TWELVE POINTS OF LIGHT

POINT 12: *THE GREAT AWAKENING - STORIES OF REVIVAL*

INTRODUCTION

A. Notes
   1. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *I am profoundly convinced that the greatest need in the world today is revival in the Church of God. Yet alas! the whole idea of revival seems to have become strange to so many good Christian people. There are some who even seem to resent the very idea, and actually speak and write against it. Such an attitude is due to both a serious misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and to a woeful ignorance of the history of the Church. Anything therefore that can instruct God's people in this matter is very welcome.*
   2. Most American denominations grew to strength because of the 19th century awakenings.
   3. Of the nine colonial colleges in America, six were born as a result of awakenings.
   4. American and British awakenings led to worldwide missionary outreach in the 19th century.
   5. The Second Great Awakening helped stir the anti-slavery movement as well as movements for prison reform, child labor laws, women's rights, and inner-city missions.

B. Biblical awakenings
   1. Old Testament
      a. King Jehoash, 2 Kings 11 - 12
      b. King Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18
      c. King Asa, 2 Chronicles 15
      d. King Josiah, 2 Kings 22 - 23
      e. Zerubbabel, Ezra 5 - 6
      f. Nehemiah, Nehemiah 8 - 9, 13

   2. New Testament
      a. Pentecost, Acts 2
      b. Persecutions, Acts 4:23-27

C. Patterns of Spiritual Renewal (from *Christian History*, vol. 23)
   1. Awakenings are usually preceded by a time of spiritual depression, apathy and gross sin.
      a. Many Christians are little different than those in secular society.
      b. Churches seem to be asleep.

   2. Individuals or small groups of God's people become conscious of their sins and vow to forsake all that displeases God.
   3. An awakening of Christians who desire to experience God's power as a result of their awareness of God's holiness.
   4. An awakening of Christians occurs with many being deepened in their spiritual lives.
   5. An awakening may be God's means of preparing and strengthening His people for future challenges or trials.

AMERICAN AWAKENINGS

A. Beginnings
   1. Solomon Stoddard
      a. Pastored the First Church of Northampton, Massachusetts for 60 years until his death in 1729.
      b. Religious awakenings in America began through his ministry.
      c. Had intense desire to reach unconverted and to see growth in the spiritual life of New England.
      d. Was almost alone in his concern over spiritual apathy of his day.

e. Began first era of active evangelism in America, *When Men don't preach about the Danger of Damnation, there is want of good preaching. Some Preachers preach much about Moral Duties and the blessed estate of Godly Men, but don't seek to awaken Sinners and make them sensible of their Danger...These Things are very needful in their places to be spoken unto; but if Sinners don't often hear of Judgment and Damnation, few will be converted. Many Men are in a Deep Sleep and flatter themselves as if there were no Hell, or at least that God will not deal so harshly with them as to Damn them. Psalm 36:2. Ministers must give them no Rest in such a Condition. They must pull them as Brands out of the Burnings...Ministers are faulty when they speak to them with Gentleness, as Eli rebuked his Sons.*

f. Believed there would be periods of spiritual drought followed by great spiritual activity.
   1) *Saints are quickened.*
   2) *Sinners are converted.*
   3) *Many that are not Converted do become more Religious.*

g. Due to failing health, his congregation called an assistant in 1722, his grandson, Jonathan Edwards.

2. Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen
   a. Arrived in New Jersey in 1719 from Holland.
   b. His persistent evangelism set the stage for the Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies in 1740.
   c. He was a Pietist
      1) An evangelical movement in the Lutheran and Reformed churches.
      2) Stressed personal conversion and a life of obedient faith and love.

   d. Dismayed by the lack of spirituality in his congregation.
      1) *...while horse racing, gambling, dissipation, and rudeness of various kinds were common, the [church] was attended at convenience, and religion consisted of the mere formal pursuit of the routine of duty.*
      2) He concluded that much of his congregation was unconverted.

   e. Emphases
      1) Considered conversion as the basis for admission to communion.
      2) Promoted strict church discipline.
      3) Developed private devotional meetings.
      4) Made church laymen into preachers.

