

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 22 “Defending the Supernatural”

I. Introduction - We are in a series on *Acts*. We are going through the entire book and looking at how the Church was born in revival and this caused the Gospel to go viral.

A. We’ve studied multiple revivals in the early church. These include Pentecost in *Acts 2* - 3,000 saved, healing of lame man - *Acts 3-4* - 5,000 saved, signs and wonders and the healings off Peter’s shadow - *Acts 5* - all Jerusalem filled with the doctrine of Christ., and the revival in Samaria - *Acts 8* - All of the city filled with joy.

B. The last two sessions we have explored how God set up a divine appointment with Peter and a Roman Centurion, Cornelius. Pete preached the gospel to Cornelius’s house and the Gentiles and got saved.

1. This was essentially Gentile Pentecost.
2. Happened in dramatic fashion as the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles while Peter preached. They began to speak with other tongues, which caused Peter and those with him to say they should get baptized. It was a dramatic manifestation.

C. Today we are going to look at how Peter had to defend the dramatic manifestation of God’s presence on the Gentiles to the religious establishment. Historically, people criticize those who are used in revival and people will often criticize the revival itself because it happens differently than expect.

1. It’s been said that God will offend the mind to reveal the heart. He does this to get us to repent.
2. Many of the revivals throughout history had unusual things that happened that offended people at the time. Years later the critics of revival are typically forgotten because we remember what God did. But at the time it is controversial.
 - a. Charles Finney and John Nevin - We remember Finney, not his chief religious critic who criticized what God did through his ministry.
 - b. Shantung Revival - This was a revival with dramatic manifestations of the presence of God. These manifestations were outside the theological box from which this revival started from. They were wiped from many of their history books. Randy Clark read one book about the revival and thought it was really boring and then he was giving a book with all the details about the manifestations and he thought it was as exciting as any testimony he ever heard. **SEE APPENDIX FOR MORE DETAILS.**
3. There is an explanation for everyone unexplainable thing God does, but the key to receiving this explanation is to pursue Him in intimacy. Every time this happened it is an invitation to us to know Him better.

II. Defending the Supernatural

A. Acts 11:1-18

1. **Acts 11:1-3** After the outpouring of the spirit at Cornelius's house, Peter went back to Jerusalem and the religious establishment attacked him for the new thing God was doing (eating with the Gentiles).
2. **Acts 11:4-10** Peter recounts his vision to those of the circumcision (This is in A.D. 40. Interestingly enough about 8-10 years later, Peter refused to eat with Gentiles in Galatia when those of the circumcision visited. He fell back into old habits because of fear. This is why we must continually renew our mind to keep the things the spirit of God is doing fresh and it is also a reminder any of us can stumble (thank God for grace).
3. **Acts 11:11-14** Peter recounts Cornelius's encounter with then angel. **Peter is telling this story to make the point this whole thing was divinely orchestrated by God. This puts faith in people. There is a power in our testimony!**
4. **Acts 11:15-16** Peter shares about how the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles. **Luke 3:16** baptized in the Holy Spirit fire (the passion of God) - baptized into the Godhead and not consumed.
5. **Acts 11:17-18** We can all take a lesson from this congregation and realize with a biblical explanation is provided for something that is outside our box, that we accept it and rejoice.
 - a. We must get a new wineskin for the new wine.
 - b. We can't get stuck in tradition. We must learn to see the new things God is doing as an opportunity to know Him better. Let Him reveal Himself to us.

B. Isaiah 60:1-3

1. The Jews were always called to be light to the Gentiles.
2. We as Christians are always called to be a light to the rest of our world. We can't be a light if our light isn't lit. If you would like me to pray for you that God lights your fire this morning, then come forward and I want to lay my hands on you and pray for you that the Holy Spirit lights your fire so you can be a light.

III. Conclusion

A. Call Up Prayer Team

B. Pray Closing Prayer

Appendix

THE SHANTUNG REVIVAL (1927-1937) - The Greatest Revival in Baptist History.

The Shantung Revival took place in the Chinese province (now known as [Shandong](#)) between the years 1927 and 1937. Although the revival was prominent in the Shantung Province it was not limited to that province. A leading historian on revivals, J. Edwin Orr, stated that this revival affected every province in China.

Areas where revival was sparked

Missionaries from the Southern Baptist denomination were the primary authors of reports on the revival, but it was not limited to that denomination. It affected dozens of mission agencies and denominations that were working in China at that time.

