

When God Moves 3

As we survey some of the specifically identified powerful movements of God among His people as recorded in scripture, we have discovered some things common to most if not all great movements where lives were drastically changed for His glory. And, we have also uncovered some things more unique to the one event described. I'm sure we can count on the fact that there are some things that must be in place, that must happen before God will ever initiate a great work. But, I'm also sure that God, in His infinite wisdom and creativity, will call for and do things that are one of a kind, unique to one specific time, place and people. We found in the account we studied in 1 Samuel some of those core requirements that are common to all great movements of God.....

Unity and assembly of heart, mind and purpose- agree on the need to return to God, tear down the idols, confess sin, repent, seek God, engage passionate unadulterated worship

submission- to God's authority, obedience (through a godly leader)

waiting on God- trusting the Lord's sovereignty and impeccable timing to move at the right time in the right way. All the while, remaining faithful to the call of God on our lives and obeying all His commands whether we think God is moving or not.

When we looked at Nehemiah and his return to Jerusalem, we also found those same core requirements plus we found.....

began with the burden and prayer of one man

integrity and wisdom were a catalyst (of leader)

They just read from the law (key event)

To take as diverse a survey as possible, today I would like for us to move to the New Testament and the early church to examine another great movement of God among His people. As we read, let's look for the common elements as well as the unique qualities of how and why God moved in such a great manner. And of course, as always, it is most important that we determine how all this relates to what we hope and pray God will do among us here and now.

After healing a lame man, which had attracted a large crowd, Peter and John began to preach and teach the crowd that Jesus had risen from the dead in the area of the temple complex called Solomon's Colonnade. Right in the middle of this preaching/teaching session, the priests, commander of the temple guard, and the Sadducees confronted them and took them into custody. In spite of the major interruption, many believed and turned to Christ for salvation.

The next day Peter and John were brought out to stand before all the rulers, elders, and scribes. Their authority was questioned. The answer- Jesus Christ the Nazarene. Peter included a brief gospel witness concluding with....

12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." **Acts** 4:5-12 (HCSB)

The Jewish leaders were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John knowing they were uneducated. They noted they had been

with Jesus. They could not refute that a great miracle had taken place through these two uneducated men. Even though they acknowledged the miracle, they would have still likely beaten or killed them had there not been such a powerful and positive reaction by so many people. So they decided to threaten Peter and John commanding them to never speak of Jesus again.

19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God [for us] to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; ²⁰ for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” **Acts 4:19-20 (HCSB)**

After further threatening them, they released them. And being exhausted from the whole ordeal, they went home and took a nap. No! They went and got some bagels and coffee. No!

23 After they were released, they went to their own fellowship and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices to God unanimately and said, “Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant: **Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot futile things?** ²⁶ **The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against His Messiah.** ²⁷ “For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness, ³⁰ while You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs,

and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”³¹ When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness. Acts 4:23-31 (HCSB)

²³ After they were released, they went to their own fellowship and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. Acts 4:23 (HCSB)

Peter and John had to have been mentally and physically exhausted having just gone through such an ordeal. You would think they would have went home and licked their wounds so to speak. After all, they had been arrested and threatened, and if weren’t for all the people giving glory to God, probably a lot worse would have happened to them. And, all this came on them simply because they had been faithfully preaching and teaching about Jesus.

Instead, they went straight to “their own fellowship.” Who, what, where was that? The church in Jerusalem, and it seems they, the fellowship, were already assembled together. Was it Sunday at 11AM? Probably not. Were they in the habit of meeting together every day? Acts 2 says yes. Were they especially assembled together because of the arrest? Probably. It seems to have been an “ordinary” day or you would think it would have been mentioned that it was a Sabbath or regular Sunday meeting. I think likely the church was assembled for the purpose of praying for Peter and John because they had been arrested. It wouldn’t be the only time they would assemble to pray for such a situation.

When Peter and John got there, they had a testimony service which consisted of all that was said and done in the presence of the Jewish leaders. When the fellowship heard this, they all began to weep and cry out to God, why us, why us.....? No!

