

## The History of the Church Part 3 # Pentecostals, Charismatics and the Third Wave

### Luke 7: 18-28

In Topeka Kansas in the 1890s there was a small Bible school (only 50 students), led by a holiness preacher called Charles Parham.

He was convinced that there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> work of the HS after salvation. This was in keeping with our friend Charles Wesley who we heard about last week, only there was a difference. For Wesley and the Methodists it was all about becoming holy.

Charles Parham was convinced that it wasn't so much about becoming holy, but that the 2<sup>nd</sup> work of the HS was actually about gifts of the Spirit, and the empowering of the HS to minister in signs and wonders. He felt that the sign of this work of grace was speaking in tongues.

The interesting thing was that none of them had experienced any of this however. He felt that it was what the Bible taught but hadn't actually had it happen – either to him or to anyone else he was teaching in his very little bible school in Topeka Kansas.

This reminds me of the story of the Vineyard. It was all going quite well but John Wimber, who led the church in California, was convinced of the command in the bible to heal the sick. So every Sunday they called people forward for healing. For a year no-one got healed. In fact the people praying actually caught illnesses off those getting prayed.

We are here today doing what we're doing because of the obedience of people like John Wimber, who based his practice on what he felt Jesus was saying rather than his own experience up to now, and persisted despite initial setbacks. And Charles Parham who was speaking about this 2<sup>nd</sup> work of grace and filling of the HS, despite having no experience of it, he continued to pray.

Then on Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 1899 it all changed. They were all praying together seeking the ministry of the HS, and one of them began speaking in tongues. Then more began, they continued meeting and the HS continued to fill people and release in them gifts like tongues, healing and other outward signs of an inner work.

A bit of background on Charles Parham: he was a loner, a bit eccentric and a racist. There was a one-eyed black man called William Seymour who wanted to be part of this but CP wouldn't let him in because he was black, so he was allowed to sit outside by a window looking in.

WS becomes convinced that this was of God (even though it was coming via this odd bloke CP, and even though he had never personally experienced any of these manifestations) and got some friends together to hear what he was learning.

By now it was **1906**. They met in LA in a house on Bonnie Brae Street and some of the group began to have powerful experiences – tongues, prophecies, healings.

It caused somewhat of a kerfuffle, and the windows were open, so the street came out to watch (no tv). The message spread, the HS fell on people in the crowds peering in to watch proceedings. It got to a point where the front porch collapsed and they had to move to somewhere bigger.

They then found an old church building in Azusa St. The meetings then continued, 24x7, until 1915. It soon attracted people of all backgrounds – rich and poor, black, white, Hispanic and Chinese. Women were equal participants as well. This was all quite radical for early 1900s and not part of a human plan, just the blessing and outpouring of the HS.

Many visited and took what was happening back with them – all the major cities in America were holding Azusa St prayer meetings before long. It was the beginning of the movement called Pentecostalism.

It spread worldwide, because the HS would speak to people and send them out to different parts of the world.

For instance this couple of ladies felt God speaking to them about going to Para – they didn't know where that was, so went to the library, found out it was a region in Brazil, so prayed into it and felt the HS saying go to NY on such and such a street on a certain day and time, someone will meet you there with the money to get to Para. It happened just as the HS said – some men came with some money and said 'Are you the ladies going to Para?'

Now there are 1000 Pentecostal churches in Brazil.

In 1914 they added some structure and formed the Assemblies of God. Other denominations were also established. This was when they split on racial grounds – when they had meetings and it became time to organise things the African American groups were generally left out and they ended up forming a denomination of their own the Church of God in Christ.

Azuza St also stopped about this time. (Thanks to Steve Nicholson and his series 'Roots of the Vineyard' for this material)

What do we see with this amazing outpouring of the HS and a move of God that would literally change the world?

**It was chaotic, unplanned, poorly executed and done by amateurs with no formal training, just an awful lot of courage, a willingness to say yes to what God was doing, and of course the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace and sovereignty of God running like a divine thread through the very human stories.**

Things to note:

1. The difference between Catholic and Protestant values (and how we sit in between them)
2. How all over Europe there was revolution, but this was averted in England because of revival.
3. When Pentecostalism exploded onto the scene it was very egalitarian – men and women used equally, a big mix of class, background, education and most important race. Only when men began to organise it do we see the social and cultural norms of the time being imposed upon it – again most importantly the separation and subjugation of the races. Could it be that if this hadn't of happened we might have seen the racial equality in America that they are still trying (and failing) to achieve now?