Southern Baptists claimed that this was “The Greatest Revival in Baptist Church History.” Strangely enough, the revival had very distinct Pentecostal features which the Southern Baptists at that time were very opposed to. The Baptist missionaries were promoting a “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” or an “infilling of the Holy Spirit,” subsequent to salvation, with manifestations that accompanied that infilling. This was taking place among other non-Pentecostal mission agencies as well.

State of the Church in China Before the Revival

- ▶ The whole country was in turmoil.
- ▶ Missionaries and church leaders in China began to sense a great spiritual need.
- ▶ The churches were cold and apathetic.
- ▶ Many were simply dead.
- ▶ There was little difference from before and after a person was “converted.”
- ▶ Spiritual conditions were so bad that many missionaries resigned.
- ▶ There was utter depression that made many shy away from attempting anything for God.
- ▶ Membership in churches decreased consistently from 1919 onward.
- ▶ Many churches sat empty during the spring and fall farming seasons.
- ▶ Opium smoking, wine drinking, and the taking of concubines were common sins among the church members.
- ▶ During the Nationalist Revolution in 1927, much of the mission work suffered and many Chinese Christians fell away due to the severe persecution.
- ▶ Defeatism was prevalent.
- ▶ Many Christians believed the Bible but had no conception of the moral demands associated with it.
- ▶ Secularism was threatening as more than one-half of the missionary work force was engaged in educational work (not evangelism).

► Liberalism weakened doctrinal convictions.

Extraordinary Prayer

With stories of the [Welsh Revival](#), the [Korean Revival](#), the [Manchurian Revival](#), as well as revivals in the United States and many other nations, a passion for revival in China emerged.

► Chinese churches united in prayer behind the slogan: “Lord, revive Thy Church, beginning with me.”

► Missionary Mary Crawford indicated that the “revival was born out of prayer groups, definitely asking for revival, some of them dating back as far as 1925.”

What Happened

The veteran Baptist missionary of 44 years, [John Abernathy](#), wrote that the revival came about as a result of “earnest prayer by groups and individuals, faith in God, Bible study, teaching, and much preaching on sin and kindred subjects.”

The president of the North China Baptist Theological Seminary, [Dr. C.L. Culpepper](#), wrote that the revival began in 1927 in Chefoo (now Yantai) with a series of meetings conducted by [Marie Monsen](#), a missionary with the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.

Culpepper’s testimony of a miraculous healing that took place in his wife, Ola, also brought tremendous impetus to the revival. She was losing her eyesight and was under continual pain from a degenerative eye disease. Marie Monsen had just given a testimony of healings that had taken place in other areas, and Dr. Culpepper asked her to anoint his wife and pray for her. After Monsen prayed, Ola Culpepper laid down her glasses and her eyes never bothered her again.

Marie Monsen

[Gustav Carlberg](#) of the Lutheran Augustana Synod Mission indicated that “one of the outstanding instruments God used for the reviving of the churches in northern China was Miss Marie Monsen.”

Carlberg also indicates that Monsen “was in possession of a power from God that was well-nigh irresistible.” This “irresistible power” led her to bring revival to churches in the far northern area of Manchuria and to other southern provinces as well.

A common practice of Monsen was to ask people if they were born-again. She would ask this of missionaries, pastors, and evangelists too. The conviction power of her words was not only released during her sermons, but she would also stand at the door of the church after preaching and ask people as they were leaving if they were born-again. Some testified that conviction power contained in her words “felt like the thrust of a sword,” or “they were like lightning-bolts.”

Held Captive by Pirates for 23 Days

In April 1929, on a trip by ship from Tientsin (now [Tianjin](#)) to conduct meetings in Hwanghsien, pirates boarded the ship Mosen was on and commandeered it for 23 days. Mosen's encouraging example of bravery and courage through the experience brought strength to others. The pirates ended up fleeing the boat because of her.

The reviving that was brought to many began to spread like a contagion. Individuals revived in one place would then go to another, carrying the contagion there.

Conviction of Sin

This revival was no different than others, in that conviction of sin was the initiating step God took to set His Church right. Baptist missionary John Abernathy indicated that before the evangelistic aspect of the revival came, the Church came under deep conviction of sin.

Abernathy wrote that missionaries were also among those who came under deep conviction of sin, and until those sins were confessed and restitution made, there would be no relief from that conviction power of the Holy Spirit. It was the same for those to whom reconciliation was in order.

