

## **Barratt Ministries Challenge**

### **Issue 64**

#### **The Revolution**

#### **The Kingdom Series Part 3**

*by Alex Robertson*

The kingdom of God always makes its entrance by means of a revolution. We have seen that there are 3 different 'manifestations' of the kingdom of God, one past (Israel), one present (Christianity now) and one future (the millennial kingdom). Each of these kingdoms is brought in by a revolution.

God commanded Joshua to invade the land of Canaan and destroy the seven nations who inhabited it. It was a classic revolution, a violent military takeover. In the present-day kingdom of heaven there is no outward violence, but there is just as much a revolution. The territory that Jesus comes to possess is us, our bodies, and in that 'promised land' there are also giants and 'seven nations' to be cast out. The old life and the old ways must be destroyed with absolute ruthlessness; proud imaginations must be cast down, strongholds must be pulled down, every thought must be taken captive (see 2 Corinthians 10:4,5). Jesus must have total rule in our lives. And finally when Jesus comes again there will be another mighty revolution, a takeover of the whole earth, a forced change of order and government. Each time there is an uncompromising revolution.

The gospel of the kingdom (the Sermon on the Mount) is the 'manifesto' for the coming revolution. It spells out the cost of living the crucified life which will enable Jesus to reign in our lives, and it promises great rewards in the millennial kingdom when Jesus comes again. Today we must regain this perspective. We are revolutionaries now. That is our identity.

#### **An unlikely revolutionary**

When Jesus was on earth, he was an unlikely revolutionary. He refused to take earthly power and be made king; he shunned fame and status, often instructing people who he had healed not to make him known. He refused to take on the traditional leader's role of judge. A man who brought a family feud to him to sort out received short shrift: "Man, who made me a judge over you?" (Luke 12:14). And he steadfastly refused to implement any social or political change, a source of endless frustration to the Jews who expected the Messiah to lead them in revolt against the Romans. Pilate, a shrewd Roman leader who would quickly stamp on any sign of genuine revolt, thought Jesus was harmless and tried very hard to release him. But Jesus' revolution was far in the future, and far bigger than the little land of Israel.

In Revelation 19:11-21 we see the moment of this worldwide revolution described. Jesus comes followed by "the armies of heaven", "to judge and make war". A sharp sword comes out of his mouth, with which he will "smite the nations". He comes in "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God". An angel summons the birds of prey "the supper of the great God", and the menu for this

feast is the bodies of all the men slain in the destruction which Jesus wreaks upon the antichrist and his army.

### **Not symbolic**

There are several things we need to come to terms with here. Firstly, this is not symbolic. It's literal and real, a bloody and violent military coup on this earth. The church has lost this perspective, but it is absolutely clear that God's ways include violence and bloodshed. Joshua was, in today's political terms, a terrorist guilty of genocide seven times over - and God has not changed. Only in this middle period, the time between Jesus' first and second coming, are we called to non-violence. Of course, Joshua, and Jesus at his second coming, are totally unacceptable to today's society, and to the emerging New World Order and its values, which are summed up in two words: non-violence and tolerance. Jesus will not return to a welcoming world; far from it, and the revolution of the kingdom is not gradually taking over the world. That's a false and dangerous error that will lead Christians straight into the counterfeit kingdom of the antichrist.

This revolution when Jesus returns bears a remarkable similarity to the 'alien invasions' which feature in so much science fiction. An enemy force of immortal beings with strange powers, taking over the government of the world and holding earth's inhabitants in forced subjection ("he shall rule them with a rod of iron"). Science fiction is the devil's prophecy, by which he encourages the world to resist and fight against such an invasion. And we are the "aliens". Like a hidden 'fifth column' we are presently 'planted' on the earth, but suddenly we will be revealed as immortal 'aliens', "in the twinkling of an eye". We are called to be 'aliens' now. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims ..." (1 Peter 2:11). The word 'stranger' here means 'foreigner' or 'alien'. All the heroes of faith "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims [same word] on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). We are at the 'pre-revolution' stage, waiting expectantly for the 'alien invasion' of Jesus' second coming.

### **What is our promised land?**

Old Testament Israel, the first manifestation of the kingdom of God, is a 'type' or picture for us. Egypt symbolizes the world from which we are saved, but what does the promised land signify? Not heaven (as some of the old hymns would have it), because there are giants to conquer in the promised land, but none in heaven! No, the promised land signifies this earth, when Jesus returns. Jesus is the new Joshua (their names are virtually identical in Hebrew), and just as Joshua conquered Canaan to bring Israel into their inheritance, so Jesus will conquer the whole earth to claim his inheritance and that of his faithful servants, those who have lived in obedience to the gospel of the kingdom.

Now, however, we are out of Egypt, but not yet in the promised land. We are in between - in the wilderness. The lifestyle to which we are called is a 'wilderness lifestyle'. The New Testament often quotes from Israel's time in the wilderness. Jesus tells us not to be anxious, saying, "What shall we drink?" (Matthew 6:31), and he is quoting directly from Exodus 15:24, where the Israelites, having left Egypt, reached water at Marah and found it bitter, and said to Moses, "What shall we drink?"

