

Lesson 4

Revival in Ephesus

True revival always affects culture - the church is purged, society shows moral improvement, Christian organizations spring up, missions activity increases and higher institutions of learning based on Christian principles come into existence.

God changes culture by first changing lives. People get saved in large numbers and this influences culture in a positive way. Christians begin to develop and get serious about a Christian world-life view, and Christianity begins to make an impact on a spiritually indifferent, atheistic, materialistic and humanistic society. Christ through Christians begins to affect the world. Christ changes culture so as to make culture face Christ realistically. Christ changes culture by first changing people on the inside who begin to live for Christ and operate on a biblical morality based on absolutes. Men and women with Christ in their lives begin to affect society in the area of politics, education, law, medicine, economics, music, art and even religion. Christ's philosophy is in opposition to the world's philosophy and there is conflict between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. Christianity is revolutionary and it can be very threatening to a dying culture. It is dangerous to be a committed Christian. If you do not think so, you have not begun to live real Spirit-filled Christianity. Someone has said, "A Christian is one who is completely fearless, continually cheerful and constantly in trouble." We must always bear in mind that it is Christ's desire that Christians should shape, mold and make an impact upon culture, and godless, humanistic culture should not mold Christians.

So everyone knows where I am coming from, let me give my definition of revival.

"Revival is a sovereign, powerful, extraordinary moving of the Holy Spirit through the preached Word which spiritually convicts, arouses and enlivens professing, backslidden Christians in the church and which results in a supernatural acceleration of the conversion process to the unsaved" (Jack L. Arnold).

CLEARLY UNDERSTANDING WHY EPHEBUS NEEDED REVIVAL

Ephesus was a city held in the grip of superstition, demons and darkness. In fact, Ephesus was the citadel of Satan, the fort of the underworld and the bastion of the occult. Commercially, Ephesus was a very wealthy city, for it was at the crossroads of the Roman Empire. Religiously, Ephesus was famous for the Temple of Artemis (Diana). Artemis was the goddess of the earth and she was the goddess

who controlled the sexual reproductive powers of men and women. She was a many breasted goddess representing Mother Nature. Therefore, the worship of Artemis

was very sex oriented, resulting in horrible sexual perversions. Sacrifices were offered to Artemis coupled with ceremonial prostitution for all worshipers (men and women) of Artemis which was practically everyone in the city.

A huge statue of Artemis stood in the court of the Temple of Artemis which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This temple which took 220 years to complete was 425 feet in length, 220 feet in breadth, having 127 columns, towering 60 feet high, each column weighing about 150 tons. So deep was the pagan religion in the life of the people they felt they were the temple keepers of Artemis. The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: ***“Men of Ephesus, doesn’t all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven” (Acts 19:35)?***

Ephesus was the center of witchcraft, demonism, the black arts, astrology and occult practices of all kinds. This city was sold out and enthralled with Satan and his devices. It was not uncommon to find priests, magicians, witches, warlocks and quacks of every description in this wicked city. Ephesus was enslaved to Satan and his demons, in bondage to the occult, devoutly religions, devoted to wanton sex and sold out to materialism. Spiritual and demonic darkness engulfed the whole city of Ephesus.

Before you are too critical of the Ephesians for their pagan religion, please think about what is coming across blatantly and subtly every day in your home through the television - astrology and the horoscope are constantly referred to. Witchcraft is endorsed. Psychics advertise openly late at night endorsed by movie stars. Perverted sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, alcohol, drugs, violence and murder are every where on the screen. Satan and demons are not denied and are often exalted by the media. Christians are the last major grouping in this country to stand against the Satanic activity, and even Christians are being duped by the media and ultimately by Satan and the demons.

Some feminist’s today are worshiping the goddess Artemis because they say she represents what women should be.

CORRECT PREACHING IN REVIVAL Acts 19:8-10

The Apostle Paul came to the sex-crazed, Satan-controlled, super-religious city of Ephesus to preach the liberating gospel of Christ. Christ used a few Christians to make an impact on a whole city because they stopped operating on the spiritual power of Satan and began to operate on the spiritual power of Jesus Christ.

As was his custom, Paul spoke the gospel to the Jews first. ***“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months” (Acts 19:8a).*** The

Jews were probably not directly involved in the occult but were influenced by it. We can guess they were religious legalist

working their way to heaven by good works. They were just as controlled by Satan as those Gentiles in Ephesus who bowed their wills to the devil. Satan's ace in the hole is to blind people to the truth through ritual, tradition and works, thinking by doing so they are appeasing God.