²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices to God unanimously

Acts 4:24a (HCSB) Not to complain but to praise.

Lesson 1: Assembly and unity are key. The most common theme among our three studies of great movements of God in the bible so far is unity and assembly. It seems that even before Peter and John's arrival, the church was already assembled and their hearts and minds were unanimously calling out to the Lord in prayer for God to do something extraordinary including the safety and release of Peter and John. What if the church hadn't assembled?... What if only some of the believers had showed up?.... What if only one or two had prayed while the others just occupied space?

If we want to see a great moving of God among us, I believe we're going to have to come to a point, as this local assembly of the body of Christ, that we want to see God do something extraordinary, that we are not content with the way things are. We must each personally be willing to change and sacrifice for the sake of Jesus' church, His kingdom and His purposes.

And, I think we're going to have to take much more seriously the significance of our assembly together, not just on Sunday morning but whenever we have the privilege and

opportunity. Don't just sit here for an hour on Sunday morning agreeing that you want to see God do something extraordinary, then disappear for a week. Don't get your hopes up. It ain't gonna happen! The early church met together daily. We can't even get everyone here for an hour on Sunday much less any kind of significant crowd at any other time. This should be a major concern to those of us who want to see God do something.

I remember some of you saying back in the early days of New Hope how none of you dared miss a gathering of the church because you were afraid you would miss something. There was real anticipation regarding what God might do next. Do you still have that sense of expectation? When you come to a gathering of God's people, are you looking for God to do something extraordinary, like change a life, maybe even your life? Sunday morning before last we baptized a young woman. Did you know that? Last Sunday evening a child came confessing Christ as Savior. Did you know that?

I'm afraid we're going to be a long way from experiencing a great work of God in our midst if for no other reason than we don't take our assembling together in unity seriously. Worship and ministry participation for much of the body of Christ seems to just be another option of potential activities throughout the week that often does not even get first priority.

24 When they heard this, they raised their voices to God unanimously and said, "Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant: **Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot futile things?** ²⁶ **The kings of the earth took their stand, and**

the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against His Messiah.²⁷ “For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed,²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.²⁹ And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness,³⁰ while You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs, and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” Acts 4:24-30 (HCSB)

“When they heard this” the testimony of Peter and John. Who was they? The whole church. “They raised their voices to God unanimously and said...” We’re not talking about the leaders of the prayer meeting/worship. It was all the people. They weren’t individually praying prayers.... “Please heal my sore toe”... “I need a new camel”.... “do something to my annoying neighbor.” They were all praying miraculously, marvelously in unison.....

*Giving glory and worship to God

*Quoting scripture- God’s promise

*Give“us” complete boldness to speak your message

*Signs and wonders (to affirm their message)

Lesson 2: We must focus on and **pray about things that really matter.** By example of the meeting we’re studying- we should assemble more frequently and we should pray more fervently, agreeing together about one or at most a few things that really matter, have eternal value, are life changing and affect us all.

Consequences

31 When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's message with boldness.

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. **33** And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them. Acts 4:31-33 (HCSB)

*Place was shaken

*All filled with the Holy Spirit

*Power

*Spoke God's message with boldness.

*Unity

*Extreme sacrificial giving/generosity

*Great grace was on all of them

Lesson 3: There will be results. Maybe not in the time and way we expected, but there will be results.....

Do these things sound good to you? Does this sound like it was a great moving of God? These are all tangible evidences of a great moving of God.

The place where they met literally shook. This is the least significant result of the prayer meeting. It was just a sign, an affirmation from God. But it was a good sign. Have you ever been a part of a prayer meeting when the place shook?

All these other things are beautiful, powerful, miraculous, functional works of God in His church among His people.

The results, the way God moves, may not be all you expect, when and how you expect it, but God will deliver. He will move. He will change us. The greatest evidence of a great movement of God is changed lives- filled, empowered, speaking boldly, unified, sacrificing, and full of grace.