

Global End-Time Revival; is it Biblical?

Charismatics are certain, and many Reformed hope, that a global, public, massive revival will restore the fortunes of the church in the near future as a testimony for the end of the ages. Many base this upon the principle of a latter rain expression of growth as a corollary of the early rain breaking up the ground. The early rain is seen as the early church bringing in a massive revival of the Gospel, but the latter rain expression (it is said) will be bigger and better, being the harvesting of the world as opposed to the planting of the word.

Reformed folk hope for a revival to fix their problems because nothing is working. Conservative Protestants are seeing their churches continue to diminish in ever-greater numbers; most moving into Charismatic churches. But the Charismatic Movement has stalled and their overall numbers are reduced also, though some individual churches have grown slightly. It is an inescapable fact that thousands of people have left Charismatic churches in great dependency and despair in the last 20 years.

If we take a global view of the impact of the Charismatic Movement in Britain since 1962, have we seen a fulfilment of the many promises and prophecies that the Charismatic vision would bring in revival, massive church attendance, a glorious testimony, fulfilled empowered believers, a righteous nation and an effective Gospel message? No! In fact the very opposite is the case.

The truth is that the social situation of the UK is worse than it has ever been both in terms of morality and social infrastructure. Year on year the country falls deeper into an abyss of lawlessness, iniquity and abusiveness. I do not need to develop this point for any sane observer; the Charismatic Movement did nothing to improve society but has made it worse.

But the church situation is also much worse. Giving to Christian charities has fallen to its lowest ever levels. Giving to missions has greatly diminished. Volunteers for mission work in the traditional mission organisations has collapsed. The Gospel has been more adulterated than ever before in history so that most church people do not even know what the truth is anymore. Overall church attendance in the UK has fallen through the floor when compared to Victorian levels. Some years ago traditional church institutions were losing 2,000 members every week; things are not much better now. Growth is mainly occurring in Classical Black Pentecostal churches, largely through immigration.

Worse than all this is the impoverished state of most Christians. In many, unrighteousness prevails and is tolerated. Sin is a subject rarely expounded and its dangers not understood. The fear of God is nowhere to be seen. In fact, the lifestyles modelled by leaders encourages the church membership to be more worldly, more uncontrolled and careless. Most churches are indistinct from the world; they love the same things, have the same goals, act the same, and look the same. Church members regularly, lie, cheat, gossip, slander good people, back-bite, act treacherously and fail to love as brothers. Fornication in some types of churches is as common as in the world.

We could go on. The point is that the teachings of the Charismatic Movement and the hopes of the Reformed have all failed. Things are much worse than 40 years ago (and even then many commentators were saying that the church was already apostate).

In this situation, everyone hopes for a global revival and for a supernatural intervention to fix all the mistakes. But why should God intervene in this way when he has given us all the power, all the grace, all the resources and all the instructions to do well? The very problem is that the church does not follow God's word and this is why it is in the mess it is in. What

is the point of crying to God for a supernatural intervention when the church at large has shunned God's own word?

The chief hopes for a latter rain expression for power in the church are found in the teaching of Pentecostals and Charismatics. The most radical form of these is the Latter Rain theology, which first flourished in the late 1940s until it was outlawed as heretical by the AOG churches, but which has now flowered in the Charismatic Movement and especially in the New Apostolic Reformation and ex-Restoration Movement. No good will come of this since the teachings are not only unbiblical but also occult and blasphemous in nature.¹ Another source of expectation is the millennial teachings of certain groups, which we have exposed in many papers as being without foundation.²

What are we to make of all this?

No apostolic support

The first thing to state clearly is that this hope for a universal, massive, public, powerful end-time revival of the church's fortunes is completely unbiblical. It has no apostolic support whatsoever. There is no clear apostolic statement regarding a global, public, end-time revival that will see the church dominating the world. If that is the case, then all the dreams and hopes for a global revival are pointless and a waste of time.

In fact the thrust of the prophetic warnings of Jesus and the apostles is that the end will see a worsening of fortunes for the church and endurance is required to just survive.