### **Restorationism**

Another split happened in 1940s with restorationism (also known as the latter day rain movement) – a restoration based around big prophets and apostles releasing lots of power which will bring thousands of people into the church and this great revival would precede the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ, all ushered in by 24/7 prayer.

It became known as Elim, and them and AOG had 600 churches each. AOG pressed in even more to evangelism and church planting whilst Elim went for big powerful encounter meetings.

I can't comment on modern day Pentecostalism in this country and I am just using as my source Steve Nicholson's talks on church history and vineyard roots. What I can say is that restorationism is a subtle influence on charismatic churches even today.

There is a hunger for revival and for the return of Christ. The Bible says that no-one knows the day or the hour, only to be ready.

That means taking hold of our mandate to spread the kingdom of God, be salt and light in the world, share the good news, heal the sick, set the oppressed free and care for the poor.

And as we go to pray.

It doesn't mean look for the anointed prophet or apostle who will stand on a platform and preach to thousands. It doesn't mean bigger and better meetings. It doesn't mean power and glory in the church building – it means the church taking the power and glory that rests upon them into the world to be agents of transformation.

According to Steve Nicholson (talking from a US perspective) AOG now has 12,000 churches worldwide and Elim (who were restorationist and went for the amazing meetings with the anointed apostles) 500 – they hadn't planted churches and grown numerically.

We want to grow, impact the city and the region and to some degree even the world. To do that it isn't about making this bigger and better. Our focus needs to be on what goes on out there.

And so post war we find the church once again settling down and sliding into nominalism. The spirit was moving amongst the Pentecostals, but this hadn't impacted the conservative churches – Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists (who by now were looking more like the Anglican church they once got kicked out of, and less like the grass roots spirit-filled move of God through small groups, worship and radical discipleship).

The Pentecostal outpouring is sometimes known as the 1<sup>st</sup> wave, and then we had a charismatic renewal, which brought the gifts of the spirit into more traditional mainstream denominations, the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave.

People like Dennis Bennett and his book '9 o'clock in the morning'.

What both waves had in common was a belief that there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> blessing that came after conversion – in addition to it.

Then interesting it was a Quaker holding a bible study who was responsible for the conversion of a man called John Wimber. He went about converting people left right and centre, and by 1970 he was leading 11 Bible studies that involved more than 500 people. During this time he had an uncalled for Charismatic experience when his son Sean was miraculously healed and him and his wife Carol started speaking in tongues, even though he didn't believe in the gifts of the spirit still being available to all.

So having been kicked out of the Quaker church he joined Calvary Chapel, which had grown out of the Jesus People movement, but he got burned out flying round the country teaching on church growth, was on his knees in a hotel and felt God say to him, 'You've shown me what you can do, now let me show you what I can do.'

He gathered with a bunch of other people in a similar situation, and they just started meeting together to sing love songs to Jesus, and in that place of intimacy and simplicity sought to fall in love with Jesus all over again.

The Vineyard was born. It grew, they met in a High School gym, they prayed for healing and didn't see anyone healed for a year, then this guy Lonnie Frisbee – a messed-up itinerant preacher – was invited to speak one Easter and the spirit fell in power.

Vineyard was known for its intimate worship – singing songs to Jesus rather than about Jesus – and because JW was a professional musician he applied the same production values to their recordings. Vineyard music went around the world. If you are new to church you will only know brilliant worship from gifted organisations and groups like Jesus Culture, Hillsongs and Housefires. In the 80s it was Vineyard.

And the other thing Vineyard were known for was signs and wonders. Unlike the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave, this 3<sup>rd</sup> wave as it became to be known believed that when you became a Christian you were filled with the spirit. Sometimes it is like a pilot light and the full-on turning up the heat hadn't happened yet (and this is perhaps how it was associated with a 2<sup>nd</sup> blessing experience). And Wimber was passionate that it wouldn't be the superstar at the front ministering in the gifts – but it was for everyone. We didn't want superstars – everyone gets to play.

Thirdly every Vineyard Church has at its core a responsibility to care for the poor and imitate Jesus' heart of compassion for those in need.

Vineyard has always been a church planting movement, but for a long time Wimber refused to plant outside the US, wanting instead to bring renewal to existing churches and denominations. However eventually in 1987 John Mumford persuaded him to release 3 Vineyard churches in the UK, which has now grown to 140 churches.

Pete Greig says that with a move of God you get

- Renewal
- Reform
- Results

We might feel that church hasn't been doing so well in the UK lately. Especially compared to the olden days.

Well in 1730 only 5-10% of people attended church, only 50% of parishes had a vicar and there were only 5 Christian MPs.

Between 1738-1760 there was renewal from Wesley and Whitfield, with flexible models of doing church, small groups discipling people and 'hotspots' – certain places and ministries doing particularly well.