B. The First Great Awakening (1730s - 1740s)
   1. Need
      a. Increased wealth led people away from spiritual things.
      b. Intermittent wars with Indians troubled the people.
      c. Great energy spent in conquering the new continent.
      d. Witchcraft mania drove many away from Puritanism and anything supernatural.
      e. Shortage of trained ministers.

   2. In New England - Congregationalists
      a. Jonathan Edwards
         1) Became pastor of the Congregational Church of Northampton, MA in 1729.
         2) Stressed evangelism in 1734 with a series of sermons on justification by faith.
         3) Awakening began that year, *The Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in and wonderfully work among us...This Work of God, as...the Number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious Alteration in the Town; so that in the spring and summer following, Anno 1735, the Town seemed to be full of the Presence of God; it was never so full of Love, nor of Joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable Tokens of God's Presence in almost every House. It was a time of Joy in families on account of Salvation being brought unto them...More than 300 Souls were savingly brought home to Christ, in this Town, in the Space of half a Year...I hope that by far the greater Part of persons in this Town, above sixteen Years of age, are such as have the saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ.*
         4) Other pastors started to promote the awakening in Western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

5) His theology
   a) Consistent application of Calvin's teaching on God's grace and sovereignty.
   b) Considerable use of reason and natural theology.
   c) Confronted developing climate of humanistic rationalism.

6) Selected resolutions
   a) *...I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory...*
   b) *to do whatever I think to be my duty, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general.*
   c) *Never to lose one moment of time, but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.*
   d) *Never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.*
   e) *To be endeavoring to find out fit objects of charity and liberality.*
   f) *To maintain the strictest temperance in eating and drinking.*
   g) *To study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.*
   h) *Never hence-forward, till I die, to act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God's.*
   i) *After afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them, what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them.*

7) His sermons
   a) *"Safety, Fulness, and Sweet Refreshment, to Be Found in Christ,"* Isaiah 32:2.. *The saints themselves, while they remain in this imperfect state, and have so much remains of sin in their hearts, are liable still to many troubles and sorrows, and much weariness, and have often need to resort anew unto Jesus Christ for rest. I shall mention three cases wherein Christ is a sufficient remedy...First. There is rest and sweet refreshment in Christ for those that are wearied with persecutions...Secondly. There is in Christ rest for God's people, when exercised with afflictions...Thirdly. There is in Christ quiet rest and sweet refreshment for God's people, when wearied with the buffetings of Satan.*
   b) *"Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God,"* Deut. 32:35. *The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced, light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but her mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.*

b. George Whitefield
   1) An Anglican priest who was converted through the friendship of Charles Wesley.
   2) First to be called a *Methodist* by students at Oxford University who made fun of his small group that met for prayer and Bible study, went to church and helped the poor.
   3) Made 7 trips to America and preached from Maine to Georgia.
      a) His powerful preaching helped bring to life the Great Awakening.
      b) Not permitted to preach in many churches so he spoke in open fields, barns, and courthouses.
      c) His farewell sermon in Boston, 1740, was heard by 20,000.

   4) Benjamin Franklin constructed a building for Whitefield to preach, in Philadelphia, which became the University of Pennsylvania.

c. Responses
   1) Old Lights
      a) Those who were opposed to anything but the ususal expressions of worship.
      b) Regarded emotional excesses as harmful to religion.
      c) Included Charles Chauncy of Boston.

2) Emotionalists
   a) Those who were inclined to excesses of emotionalism.
   b) James Davenport's wild behavior brought criticism on the Great Awakening.

3) New Lights
   a) Those who tried to be open-minded and steer a middle course between the other two groups.
   b) Thankful for awakening and did not consider excesses as a necessary aspect of the work of God.
   c) Jonathan Edwards was the leader of this group.

