

AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

10/5/2017

We continue our series today studying America's Great Awakening.

I. AMERICA'S FIRST GREAT SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A. In 1733 America though Christian had grown spiritually cold.

1. Jonathan Edwards described his town as experiencing; " A degenerate time with dullness of religion."

2. Future chaplain of the Congress Rev. Samuel Blair stated; "Religion lay as it were dying, and ready to expire its last breath of life in their part of the visible church."

B. The roots of America's Great Awakening were laid in Germany.

1. In 1724 the Moravian community was established.

2. They held prayer meetings 24 hours a day seven days per week for 100 years.

3. They sent out two types of missionary teams

a. One to win the lost.

b. One to win the church.

4. One group encountered a young missionary in 1735 on his way to America.

a. His name was John Wesley.

b. He was the thirteenth child of Samuel and Susannah Wesley.

c. His father was a minister who suffered much persecution for his faith.

d. As a child John was miraculously saved from a fire.

e. He would later say that he was "A brand plucked from the burning."

C. In 1735 Wesley went to a new colony in Georgia as a missionary.

1. On the sea he endured a severe storm and witnessed the Moravians faith
2. He sought counsel from the Moravian pastor about his own conduct;

(The pastor) said, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused and said, "I know He is the Savior of the world." "True." The pastor replied, "but do you know He has saved you?" I answered, "I hope He has died to save me." He added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do." In recollecting the event, I thought, "But I fear they were vain words."

D. After a few years in Georgia Wesley returned home. On the way home he recorded in his diary:

I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me?...I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well...and believe myself while no danger is near. But let death stare me in the face and my spirit is troubled, nor can I say to die is gain.

E. Wesley landed in England on February 1, 1738. He wrote;

It is now two years and four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned of myself in the meantime? Why, what I least suspected; that I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God! I am not mad, though I thus speak, but I speak the words of truth and soberness.

F. Wesley desired to know Jesus as his personal Saviour;

1. For three months Wesley;
 - a. Went to meetings
 - b. Studied Scripture
 - c. Prayed in pursuit of God

2. At a prayer meeting on Aldersgate Street listening to Luther's Preface to Romans Wesley writes;

About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and as assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

- G. From that time forward God began to greatly use Wesley;

1. He would arise at 4:00 a.m. and begin preaching at 5:00 a.m.
2. From 1739 to 1791 (52 years) he invested his life for the cause of Christ
 - a. He travelled 225,000 miles mostly on horseback.
 - b. He preached over 50,000 sermons
 - c. He travelled 25 miles per day
 - d. He wrote 233 books on all sorts of subjects
 1. Theology
 2. Home
 3. Health remedies (used for almost 200 years)
 4. Electricity

- H. Many wondered how Wesley could accomplish so much;

1. Wesley stated; "Leisure and I have taken leave of one another, I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is long indulged me."
2. One biographer said; "Like Calvin he writes as if he had nothing to do but write, preaches as if he had nothing to do but preach and administers as if he had nothing to do but administer."

- I. Wesley preached up until his death at the age of 88
 - a. His last words were; "The best of all, God is with us."
 - b. He left behind;
 - 1. 750 preachers in England.
 - 2. 350 preachers in America
 - 3. 76,968 Methodist in England
 - 4. 57,621 Methodist in America
 - J. Wesley had a friend who was influenced by his ministry named George Whitefield
- II. George Whitefield a miracle for God!
- A. The sordid past of George Whitefield;
 - 1. He did not grow up in Church like Wesley.
 - 2. He grew up in a hotel tavern his parents ran.
 - 3. His first 16 years was shaped by shady character.
 - 4. He said as a boy he;
 - a. Was a liar
 - b. Was a thief
 - c. Was a gambler
 - d. Was addicted to filthy talk
 - e. Cursed
 - 5. He came from a very unstable home.
 - B. After his parents divorced he was sent to Oxford

1. Whitefield ended up in Wesley's' Holy Club in 1733.
 2. During this time he read a book, "The life of God in the Soul of a Man which pushed him with an encounter with God. He said;

"God showed me I must be born again or be damned! I learned a man may go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacraments and yet not be a Christian...Shall I burn this book? Shall I throw it down? Or shall I search it? I did search it; and holding the book in my hands thus addressed the God of heaven and earth: "Lord, if I am not a Christian, or if I am not a real one for Jesus Christ's sake show me what Christianity is that I may not be damned at last."
- C. Whitefield preached his first sermon on June 27, 1735 at the age of 21.
1. His mother, relatives and 300 people crowded into the church to listen
 2. It was no ordinary message
 3. The presiding bishop said fifteen people were "driven mad."
- D. Whenever and wherever he preached, large crowds gathered.
1. His meetings produced an immense sensation.
 2. He attracted all classes;
 - a. Noble
 - b. Common
 - c. Rich
 - d. Poor
 3. Lord Bolingbroke said; "He is the most extraordinary man in our times. He has the most commanding eloquence I ever hear in any person"
- E. George Whitefield started a revolution in America. **Will continue next week!**