It was not uncommon for people to begin crying out in agony due to their sins, right in the middle of a sermon.

Results of the Revival

Baptisms increased

- ▶ Spiritually dead churches were made alive again.
- ▶ Prayer became more earnest.
- ▶ Church attendance dramatically increased in just a few months, and those attending were diligent in their labors for the Lord.
- ▶ National leaders were developed and the Chinese church took ownership and moved forward without the finances or the oversight of the mission agencies.
- ▶ Sick were healed and devils cast out.
- ▶ Men, women, boys, and girls were preaching with results.
- ▶ Witnessing became spontaneous.
- ▶ Uneducated Chinese became more effective in evangelism than missionaries.
- ▶ Evangelistic teams were sent to different provinces, with many being saved.
- ▶ Unconverted church members and even preachers and missionaries were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ All the faculty of the North China Baptist Theological Seminary and Bible School had been

filled with the Holy Spirit.

- ▶ Enrollment in some Bible colleges grew thirty-fivefold.
- ▶ Revival was experienced in all three Baptist hospitals, with many nurses being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Patients were also saved daily.
- ▶ Renewed power was given for living, serving, and dying.
- ▶ Increased persecution was experienced.
- ▶ Family relationships were healed and unsaved people, seeing the change in the Christian's lives, were drawn to Christ.
- ▶ The study of the Bible became more intensified.
- ▶ Conversions and baptisms increased ten times the first year and continued for a number of years.
- ▶ Lives were transformed.
- ▶ Opium addictions were broken.
- ▶ Family idols were destroyed.
- ▶ Stolen goods were returned to the rightful owners.
- ▶ Joy in the Lord brought more singing, especially choruses. Many hymns were composed.
- ▶ Chinese leaders became more conscious of their responsibility and manifested a new gratitude to the missionaries for their work in laying foundations.
- ▶ Self-support of the Chinese Church, which had been a distant goal, was now seen as being attainable.
- ▶ A fresh victory over sin emerged where before there was only powerlessness.

Manifestations

Strangely, this revival took on a very Pentecostal nature, and was embraced by the traditionally non-Pentecostal denominations. John Abernathy, a Southern Baptist missionary, reported that from September 1930 to June 1932, 24 of their missionaries experienced a baptism, or filling of the Holy Spirit, and this was subsequent to their salvation. Abernathy and Culpepper indicated that others also had similar experiences as the revival progressed.

Accompanying the baptism of the Holy Spirit there was occasionally:

- ▶ Speaking in unknown languages.
- ▶ Singing in unknown languages.
- ▶ Laughing (this one being the most common experienced).
- ▶ Falling on the ground, jumping, rolling.
- ▶ Some would lay on the floor for hours, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, there would at times be dreams, visions, trances, shaking, and praying in unison without loud voices.

Missionaries reported that following this baptism, they were more surrendered to Christ, in response they received greater boldness and more power in the Lord's work.

Abernathy said that these manifestations are not out of place. He said; “when the Holy Spirit is in it, one ceases to feel that it is out of place.” He also indicated that Satan attempted to bring reproach by duplicating these manifestations, for the purpose of discrediting the entire revival. That is how Satan works, by leading people into excesses.

While the Baptists of the Southern Baptist Convention were embracing the manifestations, and reaping an abundant harvest, the English Baptists opposed the “excesses,” and they saw little fruit as a result.

The Lutheran Gustav Carlberg opposed the manifestations, and referred to them as “undesirable manifestations,” “extravagances,” “unhealthy outgrowths,” “blemishes,” and “aberrations in the extremes.” Even so, he acknowledged that there was some good that came from the manifestations.

Manifestations Investigated

The stories of the manifestations that were occurring among the Baptist missionaries were reported to their denominations Foreign Missions Board (now the International Missions Board). The report was that Baptist missionaries “had indulged in Pentecostal excesses.”

In 1935, Executive Secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Charles E. Maddry, was sent to China to investigate, and he returned with glowing reports. He affirmed the validity of the work by the missionaries and directly defended them when he said,

In the great revival that has swept through North and Interior China, there have been some excesses and hysteria, but it is rapidly passing today. Our missionaries have their feet on the solid rock of Christ Jesus and they are building gloriously on the foundation laid so deep and strong by those heroes and martyrs who preceded them.