3. In the Middle Colonies - Presbyterians
   a. William Tennent
      1) Responded to the need for trained clergy and started a school on his property in Pennsylvania in 1727.
      2) It was mockingly called *Log College* by those who opposed him.
      3) By 1734, four pupils were ordained as Presbyterian ministers, including his son, Gilbert.

   b. Gilbert Tennent
      1) He went on to attend Yale College.
      2) Served a congregation in New Jersey near the place where Frelinghuysen ministered.
      3) He became a leader of the New Lights.
      4) Whitefield attended his church and reported, "[I] never heard such [a] searching sermon. He convinced me more and more that we can preach the Gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own hearts...Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged at his preaching."
4. In the Southern Colonies - Baptists and Methodists
   a. Baptists
      1) Benefitted from the spiritual developments of the Great Awakening.
      2) Helped set the stage for the enormous Baptist expansion later.

   b. Methodists
      1) John Wesley
         a) He had a vision for missions.
         b) In 1771, at the Methodist Conference in Bristol, England, he said, "Our brethren in America call aloud for help. Who are willing to go over and help them?"
         c) Francis Asbury responded to the call.

      2) Francis Asbury
         a) Was placed in charge of the Methodist congregations and preachers in America in 1772.
         b) Adopted the Methodist practice of using traveling preachers, *circuit riders*.
            1] American congregations were small and far apart.
            2] It was almost impossible to have pastors settled in every location.

         c) It is estimated that Asbury preached over 16,000 sermons, ordained more than 4,000 preachers, traveled on horseback 270,000 miles, and wore out six horses.

      3) Reasons for dramatic increase
         a) The Circuit
            1] An army of courageous men endured hardships to take the Gospel into the frontier.
            2] Traveling preachers were a welcome break and provided news, served communion, performed marriages, as well as preached.

         b) Simple theology
            1] Personal responsibility to respond to the message.
            2] The message was tied to strict rules concerning moral issues.

c) Camp meetings
   1] Large crowds would gather to hear evangelistic preaching.
   2] Asbury wrote, *...The ministers of God, Methodists and Presbyterians, united their labors and mingled with the childlike simplicity of primitive times. Fires blazing here and there dispelled the darkness and the shouts of the redeemed captives, and the cries of precious souls struggling into life, broke the silence of midnight...*

C. The Second Great Awakening (1790s - 1840)
1. Need
   a. Reaction by many to excesses of First Great Awakening.
   b. Affect of the war on the nation.
   c. Emphasis on building denominations instead of evangelism.
   d. Rise of Deism and rationalism with decline in spiritual condition of schools.

2. Western Phase
   a. Beginnings
      1) A letter from 1799, *We have heard from different parts the glad tidings of the outpourings of the Spirit, and of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*
      2) Then in 1801, *Revivals, of a more or less general nature, have taken place in many parts, and multitudes have been added to the church...From the west, the Assembly have received intelligence of the most interesting nature. On the borders of Kentucky and Tennessee, the influences of the Spirit of God seem to have been manifested in a very extraordinary manner.*

   b. The Great Camp Meetings
      1) James McGready (1762 - 1817)
         a) Pastored three small churches in Logan County, KY, Muddy River, Red River, Gasper River.
         b) The area was described by Peter Cartwright, *...was called Rogues' Harbor. Here many refugees from almost all parts of the Union fled to escape justice or punishment...It was a desperate state of society. Murderers, horse-thieves, highway robbers, and counterfeiters fled there, until they combined and actually formed a majority.*
         c) By 1798, many *were struck with an awful sense of their lost estate.*
         d) In 1800, 500 members of McGready's three congregations gathered at Red River for a *camp meeting* when *a might effusion of [God's] Spirit came upon the people and the floor was soon covered with the slain; their screams for mercy pierced the heavens.*
         e) Another camp meeting was planned for Gasper River the same year.
            1] More than 8,000 people attended.
            2] It was the turning point of the Awakening in the West.

      2) Barton Stone (1772 - 1844)
         a) Pastored the Cane Ridge and Concord Presbyterian Churches northeast of Lexington, KY.
         b) Traveled to Logan County to observe McGready's camp meetings.
         c) Planned a similar meeting for August, 1801, at Cane Ridge.
            1] Up to 25,000 people attended, from as far away as Ohio and Tennessee.
            2] Rev. Moses Hoge described the scene, *The careless fall down, cry out, tremble, and not infrequently are affected with convulsive twitchings...Nothing that imagination can paint, can make a stronger impression upon the mind, than one of those scenes. Sinners dropping down on every hand, shrieking, groaning, crying for mercy, convulsed; professors praying, agonizing, fainting, falling down in distress, for sinners or in rapturers of joy!...As to the work in general there can be no question but it is of God. The subjects of it, for the most part are deeply wounded for their sins, and can give a clear and rational account of their conversion...*

      3) Camp meetings became famous for excessive enthusiasm.

