



Revivals And Church History :: Mordecai Ham

Mordecai Ham - posted by jeremyhulsey (), on: 2003/9/23 2:28

Mordecai Ham

1878-1959

Meet Mordecai F. Ham--another of those old-time evangelists, that worthy handful of men who at the conclusion of the Nineteenth Century and the commencement of the Twentieth Century shook their generation for God, wrought revivals and restored some semblance of righteousness to America such as has never been accomplished since.

Mordecai Ham had a heritage that surely helped spark and shape his message and ministry. "God raised up Ham from three centuries of spiritually-minded men," noteworthy among them, Roger Williams, "pioneer fighter for religious liberty in America."

It was his father's life and his grandfather's death that God used to mold the unforgettable and unalterable aspirations and influences of young Mordecai's spiritual life. Ham "attributed his conversion and spiritual inclinations to the devotional habits of his boyhood home," relating, "We had a family 'revival' every evening. Father (a preacher himself--pastoring as many as six Kentucky country churches at one time) would give us a Bible reading and a sermon; then ask his children to confess any ill conduct of which they had been guilty that day."

When his grandfather (Mordecai F., Sr.) died, the young Mordecai knew he was to preach. As a seven-year-old he had such inclinations--preaching to neighborhood cats and dogs--even trying to baptize them every once in a while.

However, Ham had suppressed that call until his grandfather's death. Called back to Bowling Green, Kentucky, to the deathbed of his beloved kin, Mordecai saw the old man breathe his last at four o'clock that February 28, 1899, morning, "point upwards, as though beholding the Lord beckoning him to come home." That moment the 22-year-old Mordecai knew his grandfather's mantle had fallen upon him. He later declared, "Seeing him die did more than anything else to convince me of the reality of the Christian experience."

And Ham mirrored much of the old man whose plain preaching influenced Mordecai to be, as he called himself, "A hog-jowl and turnip green" preacher.

However Ham did not quit the road as a traveling salesman and prepare to preach until he married Miss Bessie Simmons of Bowling Green. His preparation was eight months long. During that period of "careful study and prayerful reading the Bible," Ham was appalled to see "the terrible shortcomings of Christendom and how far my own Brethren (Baptists) had wandered from the New Testament pattern."

In September, 1901, Ham preached his first sermon. Attending a district association meeting at Bethlehem, Kentucky, with his father, he was shocked to hear the announcement, "The next message will be given by Rev. Mordecai F. Ham, Jr." Unprepared for that unexpected assignment, Mordecai nevertheless mounted the pulpit and preached from Matthew 11:12. That day he was not preaching to cats and dogs, but pastors and messengers from the association; and preaching not on some street corner or alley, but from the pulpit where his grandfather had preached for forty years! God's blessing was upon him--the congregation was stirred, invitations to preach in other churches were extended and that day Mordecai F. Ham, Jr., entered the ministry.

In his early days, Ham began a practice he pursued most of his ministry, "He hunted the lowest sinners in the community and, finding them, would pray and lead with them until they were surrendered to Christ."

Ham was fearless in his ministry, strongly denouncing sin in his preaching, carrying the battle to moonshiners, the liquor crowd, confronting rioters, disturbers, opposing modernists, praying down and pronouncing judgement upon those who contested his campaigns.

One instance illustrates his courage and convictions:

Quote:

On that second night it seemed all "hell" broke loose as the moonshine crowd stole up around the church and threw rocks at us. They unharnessed the horses, cut the saddle straps and stole everything they could carry off.

Ham went out and confronted the ringleader, who proceeded to pull a knife on him. "Put up that knife, you coward. If you were not a coward you would not pull a knife on an unarmed man. Now I'm going to ask the Lord either to convert you or to kill you."

"Do as you please," he snarled at Ham and stalked off. Ham prayed and the bully was dead the next morning. Three others of the gang were killed the next morning when a sawmill blew up. That night Ham demanded all the stolen property returned or the Lord might kill someone else. Twenty-four hours later all had been returned but a saddle. Ham announced he was going to lead in prayer, and the one fellow "jumped up and hollered, 'You needn't pray! It will be here in a few minutes,' and it was."

Ham's ministry was mostly citywide and in the Southern states, although he preached in Colorado, Kansas, Ohio, Indiana and Minnesota. Everywhere he left a wake of converts*--over 300,00 additions in forty years of campaigns, revived churches, community conditions changed.

Just a few examples suffice: In Macon Georgia, thirteen "houses" of the red-light district were closed--the girls converted. The Ham-Ramsey (his associate and song leader) team, in almost every county in which they held a campaign, saw those counties vote dry in elections where booze was on the ballot. After a meeting in Marlow, Oklahoma, the cashier of the bank reported 75% of uncollected accounts paid! Raleigh, North Carolina, February to April, 5,000 decisions for Christ. Burlington, North Carolina's mayor's letter to the local paper:"...I must say I have never seen the city of Burlington so thoroughly stirred as it has been by this campaign. Every department of our municipal government has felt the wonderful effects of this meeting..." (Burlington Daily Times, May 20, 1925).

In 1927, Ham retired from evangelism for a brief two years to pastor First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City. But he was essentially an evangelist and he returned to his heart's work.

Ham considered himself a prophet-revivalist-evangelist. He attacked corruption and vice; he rebuked "professional" ministers and ministry for Christ; he mixed his method of presenting the message, "giving a little singing; then then some preaching; then some more singing; then some praying; then some more preaching," but always he exposed sin, warned of judgement, implanted conviction, called a disobedient people back to the truths they had forsaken and witnessed to "a penitent and grieving people the good news of what Christ has done for them."

A biographer, his nephew, Edward E. Ham, surely summed up Mordecai F. Ham's ministry with these words: "God raised up Evangelist Ham to do more than hold meetings in the great cities of the South. He ordained him a prophet to do more than lead great campaigns against liquor during the pre-prohibition days. God raised him up to remind Christian America of the main spiritual issue that has been in existence since man's beginning on this earth: Christ versus the Antichrist.

~Profiles In Evangelism~

*One of the many converts of brother Ham's revivals is the evangelist Billy Graham.

Re: Mordecai Ham - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/9/23 10:21

This is great!

Thanks Hulsey

Oh that we had more men like this today...