

# EXPONENTIAL

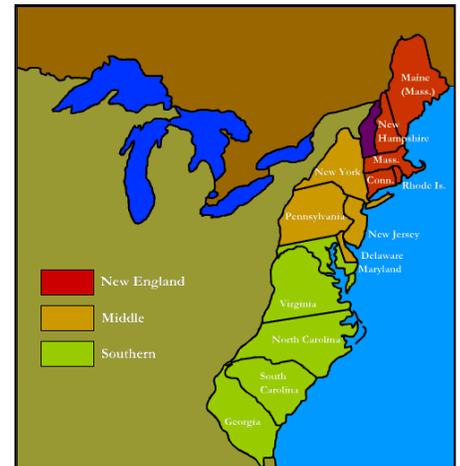
## Spiritual Awakenings

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### Session 4: The First Great Awakening – Fire!

#### Southern Colonies: The Arrival of George Whitefield

- In 1735 John and Charles Wesley traveled from England to serve in the new colony of Georgia. Charles would work as General James Oglethorpe's secretary and John as a chaplain to the colony. John especially wanted a chance to preach to the Indians. The whole Georgia episode turned out to be a mess for John Wesley. He returned to England.
- George Whitefield perceived a ripe harvest in the colonies.
  - "My heart was full, and I took the first opportunity of venting it by prayers and tears. I think I never parted from a place with more regret; for America in my opinion is an excellent school to learn Christ in, and I have great hopes some good will come out of Savannah because the longer I continue there, the larger the congregations grew. And I scarce knew a night, though we had Divine service twice a day, when the Church House has not been nearly full – a proof, this, I hope, that God has yet spiritual and temporal blessings in store for them. Hasten, O Lord, that blessed time!"



#### New England: The Fire Rages in the Connecticut River Valley

- In 1733-1734 the First Congregational Church in Northampton experienced a revival among the youth.
- The adults eventually caught the spirit of the youth and even followed the practice of meeting in small groups. As Edwards preached a series of sermons on justification by faith alone, the great truth of the Protestant reformation, the First Congregational Church was affected. The first converts came in December of 1734. In six months 300 persons were converted in the town of 1100.
- By 1735 the town's citizens showed an increased anxiety about irreligion.
- News of the events in Northampton quickly spread throughout the Connecticut River valley. As travelers came for business in the courts of Northampton, the county seat, and as peddlers roamed the valley in pursuit of their trade, the sparks of revival, spread northwards in Massachusetts and southward into Connecticut. In all, 100 communities were affected. By 1736 more than 20 Connecticut churches had felt its impact.
- Edwards' own account of the events in and around Northampton entitled *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, helped acquaint the world with the revival. This personal letter was published in London in 1737 and in Boston in 1738.

#### New England Set Ablaze: The Work of George Whitefield

- On 14 September 1740 into an atmosphere electrified with expectancy and emotion, George Whitefield came.
- Ample preparation had been made for Whitefield's arrival in NE. Publications were printed, the writings of Gilbert Tennent were distributed in Boston, and Boston newspapers carried extensive advertisement of books and tracts by Whitefield. The people of NE were ready on the morning of Monday, Sept. 15, when Whitefield stood to preach his first sermon in New Port, Rhode Island. They were exceedingly attentive and tears trickled down their cheeks.
- From Rhode Island, Whitefield moved to the cultural city of Boston where he was initially warmly received.

- He wrote, “So many persons come to me under convictions, and for advice, that I have scarce time to eat bread. Wonderful things are doing here. The Word runs like lightening.”
- In the following days, Whitefield made an extensive tour of NE and then returned to Boston. On October 9, as he mounted the pulpit to give the morning lecture at a crowded meetinghouse he wrote:
  - “I saw a great number of ministers sitting around and before me. . . [T]he Lord enabled me to open my mouth boldly against unconverted ministers; for, I am persuaded, the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ. The reason why congregations have been so dead is, because they had dead men preaching to them.” This statement, once published, caused severe reaction among these “dead men.”
- Whitefield left Boston on October 12 to make another tour into New England. He delivered a farewell sermon to some 30,000 people. The time in Boston had been fruitful. Thousands had been saved, including 20 ministers!
- Whitefield arrived in Northampton on Friday, October 17. The word of the Northampton revival of some five years previous had reached Whitefield as had the reputations of both Stoddard and Edwards.
- Sparks flew during the weekend stay in Northampton. On Sunday, the fire ignited. Whitefield praises:
  - “Preached this morning, and good Mr. Edwards wept during the whole time of exercise. The people were equally affected; and, in afternoon the power increased yet more. Our Lord seemed to keep the good wine till the last. I have not seen four such gracious meetings together since my arrival. Oh, that my soul may be refreshed with the joyful news, that Northampton people have recovered their first love; that the Lord has revived His work in their souls, and caused them to do their first works!”



- In his 1740 tour of the colonies, Whitefield traveled 800 miles and preached 130 sermons in 73 days.
- In total Whitefield made 13 voyages across the Atlantic between 1738 and 1769. his passion for NE continued. He would return twice more to NE. The results of he and his cohorts are astonishing. In a few short years 150 churches were started and 40,000 people were converted at a time when there were only 250,000 inhabitants in the entire region. Whitefield is credited with making the GA a general continental revival.

**Scripture:** John 4:23

**Statement:** Jonathan Edwards instructs ministers to maintain an appropriate balance between spirit and truth. While the statement is for ministers, any person who stands to proclaim the word or lead a Bible study should heed his words: “If a minister has light without heat, and entertains his auditory with learned discourses without a savour of the power of godliness, or any appearance of fervency of spirit, and zeal of God and the good of souls, he may gratify itching ears, and fill the heads of his people with empty notions; but it will not be very likely to reach their hearts, or save their souls. And if, on the other hand, he be driven on with a fierce and intemperate zeal, and vehement heat, without light, he will be likely to kindle the like unhallowed flame in his people, and to fire their corrupt passions and affections; but will make them never the better nor lead them a step towards heaven, but drive them apace the other way.”