Evidence

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thess 2:1-4

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. Matt 24:4-3

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Tim 4:1-3

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. ... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 2 Tim 3:1, 3-4

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 1 Jn 2:18

¹ See many other papers on this for details, such as 'The Charismatic Catastrophe' or 'The Rescue Package'.

² Both the Postmillennial triumphalist teachings of Reconstructionists and Charismatics, as well as the premillennial ideas of Dispensationalists.

The whole book of Revelation was written to encourage saints, especially in the end times, to persevere because of the suffering they are called to endure. In the world we have tribulation but Jesus has conquered the enemy and our future is secure in him.

The warning thrust of all Scripture

To prepare us for the prospect of difficult times and a general falling away in the church (the opposite of a revival) the Lord God gave us example after example of this in history. Despite initial victories sustained by a person who was a type of Christ; despite the provision of miracles and angelic support; despite grace upon grace, the Lord's people continually apostatised, rebelled, and ended their dispensation³ in great difficulties. In every case only a remnant survived as faithful. The testimony of Scripture is for a remnant not for a worldwide revival and a large faithful church.

Moses and the children of God in the wilderness

In this period Moses is the type of Christ. Following the Passover (which speaks of the cross) he oversees a great victory over the enemies of God's called-out people and the Red Sea is a type of entering death and then resurrection. After this the people are given God's word from heaven and instructions on worship and living righteously. But what happens next?

Immediately there is idolatry with the Golden Calf; a return to the occult worship of the world they had left.⁴ Over time the people failed to obey the Lord and corporately complained against him ten times, this was despite being given miraculous food and water, as well as deliverance from enemies. Of this generation Hebrews tells us that God cast them out as rebels and they died in the wilderness, with the exception of Moses, Joshua and Caleb. It required forty years to form a new generation that would trust God and occupy the Promised Land.

Instead of being on a godly pilgrimage to the Promised Land of Canaan (symbolising heaven), a three-day journey at normal walking speed, the people continually rebelled and apostatised, committing idolatry. The testimony was failure not success.

The period of Joshua and the Judges

In this period Joshua is the type of Christ who secures great victories against the enemies of the Lord's people. Crossing the Jordan is the type of dying with Christ and being raised with Christ this time; entering the land is the life of the believer who has to contend against the world the flesh and the devil (Canaanite tribes). This is the period of waiting for the revelation of the king to come.

After the initial victories and the allotment of the tribal lands Joshua dies and the people continually rebel, apostatise and blaspheme. To correct them God puts them into slavery under Canaanite and eastern warlords for a period until he then provides a deliverer (types of Christ) to set them free. But each time this happened the people quickly rebel and commit idolatry, and each time is worse than the last. Prophets are brought in to demand correction and warn of the evils they are committing, but they continually ignore them.

This appalling situation, where every man does what is right in his own eyes with no submission to the word of God, continues until the monarchy is established to denote a new period of symbolism. Again the testimony is one of failure and diminishing, not success and godliness.

³ That is, a period of time for a certain type of divine system of order, government or administration; such as, patriarchal times, the monarchy etc.

⁴ Apis was the bull God of Egypt who ensured fertility.

The monarchy

The people demand a king like the nations, against God's will, and are initially given Saul to show them what naturally occurs when kings rule (they demand taxes for their retinue and palaces, rule unrighteously and command you to fight their wars)

David is brought in as a type of Christ the King, the man after God's own heart; the shepherd of his people. Again David's job is to spend his life fighting and defeating the enemies of the Lord's people. So much is he a man of war that he had no time to build the temple, which was his heart's desire. His son, Solomon is left to complete this task. The dedication of the temple is coupled with the slaughter of tens of thousands of blood offerings, a symbol of the greatness of the cross of Christ.

So, the Israelites are a blood bought people whose occupation of the land is won by the victories of their great king. The history of this people is thus a type of the life of the believer in the kingdom after the cross. And what do we see? Rebellion, apostasy, idolatry and blasphemy, plus a continual alliances with the world. The idolatry is so bad that the Lord compares it to the adultery of a spouse and states that only a remnant will return, the vast majority of the people will fall away and be condemned. Even with a multitude of prophetic warnings and great deliverances by the Lord in his long-suffering, the people still rebel and apostatise.