God's answer is the same in the Old and New Testament: seek the kingdom, the promised land, and God will provide everything you need (Exodus 15:25-26, Matthew 6:33). When Jesus tells us in the Lord's Prayer to ask God for "our daily bread", that is a reference to the manna, the 'bread' of the Israelites which fell literally 'daily'. A read through Deuteronomy 8:1-7, where Moses reviews the forty years Israel has spent in the wilderness, just before they enter the land, shows us many parallels with Christian life and purpose today. "The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

### **A time of proving**

Just like Israel's wilderness, our time on earth as Christians is a preparation and a proving for our promised land, the millennial kingdom of God on earth. If we have been faithful in small things, we will be entrusted with great things in the kingdom. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

But we are not the 'Joshua generation' now. We will not slowly influence and permeate the world with the values of Christ so that we eventually 'bring his kingdom in'. That's not what scripture says will happen. We are called now to be like Jesus when he was on earth the first time. "He that saith he abideth in him ought so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6).

That means being willing to suffer and pay a price for being a revolutionary in a world which doesn't want that revolution. "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Peter 4:1). On earth Jesus refused worldly power and status, he refused it; he came in poverty, not riches; in terms of the world's power, he came in weakness, not strength; he was despised, not honoured, cursed, not blessed. Therefore he is worthy "to receive power, & riches, & wisdom, & strength, & honour, & glory, & blessing" (Revelation 5:12), and he will receive them on earth in the millennial kingdom. And we are called to be like him, if we also wish to receive blessing in the coming kingdom.

### **Living as revolutionaries**

Every revolutionary worth his salt has to be willing to sacrifice everything for the revolution. He is willing to face rejection from family and friends; willing to be branded an enemy of the state, an outlaw; willing to endure poverty, exile and prison for the sake of the revolution. Why? because he believes passionately that only the revolution is the answer for mankind. And we too are called to this demanding lifestyle, where if we love father or mother more than Jesus, we are not worthy of him (Matthew 10:37); where we will be hated of all nations because of him (Matthew 24:9); where we can expect trouble and opposition (John 16:33, 2 Timothy 2:12). Many of the apostles and first Christians faced exile, prison and martyrdom, because they believed that this world and its system was not worth anything and the kingdom to come was worth everything.

The revolution will bring a great reversal of values and situations. Those who mourn now shall be comforted then. Those who humble themselves shall be exalted. Those who are meek now shall inherit the earth then. And Jesus makes it clear that we can't have glory, honour and power now in this world and also in the kingdom. "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation ... woe unto you that are full ... woe to you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:24-26). Power, riches and honour are very appealing; and if we want, we can twist the scriptures to convince ourselves that we can have the lifestyle we want in this life. But in truth, we cannot have our cake now and eat it in the kingdom. The simple message is this: if you want to be part of the revolution, you've got to be a revolutionary, and it's going to cost you.

## **EXPERIENCES FROM LIFE**

*by Joanna Barratt*

### **Possessing the Land**

There is so much talk in the churches today of 'taking over' or 'possessing the land', but what does this really mean in literal terms?

Well, I am absolutely positive that God is not expecting us to enter into physical warfare like Joshua. Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount clearly sets out a completely different mandate for how we treat people of other nations, our neighbours and even enemies. We are to exercise love and peace toward all men.

People go on marches and walk round a particular area claiming the ground upon which their feet tread for the Lord. But for all the marching, and all the talking, I don't know of one single village (let alone town) in Britain which has been won for Christ in this way. In fact our 'Great' Britain is becoming a laughing stock in the world ... the continual scandal in our Royal Family, the hooliganism of our jet-setting football fans, the promiscuity and lewdness of our British holidaymakers when in foreign countries, etc. We have lost all rule and influence over the empire we once had, and now witchcraft and homosexuality are rife in our streets.

Years ago the decadence of our city weighed heavily upon me and a few other people who had decided to intercede for Manchester, the city I had grown up in. We prayed and claimed and said all the 'right' things. But after some weeks God rebuked us by saying that the disciples of Jesus could not cast out a demon in one boy (Mark 9:28), yet we were trying to free Manchester of the millions of demons who were controlling it. God told us that we could not even expect to free our church if we hadn't already cleansed our home. And our home would not be free unless we had slain the giants in our own hearts. "There are no giants to be conquered in my heart!" you might say. Oh no? Well, you are as human as I am, and I know there were plenty for me to deal with.

## **A verbal bully**

I used to be so good at arguing. I was a verbal bully who could beat to pulp anyone who had the misfortune to cross me, and would delight in watching them writhe as I exposed to all ears listening any tiny weakness they might have. For years I felt very 'righteous' for my 'honesty' as I couldn't stand talking about people behind their backs, I thought this was cowardly. "Be upfront and tell it how it is", was always my motto. It was a revelation to me one day to note that I had changed. It wasn't something I had worked on as I honestly didn't believe I had a problem.