Between 1760 and 1790: out of that came reform – both in the church and in society.

Wesley died in 1790 and it was between 1790 and 1835 that you saw results.

- The evangelical population increasing by 55%
- Abolition of slavery 1833
- The Sunday school movement (by 1831 1.25m children 25% of the pop, and by 1870 70% of the pop were attending Sunday School).

Only at this point do you see the nation changed – takes generations.

Pete Greig think we are seeing the same thing now.

1970 – 1990: renewal

- Renewal of the church
- Worship transformed
- Charismatic experience becomes almost universal
- Unity

- Limited salvation

1990 – 2015 – reform

- Alpha
- Church planting
- Prayer models
- CAP
- Food banks

### Results?

Times Newspaper 28<sup>th</sup> Dec 2018: 'Atheism down as UK gets spiritual' The number of atheists in Britain has fallen in the past year, according to a survey suggesting that more people are attending church, albeit irregularly.

Financial Times Newspaper April 2019: churches fill gaps left by austerity cuts.

You also have beacons of exceptional growth and favour – HTB and the renewal coming through them to the Anglican church. Causeway Coast Vineyard in N Ireland and City Church Aberdeen.

Could it be that results are beginning to come and the nation is indeed changing?

In a letter Pete Greig wrote to the church published in Premier Christianity Magazine he says

Dear Church,

The Lord is doing a new thing among us. There's a new urgency in our hearts; a new spring in our steps. St Augustine said that God rubs salt on our lips to provoke a keener thirst for his presence, and as I travel around the UK, praying and talking with a lot of leaders, I see more and more salty lips. The Spirit seems to be bringing us to our knees, and calling us to cooperate in new ways for a kingdom beyond our own little empires.

This is more than mere rhetoric. There are empirical reasons to rejoice. Dynamic new churches are being planted in many traditions. The Methodists have partnered with the Pioneer Network to renew dwindling congregations and repopulate empty buildings. Vineyard churches are multiplying fast. Anglicans are replanting vibrant congregations in depleted parishes. The bishop in my own diocese just announced plans to establish 100 new worshipping communities in the next ten years (this would have been unthinkable five years ago). Feathers are being ruffled, for sure, but the gospel imperative is prevailing.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) has planted 720 churches in 20 years from Newport in South Wales to Southend-on-Sea, and they regularly gather 40,000 people to pray all night at London's Excel Centre.

In Scotland, City Church, Aberdeen has grown so fast it now fills nine separate venues. In Northern Ireland, Causeway Coast Vineyard introduced 2,308 people to Jesus last year alone. They also served 13,752 meals to local families and mobilised 14,495 volunteer hours. Sixteen years ago theirs was a church of just six people. I could go on. But the truth is that there are similar stories of extraordinary new life emerging throughout the UK.

This really matters because, as the theologian George Eldon Ladd said, the Church is the primary agency of the kingdom of God. We fed 100,000 hungry families in the UK last year and provided the biggest network of debt counsellors by far. We run thousands of schools, clubs and hospices, more than 50 per cent of all toddler and parent groups, and the majority of the nation's extracurricular youth work.

With such a track record, perhaps we should walk a little taller through the corridors of power. As the American theologian Stanley Hauerwas says, "The most interesting, creative and political solution we Christians have to offer our troubled society...is the church. We serve the world by showing it something it is not, namely, a place where God is forming a family out of strangers."

This assertion is supported by a surprising MORI poll which revealed the Church as the most socially and culturally diverse community in the UK. With multiculturalism failing and protectionism proliferating, it's fantastic news that the Church can stand as a prophetic example of reconciliation between different cultural, political and socio-economic identities.

The essentials of Christian belief are clearly listed in the Nicene Creed, which was formulated in the year AD 325. All Christians ever since, whether they are Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, or Free Church, have agreed on the central doctrinal statements expressed in this particular statement of faith. These, I suggest, are the essentials around which we can unite, and beyond which we must grant liberty for differing opinions about issues relating to the future of Israel, the chronology of the end times, the nature of the priesthood, the practice of the gifts of the Spirit, church governance or even (dare I say it?) impassioned perspectives about marriage and human sexuality. Such topics are all extremely important. We should think about them very carefully indeed and form opinions. But they must never be allowed to define orthodoxy or divide the Church. These are days of remarkable opportunity for the Church in the UK. The Spirit of God is calling us to wake up, to walk tall, to work and pray together in new ways. He sends us to go and make disciples of schools and streets and cities throughout Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. And he gives us the most extraordinary promise that, as we go, he will be with us always, "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

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