This period follows the example of the previous ones and the apostasy is even greater. There is no successful end to any of these periods, rather failure, sufferings and apostasy.

Summary

So, we have the continual example of the Lord's people in the Old Testament coupled with the specific teaching of the Lord himself, plus his disciples, that the end times will be a time of apostasy of the church; it will fall away.

To make it even clearer, Jesus sates,

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? Lk 18:8

The Greek construction of this sentence demands, or at least implies, a negative response. This means that when the Lord returns there will not be a large-scale, public testimony of faith in Christ in the world. There will not be an obvious, public, faithful church evident in the earth; but there will be a faithless, apostate, global, rebellious church submissive to an antichristian world government.

In this the church is like Christ in his victory on the cross. To the world's eyes this was a tragic failure. It seemed that the messianic movement he had initiated had collapsed and all his followers were scattered and dejected. The cross seemed like the end of Jesus' mission; but the cross was only the beginning. For the end-time church suffering the fires of persecution and scattering on the earth, it seems like the end of Christianity; but it is only the beginning of a new glorious age that starts with the return of Christ.

The idea of an end-time church that rules the world and brings peace to all is contrary to Jesus' own words:

Do *you* suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. Lk 12:51

What will happen to the church at the end?

The end-time genuine church will be a recapitulation of the early church in this regard. It will be an underground, secret, surreptitious body based in house churches that maintain a powerful but quiet testimony. These churches are like salt in a meal or yeast in a loaf

(illustrations Jesus used of the kingdom), hidden from sight. Just as the early church was persecuted and met in secret in homes, so will be the end-time church. Just as the early church was successful in preaching a pure Gospel and giving people the faith to resist the fires of persecution, so will the end-time church. This is not only the example of the apostolic church it is also the clear scenario given us in the book of Revelation.

The Lord told us that his church would prevail and that the wheat would come to harvest at the same time as the poisonous darnel that was sown within it (Matt 13:24ff.). Thus we see a fulness of the true church (the wheat) alongside the flowering of a toxic false church (the tares or darnel). This parable teaches that the church comes to maturity of growth and is not stunted; it does not teach that the church will be a large, visible, public, revived body and certainly not that it rules the world (as per Latter Rain theology).

So we have the church coming to fulness. This firstly means that the full number of elect are converted in time and the last person to be added to the church is called out. But it also means that there is a testimony to the angelic powers (that it's the focus of testimony according to Paul - Eph 3:10), even though it may be hidden from men. There is a great testimony, but it is not a worldly, or fleshly testimony. It is not a testimony in the way that the world considers success. The true end-time church is an underground body meeting in secret in homes.

Conclusion

We have to get away from being centred upon worldly considerations and parameters; God does not work like that. The world is the enemy of God and those who love the world make themselves the enemy of God. We do not need worldly strategies.

God's strategy is not a gathering momentum of vast numbers in large churches of many thousands who gain greater and greater influence and power over secular nations. This is not God's plan for this time period. The fulness of God covering the earth in his glory is for the time after the Second Coming. Failing to see the proper application of certain prophecies has deluded men into building empires on sand.

What is vital is that the church understands the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the end-time church and acts accordingly. The first thing to do is to get the church structured correctly by forming Biblical house churches led by a team of equal elders and meeting secretly. After that there is much to do, but that is a matter for a different paper.

The church must live by faith and faith must be rooted in divine truth. Faith in a pointless and fleshly hope is not Biblical faith but rather wishful thinking. Such faith leads people into building unbiblical churches and campaigning for unbiblical strategies. True faith must be rooted in God's word and this means understanding what God says about the end. True faith is not discouraged by the falling away of most people at the end, or by the tribulations to come; true faith builds according to God's instructions and lives one day at a time. By doing this we will see genuine growth as people are converted by our testimony to Christ one by one. We may not have a large church of thousands but, with God's help, we may see a proliferation of small, sound house churches in the days to come.

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