I remember an incident some years ago which happened when I went for an interview at a local Asda Supermarket. I was sitting waiting to be called in to the Manager's office when I overheard two members of staff having an argument. I didn't know what it was about, but I was amazed and quite stunned at the language they were using. It seemed so foreign to me. I had been out of worldly circulation for about 4 years, being occupied in voluntary work for the church - distributing nearly 1,000,000 leaflets in homes in Manchester and various other activities. I had been with Christians 7 days a week, and all our conversation was concerning God and the work we were jointly doing for the church. But now I needed to have some income and had responded to Asda's advertisement for assistants. I remember walking home from the interview quite shaken at the verbal violence I had just witnessed as this was a different world I had just re-entered.

## **Slaying the giant**

After a couple of months of working in Asda, someone tried to provoke me by saying some really cutting things to me. But I listened in silence to what the person was saying, wondering why my head felt as though it was stuffed with cotton wool. I just couldn't think of anything to throw back. I felt so calm and untouched inside, and was bemused by a change that had occurred in my heart that I wasn't even aware of. I can only put it down to becoming like the people I mixed with. I was with Christians who were really trying to live the Christian lifestyle and so it had rubbed off on me. I didn't want to argue anymore. That giant had been slain, and even 20 years later I still hate confrontation.

Around the time this 'dead giant' had been revealed to me, the Lord made me aware of another I had to conquer. For 15 years I had been totally involved with my church, even to the point where I gave up my day job to live by faith so that I could give my time to helping the church in a full time capacity. But then things went all 'pear-shaped'. God told me to give up everything I was doing in the church and to sit in the pew like everyone else. The church members jumped to conclusions thinking that I had been removed from the platform and from my role as church organist because I was being disciplined for some awful misdemeanour. They began to say spiteful things. I tried to ignore some things, laugh off others, but it really got to me – so much so that within a matter of months I was out of the church and on the verge of giving up Christianity altogether. I didn't even want to call myself a Christian in case I was put in the same category as the people I had just left behind me. After all the years and service I'd willingly sacrificed, I now felt betrayed and very bitter. I didn't go to church for a while – I tried to push it all out of my mind. But as the weeks went on I felt the rock in my heart start to crumble, and I knew I wasn't mad at God, I was angry and bitter against

those horrible people in the church, who professed to be brothers and sisters but turned on me like a pack of wolves as soon as they had the chance!

### **Bitter**

I'm grateful that God didn't allow me to stay in that awful state. I found a different church to attend where I kept out of any involvement – I didn't want to be burnt twice! After a period of 3 years it came to the ministers' ears that I was a singer and he asked if I would sing in the church. I did, then he asked if I would do a Saturday night concert. As I sang my opening song the ice melted and I just sang my heart out to God. I had changed, but not enough. God showed me there was a difference between serving Him and serving the church, and that was easily settled in my heart. I was terribly bitter against Christians in general, but He now wanted me to know that there were a lot of people in the church who were genuine and not just going to church out of habit. Indeed many of these people found church to be a hindrance to their growth in God, they wanted to go deeper, but the church only catered for the nominal attendee who was more worldly than godly. And that was where I had once been in my own church. I had wanted the real thing in my heart, but people had been impatient and had wanted me to come into line with their expectations of how a Christian ought to act. I received criticism concerning how I dressed, how I acted, how ... anything! People just didn't see the real me. But God did, and He also saw the giants of anger and bitterness which lay sleeping because their cages had not yet been rattled. He had to bring on the troubles just so that I could see what was in me and get rid of it.

### **Unforgiveness**

There have been countless giants in my heart which God has had to reveal. We all know we have an 'old nature', but we hate to see and confess openly what our faults are. I was once visiting an old couple who said they were having trouble with their neighbours. They had tried so hard to be kind to them, they said. Yet their neighbours had done this, that, and the other to taunt them and make their lives miserable. They didn't hold anything against their neighbours, even though they did throw all the rubbish back into their neighbours' garden. They forgave them but, even though they had really tried hard, their neighbours didn't want to make peace. As I was leaving the house the neighbour from the adjoining house opened her gate to walk down her path. I looked at the old couple I had visited and saw such hatred and venom flash in the eyes of the woman that I realised she had a greater problem than she knew. Her trouble wasn't her neighbour – it was her hatred and unforgiveness. This giant was well and truly awake and ruling her life.

### **Little by little**

This is what Christianity ... I mean real Christianity, is all about. The revolution is within us. We have to slay and completely destroy those enemies of God which lurk in our hearts undetected. God has to bring about circumstances which expose what is buried so that we can be cleansed. God said to Joshua that He would drive out their enemies slowly, city by city, little by little, as much as he could handle at a time. And that is how God deals with us – little by little, fault by fault. Don't fight

against it when God exposes something and forces you to face the damnable thing within you. Praise Him instead for caring enough to do such a thing. He will only chastise His own children, those who truly belong to Him. He wants to prepare you for the Kingdom of Heaven. It's positive!