



Centenary  
of the  
Welsh  
Revival

Wales is often called the Land of Revivals, and the most famous revival of them all took place in 1904. A hundred years on, Welsh churches are celebrating the memory and praying for God to move in power again. Although there were other people involved in the beginning of the 1904 Welsh revival, Evan Roberts is the name that will always be most closely linked to it. Kensington Temple's **Bruce Atkinson** looks at his remarkable story.



**Above**  
Bruce Atkinson records the personal account of Evan Roberts

## Pentecost in action – Wales 1904

How the Holy Spirit moved one man, Evan Roberts, and the fires of revival blazed across an entire nation

Early 20th century revival preacher Evan Roberts' dramatic spiritual experiences set him on a whirlwind of evangelism that changed the history of Wales.

By the age of twelve Evan was working with his father in the local coal mine and worshipping at the now famous Moriah Calvinistic Methodist Church in Loughor. Even as a boy, Roberts was totally committed to seeing revival in his lifetime. He would often spend the whole night reading or talking about revival, and at the age of 25 he wished to be ordained into the ministry. The superb book, 'The Welsh Revival of 1904' by Eifion Evans records Evan Roberts' account of his encounters with God as he trained for the ministry:

"One Friday night last spring,

when praying by my bedside before retiring, I was taken up to a great expanse – without time and space. It was communion with God. Before this I had a far-off God. I was frightened that night, but never since. So great was my shivering that I rocked the bed, and my brother,

**One evening Evan had a powerful vision of hell. He saw a chasm of bottomless fire encompassed by an impregnable wall.**

being awakened, took hold of me thinking I was ill. After that experience I was awakened every night a little after one o'clock. This was most strange, for through the years I slept like a rock, and no disturbance in my room would awaken me. From that hour I was taken up into the

divine fellowship for about four hours. What it was I couldn't tell you, except that it was divine. About five o'clock I was again allowed to sleep on till about nine. At this time I was again taken up into the same experience as in earlier hours of the morning until about twelve or one o'clock..." This went on for about three months.

At one prayer meeting the Holy Spirit filled Evan so strongly that he felt he was about to burst and cried out, "Bend me! Bend me!" He felt a wave of God's presence sweep over him and he was ablaze with a desire to go through Wales seeking out lost souls for the Master. Roberts had a desire to see 100,000 people saved in Wales and this was his constant prayer.

One evening he had a powerful vision of the reality of hell. ▶

◀ He saw a large chasm of bottomless fire encompassed by an impregnable wall. In this pit of torment he could see the suffering damned, all of whom had entered hell by a single door. God spoke to him, "You too would be in their midst apart from God's grace."

Immediately, he found himself walking down from the door

to hell, towards a vast crowd making their way to hell. He was filled with alarm at the tragic circumstance and cried to God with all his might for him to save them. Then he prayed that hell's door should be locked shut for one year so that the people streaming towards it might have an opportunity to turn and be saved.

"Strong people are overwhelmed by reading the newspaper accounts."

Roberts began his revival meetings at Moriah Church. He began to prophesy a great Welsh revival and stated that the Holy Spirit had given him a four-point plan for personal blessing:

"If there is past sin or sins hitherto unconfessed, we cannot receive the Spirit. Therefore we must search and ask the Spirit to search.

"If there is anything doubtful in our lives, it must be removed – anything whose rightness or wrongness we were uncertain about. That thing must be removed.

"An entire giving up of ourselves to the Spirit. We must speak and do all he requires of us."

Evan Roberts soon found himself ministering with a powerful revival anointing.

"The Spirit was with us throughout last week," he testified, "and last night three women and one man were baptised with the Holy Spirit. Oh, it was a fearful meeting!

Another way he often was led to minister was through congregational confession. He recalled, "Everyone present, uttered this prayer: 'Send the Spirit now, for Jesus Christ's sake!' It was a chain prayer and everyone was to take part. Oh,

**"If there is past sin or sins unconfessed, we cannot receive the Spirit. We must search and ask the Spirit to search."**

the effect was wonderful! As the prayer went around, one young man was filled with the Spirit... We repeated the prayer a second time with this addition: 'More powerfully, send the Spirit now more powerfully, for Jesus Christ's sake...' We do not say, 'Perhaps the Spirit will come' or 'We hope the Spirit will come', but 'We believe he will come'."

During the prayers, people began weeping under the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit. When Roberts asked if

**THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN WALES, 1904.**

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By **AWSTIN** and other *Special Correspondents* of the **WESTERN MAIL.** Illustrated.

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Even the secular media of the time were caught up in the great move of God in Wales

they should pray for the Spirit to evidence himself even more powerfully, some people protested – because they couldn't cope with the power that was already in the meeting!

Soon, Evan Roberts was ministering revival throughout Wales. Often in a meeting he would not need to preach, because the sheer intensity of his public praying alone moved people to repentance. Many would faint under the power of God released in the meetings, as the glory of God would literally sweep through the congregation.

**History is bound to repeat itself, and the crystal fountain of the famous Welsh Hymn will pour itself over the principality.**

Roberts inspired others to hold revival meetings, and by the end of 1904 over 32,000 converts had been made. By March 1905, around 84,000 had come to the Lord in Wales. The 100,000 souls Roberts had prayed for were soon to be realised!

The social fabric of Wales was strengthened and renewed within a year. Crime figures came down dramatically, some by as much as 50%, and some villages and towns had all their pubs close through lack of patronage.

But, strangely, by the autumn of 1905, Evan Roberts began to fade from the revival scene – like a shooting star that becomes lost on the horizon. He was exhausted, not only from the effort he had put into the revival but also from the tremendous persecution he had received from ministers – who had objected to the supernatural moving of the Spirit in the meetings.

Also, Evan had fallen under the spell of a strange woman called Jessie Penn-Lewis. A more apt spelling of her first name might be 'Jezzie'. Like the Jezebel of the Bible, she sought to control and tame the wild



Evan Roberts, firebrand of the 1904-5 revival

prophet and, sadly, unlike Jezebel, she succeeded. She filled Evan with strange doctrines and persuaded him to leave Wales, so hiding him from his true calling.

Nevertheless, Evan Roberts bore more fruit in one year than some denominations bear in one century. He fulfilled his vision of saving 100,000 souls, and though we can only wonder what else he could have achieved, one cannot but wonder at the power of God he unleashed throughout Wales during the time of his ministry.

Revival commentator D M Phillips, talking about the change in Welsh society brought about by Evan, summed it up as follows:

"Prayer meetings are held in trains, and many converts are made. The public houses and beer clubs are empty; old debts are paid; jealousy vanishes; church and family feuds are healed; great drunkards, prize fighters, and gamblers pray in the services, and give their testimony; the chapels throughout Glamorganshire are full every

Often in a meeting Evan would not need to preach, because the sheer intensity of his public praying alone moved people to repentance.

night; all denominations have sunk their small differences, and cooperate as one body; and the huge processions along the streets send a thrill of terror through the vilest sinners... The Revival is the topic in all spheres and among all sections of society; and strong people are overwhelmed by reading the newspaper accounts of it."

One cannot help but conclude after this short survey of revival in Wales that the Lord has very specific and sovereign favour on the Welsh people. At times in Welsh history, it seems that revival flowed like successive waves on an incoming tide. As one revival quietened, another was rolling down from heaven. One thing is sure: history is bound to repeat itself again, and the crystal fountain of the famous Welsh Hymn will once again pour itself over the principality.

*Abridged with permission from Bruce Atkinson's 'Land of Hope and Glory', Dovewell Communications, £7.99 – paperback, £11.99 – hardback.*