3. Eastern Phase
   a. Yale College
      1) Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, became president of Yale in 1795.
      2) Revival broke out under his administration and direction in 1802, 1808, 1812, and 1815.

   b. Princeton College
      1) President Ashbell Green was a strong disciplinarian and enforced Bible reading.
      2) Renewal broke out in 1814.

   c. Renewal also took place at Hamden-Sydney, Williams, and Amherst.

4. Charles G. Finney (1792 - 1875)
   a. Background
      1) School teacher who turned to the study of law.
      2) Converted in 1821 and became a Presbyterian home missionary in 1823.
      3) An evangelist from 1824 - 1831.
      4) He was pastor at Broadway Tabernacle in New York City from 1832 - 1837.
      5) A professor and later president of Oberlin College, 1835 - 65.

   b. Revivalism
      1) One of the greatest evangelists in American history.
      2) Defined revival as *...the right use of appropriate means.*
      3) Never prepared sermons but opened his mouth to let the Spirit speak.
      4) Innovations
         a) Held services at unreasonable hours.
         b) Held protracted meetings which conflicted with regular church services.
         c) Emotional and exhortative prayers.
         d) Used harsh language to get people to respond.
         e) Called aloud the names of known sinners.
         f) Used public invitation, "aisle test of Christianity."

   c. Results
      1) Changed religion from God-centered to man-centered.
      2) Rochester Revival, 1831
         a) It was singularly responsible for a national awakening in 1831.
         b) In Rochester
            1] Taverns closed.
            2] The theater became a livery stable.
            3] District Attorney declared that crime rate dropped by two-thirds and stayed that way for years.

5. *The Benevolent Empire*
   a. The Second Great Awakening emphasized the need to clean up society.
   b. This was pursued by the development of volunteer societies which included:
      1) American Bible Society (1816)
      2) American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810)
      3) American Sunday School Union (1817)
      4) American Tract Society (1826)
      5) American Temperance Society (1826)
      6) American Home Missionary Society (1826)

   c. Emphasis on abolition of slavery.

D. The Third Great Awakening - Layman's Prayer Revival (1857 - 1859)
   1. Estimates of conversions are listed between three hundred thousand and one million.
   2. Characterized by prayer not preaching.
   3. Dominance of lay leadership
      a. Absence of the famous itinerant evangelists of previous eras.
      b. Charles Finney declared that the meetings were "carried to a large extent through lay influence, so much so as almost to throw the ministers into the shade."

   4. Almost universal lack of emotional excesses that so deeply characterized the Second Great Awakening.
   5. Use of large prayer meetings in the major cities, with hundreds of businessmen desiring to pray. A quote from the New York Times (20 March 1858): *It is not often that the Daily Press feels called upon to chronicle the spiritual movements of the public mind. The great wave of religious excitement which is now sweeping over the nation is one of the most remarkable movements since the Reformation...In this city we have beheld a sight which not the most enthusiastic fanatics for church observances could have ever hoped to look upon: we have seen in a business quarter of the city, in the busiest hours, assemblies of merchants, clerks, and working men, to the number of some 5,000, gathered day after day for simple solemn worship. Similar assemblies we find in other portions of the city, a theatre is turned into a chapel; churches of all sects are opened and crowded day and night.*
   6. Mobilization of laity for house-to-house visitation, tract distribution and Sunday school work.
   7. Intensity of the revival: it reached from the largest to cities to the smallest towns.
   8. Impact of the revival was not limited to the United States but became a worldwide event, including Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England.

CONCLUSION

A. Renewal is the responsibility of the redeemed.
B. Evangelism is a byproduct of renewal.
C. Renewal can be uncomfortable.
D. Renewal is desperately needed today.

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