaven opened. The church resembled a battlefield. On one side many were prostrated over seats weeping and singing; on the other side some were affected by throwing their arms in the rigid posture. God had come."

When we read of such events, mental images are invoked. It may be in some of our minds the thought may come, "If this is what revival means, it looks like control is lost and I don't want any of that." Others may say, "Well, whatever it takes, let it happen." Far too often, we tend to focus on the results or symptoms of localized spiritual events and judge the event by the personal outworking which interprets the spiritual move of God for individual recipients. I would like for us to see the events of the Hebrides Revival and, more importantly, to look beyond the event and place emphasis on the cause rather than the effect. The great Hebrides revival came when:

### **1. THE GROUND HAD BEEN SATURATED BY PRAYER.**

Just as the farmer needs God to bless his seed with plenty of rain, so also do we need to saturate the ground of potential revival with honest, heart-felt, fervent prayer. James put it like this: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). When we examine the phrase "effectual fervent" we see the Greek word is *energeo*. If you change the last two letters of the word you have our English word, "energy." The point should be made that when we pray with true earnestness, God's powerful energy becomes available.

As we study the beginnings of the Hebrides Revival, we see that it traces back to two little ladies, in poor health and housebound, but available to God for prayer. The ladies of whom I speak were Peggy and Christine Smith. They were

84 and 82 years old. Hebrides history says: "Peggy was blind and her sister almost bent double with arthritis. Unable to attend public worship, their humble cottage became a sanctuary where they met with God. To them came the promise: 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.' They pleaded this day and night in prayer. One night Peggy had a revelation -- revival was coming and the church of her fathers would be crowded again with young people!"

Pastor James Murray MacKay responded to the sisters' plea with a men's prayer meeting. A reluctant participant, Duncan Campbell came over to the island of Lewis, but after he had met in prayer with the ladies, he soon caught the fire and began to see the vision they had been given in prayer. Crowds began to gather all over the island of Lewis. I remind you that the praying done by the believers on Lewis was "effectual fervent" prayer. This is exemplified again by an eyewitness account: "An evening was given to waiting upon God in the home of an elder. Around midnight, Duncan turned to the local blacksmith, 'John, I feel the time has come for you to pray.' With his cap in his hand, John rose to pray, and in the middle of his prayer he paused, raised his right hand to heaven, and said, 'Oh God, You made a promise to pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground, and, Lord, it's not happening.' He paused again and then continued, 'Lord, I don't know how the others here stand in Your presence; I don't know how the ministers stand, but, Lord, if I know anything about my own heart, I stand before Thee as an empty vessel, thirsting for Thee and for a manifestation of Thy power.' He halted again and after a moment of tense silence cried, 'Oh God, Your honor is at stake, and I now challenge You to fulfill your covenant engagement and do what you have promised to do.' Many who were present witnessed that at that moment the house shook. Dishes rattled in the sideboard, as wave after wave of Divine power swept through the building. A minister standing beside Duncan turned and said, 'Mr. Campbell, an earth tremor!' But Duncan's thoughts, however, were in the fourth chapter of Acts, where the early Christians were gathered in prayer and, we read, 'When they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.'"

Before we accentuate the earth shaking, we need to be reminded that they were not seeking confirmation in an earthquake; they were seeking God. The physical manifestation was simply God saying, "I am here." May we, too, be seeking God more than gifts; His person, not the manifestation. We need God!

## **2. SIN WAS DEALT A DEATH-BLOW.**

During the Hebrides revival, recently saved and rededicated young people boldly walked into a dance and the strong presence of the Lord was so felt that, without a plan of action, the youth stopped dancing, fell to the floor in prayer and a great many were born again right there on what had been a community-wide youth dance. We read that people forsook drinking and other sinful habits. It was amazing, even without specifically mentioning sinful activity--there was a cessation and desistance of any and all behavior that did not bring glory to God. Again, going back to the historical record: "One night as they waited upon God a

young deacon rose and read part of the twenty-fourth Psalm: '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.' Turning to the others he said, 'Brethren, it seems to me just so much humbug to be waiting and praying as we are, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God.' Then lifting his hands toward heaven he cried, 'Oh God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?' He got no further, but fell prostrate to the floor. An awareness of God filled the barn and a stream of supernatural power was let lose in their lives. They had moved into a new sphere of God-realization, believing implicitly in the promise of revival." When God is on the scene there is a Divine intolerance for sin. Too often, in the day in which we live, we want God to come, but not to change our lives. The truth is that we cannot have God manifest Himself without sin being dealt with severely and surely.

### **3. GOD RECEIVED THE GLORY.**

In the early 1970's one of the most life-changing crossroads of my ministry caught me by surprise. I learned an important lesson on the glimmering glory of God. One afternoon I was listening on the radio to Dr. John Moore at Moody's Founder's Week. Dr. Moore was pastor of the church in Kent, Scotland birthed by D. L. Moody when in Scotland during the revival of the 1800's. Pastor Moore was very interested in the Hebrides revival, so he traveled to the Isle of Lewis to investigate. All roads led to the prayer warriors, Peggy and Christine Smith, who at this time were now in their nineties. In the conversation with them he explained that he had come to interview them and find out about the wonderful move of God in their midst. Before the sisters gave any information, they wanted one thing clearly understood: how he would be reporting what they were about to tell him. They were emphatic as they discussed how that the reporting of the 1949 through 1952 revival had given too much glory to man. They both agreed that the reason the revival waned was because of the way the revival was reported. To use their words, "the glory had departed." Peggy said to Pastor Moore, "If we don't give Him (God) the glory, He may never come back to our island again!" So here they were praying that revival would return to the island of Lewis in great power. The Smith sisters were incredibly sensitive to the fact that God would share His glory with no man.

As we pray for revival in our own atmosphere here in Texas and the United States, may we receive the warning from our late sisters and be willing to give God all the glory when He comes! "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24).