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,...” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). “Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil” (John 8:43b-44). People may be educated, display culture, perform what appears to be good works and be respectable citizens and still be blinded by Satan. Religious respectability is the toughest nut to crack in all the Satanic kingdom of evil. Religious people have a hard time admitting they are sinful and bankrupt before God.

Paul reasoned with the Jews about the kingdom of God. ***“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8b).*** He spoke about the kingdom of God over against the kingdom of Satan. God's spiritual kingdom can only be entered through the spiritual new birth which comes from God. The kingdom of God belongs to the King, Jesus Christ, and all who have received Him as Savior, Lord and King belong to this kingdom. Those who are in God's kingdom have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness. ***“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:13).***

Revival brings preaching which is Christ centered and kingdom centered because a battle is being waged against the kingdom of darkness.

Most of the Jews were hardened to the truth by Satan and refused to believe and mocked Christianity. ***“But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way “(Acts 19:9).*** Paul and his disciples separated from apostate Judaism after three months and went to the Gentiles in Ephesus, meeting in the lecture hall of Tyrannus who was probably a Greek philosopher. ***“So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:9b10).***

In revival, religion always persecutes Christianity. Invariably there is a division into those who are for revival and those against it. Revival brings life and dynamic and this is not always appreciated by Christian traditionalists.

CLASHING WITH DEMONS IN REVIVAL

Acts 19:11-12

God began to do extraordinary miracles among the Ephesians through the Apostle Paul. ***“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul,. . .” (Acts***

19:11). Satan and his demons had done miracles for many years in Ephesus and now God would counteract the false with the true.

In revival, there are miracles that occur. This is not ordinary but extraordinary phenomena, but not all miracles are of God.

Apparently most if not all the miracles of healing Christ performed through Paul were due to Satanic influence. **"...So that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:12).** Satan can and does bring sickness. Not all sickness is Satanic by some is and this kind of sickness can be healed when the demons leave.

In revival, there will be clashings with demonic powers. Satan and his demons do not want revival and everything possible will be done to stop it.

"When the Lord begins to build His church, the devil sets up a chapel close by." (John Knox)

COUNTERFEITS IN REVIVAL Acts 19:13-17

A Jewish priest and his seven sons were exorcists; that is, they cast out evil spirits. Probably they were apostate Jews who had given themselves over to the occult and the worship of Artemis. They attempted to cast out demons in the name of Jesus because they saw Paul having such success. **"Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, 'In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out'" (Acts 19:13).**

In revival there is always the true and the false, the genuine and the spurious. There will be genuine supernatural phenomena and there will be fake phenomena because the devil is the Great deceiver. In revival there are not only counterfeits but there are abuses which sometimes make for messiness causing us to feel uncomfortable.

"Lord, send us revival without its defects, but if this is not possible, send revival defects and all ... Careful people will assess the fruit of manifestations. Wise people will rejoice in what can be rejoiced in but will be slow to put all phenomena down to God. It seems we are going to have to live in the tension of rejoicing with caution!" (John Wesley)

CHANGED LIVES IN REVIVAL Acts 19:18-20

Many people believed in Christ as Savior and Lord and they wanted to make a clean break from their past lives. Some of these people were new converts and perhaps were holding on to some of their old habits and superstitions. ***“Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds” (Acts 19:18).*** Under great conviction from the Holy Spirit, they began to clean up their lives, divulge their hidden practices and confess openly what they were doing privately. As young Christians, they still held on to some of their gross old ways, but God brought conviction to their souls. They stopped fooling around with astrology, the horoscope, witchcraft and the occult which had been bringing them defeat and disillusionment in their Christian lives. By their public confession, they and the church were purified because no Christian is to have any connections with the forces of darkness. ***“Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD...” (Deut. 18:10-12).***

Revival is most often accompanied by a great deal of public confession. There is cleansing in public confession, but even this issue has divided Christians in revival. Some do not believe in public confession but the confession was most certainly public at Ephesus.

In the spring of 1995, there has been a powerful moving of the Holy Spirit in renewal across our land in Christian schools. Howard Payne University, Wheaton College, Sanford University, Taylor University, Houston Baptist University and many other Christian colleges and seminaries have experienced a time of refreshing from the Spirit. Also Campus Crusade, Navigators and other para-church groups have experienced the same phenomena. It is an orderly, emotional, open confessing and repenting of sins and there is no question that much of it is genuine.

