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### New Testament Evangelism

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FOUR GREAT REVIVALS are recorded in the New Testament. The first occurred in the Jordan River area near Jericho with a wilderness evangelist named John.

Jerusalem, Judea, and the surrounding area were shaken by another New Testament revival recorded by a Greek physician named Luke. He tells the story of an unknown friend of his called Theophilus. It seems that there were about 120 followers of Christ who waited in prayer and meditation because Jesus had "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). The promise was for a new kind of baptism, not a ritual fulfilled in Jordan as an outward sign of an inward work, but an inward work effected by a strange new presence of the Spirit who cleansed and filled the soul. The Holy Spirit came all right, and so did a revival. Miraculous signs and power were evidenced. The 120 transformed. Thousands were saved, even in a single day.

A third New Testament revival also is recorded by Dr. Luke. It occurred in Samaria through the ministry of a church board member, Philip. The results were unbelievable by our standards of revival success today. In fact, the momentum of the revival captured the attention of the First Church in Jerusalem, which sent their pastor, Peter, and his associate, John, to continue the meeting and to preach holiness to the people.

The fourth great revival came to the city of Ephesus through the ministry of St. Paul. Paul asked the Ephesians, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They answered, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Immediately, Paul accepted the challenge; and as he began teaching the congregation "the Holy Ghost came on them: . . . and all the men were about twelve" (Acts 19:2-3, 6-7). But the Holy Spirit on a dozen men resulted in a revival which shook the city of Ephesus and at one point even provoked a riot by the tradesmen who saw the revival as a threat to the image-making business.

These four revivals then, John the Baptist at the Jordan, Peter at Pentecost, Philip in Samaria, and Paul in Ephesus, constitute something of a New Testament pattern for mass evangelism. The next question is this: Wherein were these four revivals different and wherein were they alike?

First, it is evident that the methods and manners of the four evangelists were different. John the Baptist was a rugged individualist, peculiar in dress, and somewhat flamboyant in manner. People in his meetings were struck with awe and wonder as they watched and listened. Peter was an exfisherman, impulsive and often unpredictable. Philip was a layman of limited gifts. Paul was a Roman citizen, urbane and cosmopolitan in outlook, preaching with intellectual and spiritual power. Therefore the secret of success in these revivals was not directly related

to the personality and manner of the evangelist.

Some have tried to evaluate revival preaching in terms of the intellect. Here again the spectrum is wide. Paul was a Sanhedrin man with an education equivalent in modern times to several years of university graduate study. Peter was a self-made preacher, an ex-businessman. John the Baptist had an unusual home training but shunned the traditional pattern of adult Jewish religious training for the ascetic life of the wilderness. Philip was a layman without the equivalent of training generally considered necessary for a religious leader.

Even the areas and types of people involved in the revivals varied. John preached on the river-bank. Peter ministered to the world's greatest religious center while Paul preached in the pagan city of Ephesus. Philip was reserved for the heretics of Samaria.

There are other differences as well. John's revival emphasized repentance, Peter preached on prophecy at Pentecost, and Paul on a second crisis. John spoke as a prophet, Paul as a missionary and theologian. Peter and Paul were more concerned with founding churches and establishing lasting organizations than John and Philip, while John and Philip showed more interest in baptism than did Peter and Paul.

But in spite of all their sharp differences, there is a striking similarity in these revivals. Like a single gold thread which is woven into the warp and woof of a tapestry, there is a single central characteristic in these four revivals—the evident presence and working of the Holy Spirit.

John, according to the angel, "was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). On the Day of Pentecost "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). At Samaria, Peter and John "laid . . . their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:17). And while Paul preached at Ephesus, "the Holy Ghost came on them; . . ." (Acts 19:6).

Men of themselves could not accomplish the results of these revivals. The places where they worshiped were shaken, miraculously people from many nations understood in their own language, nervous disorders such as palsy were quieted, lepers were cleansed, wrong attitudes were changed, and, most of all, sins were forgiven.

How then does the Holy Spirit come? What requisite is there for His outpouring? The answer is in one word, faith. Ten days of prayer at Pentecost, self-abasement in the Jordan wilderness, preaching at Samaria, teaching and laying on of hands in Ephesus were all human preparations for a divine work. But the Holy Spirit is never poured out in sanctifying power or in revival fire except by faith. Faith is the key which unlocks the power that ushers in revival.

Perhaps this is an oversimplification, for faith does

(Continued on Page 5)