

EXPONENTIAL

Spiritual Awakenings

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Session 11: The Jesus Movement

The Jesus Movement emerged in the late 1960s

- Churches were losing strength and influence. Church attendance fell from 49% on an average week in 1955 to 40% in 1971.
- Like other revivals, the movement occurred amid this darkness. And, like other revivals, there were sparks before the blaze:
 - Charismatic movement was gaining momentum.
 - Active parachurch organizations were gaining momentum on campuses, including Campus Crusade for Christ and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.
 - David Wilkerson founded *Teen Challenge*, a Christian drug rehabilitation organization, to reach inner city youth in America.
- Understanding the youth of the day.

Origins of the Jesus Movement

- **Ted Wise** opened the first Christian coffeehouse called *The Living Room*. During the two years of the coffeehouse ministry, contact was made with 30-50,000 young people.
- **Arthur Blessitt** was one of the first to minister to the young, especially the street people. Early in 1968, he gained national exposure when he preached on the stage of a strip club. He opened a coffeehouse. One of his ministries was a “toilet service.”
- **Don Williams** opened the Salt Company coffeehouse.
- **Linda Meissner** established the Teen Center in Seattle, Washington. She also established “The Ark,” a youth hang-out, as well as a coffeehouse, *The Eleventh Hour* (later renamed *Catacombs*). By 1971 it was possibly the largest coffeehouse.
- **Chuck Smith** moved to a small church in Costa Mesa, CA, in 1965 and established a commune house, *The House of Miracles* in 1968. Within one week, over 35 new Christians were calling the house their home. In 1970 alone, 40,000 prayed to receive Christ. As the same time, many were being attracted to Calvary Chapel’s Sunday services and midweek Bible studies. Calvary Chapel is now a denomination.

Spread of the Jesus Movement in North America

- By early 1971 the movement was spreading from the West Coast to Canada. As it did, many things came about:
 - Many Jesus papers hit the streets
 - Communes
 - Coffeehouses
 - Hip churches
 - Rock music synthesized with Christian experience.
- Impact on high schools and colleges.
 - As much as 10% of the student body of the University of California at Irvine joined the movement
 - From February 3-10, 1970, Asbury College experienced a powerful revival. This revival spread to other campuses, including SWBTS in Fort Worth.
 - Explo '72 - a massive gathering of youth sponsored by Campus Crusade, held in Dallas.
- Impacts on Jewish people: Late in 1970, Moishe Rosen moved to San Francisco and started “Jews for Jesus.”

Spread Abroad

- The movement began in Ulster, Northern Ireland after Arthur Blessitt went there. It spread to England, France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Latin America, Australia, Southeast and Central Asia. The movement took different forms as it spread.

Responses to the Jesus Movement

- The movement was criticized not only by liberals but also evangelicals. Criticisms of the movement included fanaticism, romanticism, anti-urbanism, division of the world into adepts and outsiders.
- Local, state, and federal governments were willing to encourage the growth of the movement because the Jesus People were no longer critical of the structure or actions of society.

Characteristics of the Jesus Revolution

- *Simple Gospel (One Way)*: The only real answer to life was a personal relationship with Jesus. Knowledge of Jesus was the only knowledge one needed to have.
- *The Apocalypse*: Strong belief that they were the last generation of youth to live on the earth. They could not imagine the world standing long enough for them to grow old.
- *Communal Living*: Living in houses together calling them communes, communities, Christian houses, etc. Except for very rare exceptions, these communes were free of drugs and immorality.
- *Gifts of the Spirit*: The majority of Jesus people recognized speaking in tongues as a valid spiritual experience. However, it was not a focal point and was the lowest of the spiritual gifts. Some were preoccupied with the supernatural and referred frequently to visions and visitations they had received.

The Impact of the Jesus Movement

- *Impact on Youth*: changing attitudes and behaviors concerning drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, and other components of the counterculture.
- *Impact on Evangelism*: The primary focus was on personal evangelism. An outspoken witness for Christ gained a new social acceptability. Being an old-fashioned, Bible-believing Christian was no longer a source of embarrassment or shame and there was a new freedom to witness.
- *Impact on Church Music*: The Jesus People realized that Christian rock music was a viable way of communicating the message of Jesus to youth. Those young people who were affected by Jesus Music influenced the changes in church music.
- *Impact on Southern Baptists*: While many Southern Baptists strongly objected to the movement, many others were greatly involved. From 1970-74 Southern Baptists recorded their highest baptismal figures in history. The greatest increase by far was in youth baptisms. The Home Mission Board developed the WIN (Witness Involvement Now) personal evangelism method, which proved successful. Youth Evangelism Conferences hosted by state conventions began to flourish. Folk youth musicals and youth choir tours were prominent during the period of the Jesus Revolution. Southern Baptists were the major leaders in the early youth musicals. The hymnal was affected as well. The 1975 *Baptist Hymnal* contained some songs of the youth musicals including "Pass it On" from *Tell it Like it Is*. The Home Mission Board strongly supported the Jesus Movement. This support included coffeehouse ministries, beach evangelism, and mass rallies.