Some of these Ephesians who openly confessed also brought their books of magic, charms, amulets and their papers of white and black arts and piled them up and burned them. Their confession led to conflagration, indicating the reality of repentance. If confession is real, it will lead to renunciation of sins. These Ephesian Christians were changing the total patterns of their lives because they clearly understood they could no longer dabble in the occult and be a Christian too. They were no longer “playing church.” They meant business. They sacrificed. They paid a price. They denied self.

At Wheaton College, there has been a powerful visitation from the Spirit of God. During long meetings of confession and repentance, students brought pornography, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, condoms, ungodly CD’S and tapes and many other things. Enough to fill five huge, plastic garbage bags. Also about 200 students dedicated themselves to full-time Christian work.

When people get right with Christ, they begin to get bold in their witness for Christ. Confession and cleansing lead to power. ***“In this way the work of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20).*** What kind of power? Holy Spirit power! When Christians get serious about their faith, the Holy Spirit will get serious!

CULTURE AFFECTED IN REVIVAL

Acts 19:23-27

Because people were coming to Christ and turning from idols, the economy of Ephesus was being seriously affected. ***“About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades and said: ‘Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says man-made gods are no gods at all’”(Acts 19:23-26).*** Apparently the silversmiths in Ephesus had organized into a trade union. Perhaps Demetrius was the founder and president of the Ephesians Silversmith’s Association. These silversmiths made their living by making little silver shrines or statues of the goddess Artemis and sold them to people as objects of worship or souvenirs for a large profit. The business of making silver idols was falling off; not because of tight money or high interest rates but because people were being saved and turning from all forms of idolatry - money talks. The idol makers were hit where it most hurts - the pocketbook. They probably would have shown no concern about Christianity had it not been that they were losing profits.

In revival, massive numbers of people are saved and they turn from sin and idolatry which affects the economy because so much of the economy is based on sinful practices. Hit the unsaved pocketbook and they begin to scream!

These silversmiths said they were concerned for Artemis and her temple but in reality they were concerned about going out of business. ***“There is a danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty” (Acts 19:27).*** Their interests in Artemis were garbed in the masquerade of piety. Demetrius and the others were motivated by money not religion. Religion is often used to cover up selfish motives.

When revival comes, culture is deeply affected because professing Christians get saved, backslidden Christians get right with Christ, the church operates on Holy Spirit power and a great many unchurched people are saved. As Christianity affects pagan culture, it brings Christianity into conflict with pagan culture.

COMMOTION N REVIVAL

Acts 19:28-34

These riot engineers were masters at mob psychology and knew the emotional issue that would stir the people to a frenzy - they said the Christians were opposed to Artemis and they were. ***“When they heard this they were furious and began shouting: ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ Soon the whole city was in an uproar” (Acts 19:28).*** The Ephesians in order to show their dedication to Artemis began to chant and yell, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

I can see them now waving their placards, balling up their fists and shouting violently, “One, two, three, four; we want Artemis and nothing more!” This fanatical crowd had a choice: silver or salvation, gold or God; man’s business or God’s business; Artemis or Christ. They let their emotions rule and bowed to an idol rather than Christ.

The whole city was in an uproar. The crowd in total confusion kept screaming, “Great is Artemis of Ephesus!”

Christianity conflicts with religion and with paganism when it touches people in their pocketbooks. Most unbelievers do not give one whit about Christ and the church until they are economically affected and then there is tremendous contention, conflict and struggle. Remember, behind all unsaved man’s thinking and institutions is the influence of Satan, so naturally revival brings the church into spiritual warfare with the kingdom of darkness which controls every single unsaved person and every unsaved institution. True revival at any level will probably lead to persecution for the Christians. History shows that God brings revival just before a time of persecution for the church.

CONCLUSION

Remember, when you are praying for revival, you are praying for great blessing from God and the result of this will be conflict with paganism and religious professing Christians. Revival is a unique, extraordinary time in the history of the church. It is also a time when Satan and demons come full blast to stop the revival because ultimately culture is being taken out of Satan’s hands and placed under the Lordship of Christ. In revival, the devil loses ground. While we must deplore all forms of idolatry, we cannot help be impressed with the Ephesians dedication to Artemis. While they were motivated by pride, selfishness and greed, their zeal for a false goddess was truly amazing. What about your zeal for the true God, Christians? Do you have as much zeal for Jehovah--God as they had for a false god? Are you willing to move among people and cry out, “Great is Jehovah! Praise to His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord?” Can you honestly shout out, “One, two, three, four; we want Christ and nothing more?” If you can, then revival is about to begin in your heart.