

## 1738 AD – ‘JOHN WESLEY RECEIVES THE HOLY SPIRIT AT ALDERSGATE’

“**If that nation I have warned, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.**” (Jer. 18 v 8)

### EVENTS IN 1738 AD

On 24 May, 1738 John **Wesley** went to a service in a Moravian chapel on Aldersgate Street in London and ‘felt his heart strangely warmed’. He knew at that very moment he was saved.

### WESLEY BEFORE ALDERSGATE<sup>1</sup>

In 1703, John **Wesley** was born in Epworth, England, the child of Samuel and Susanna **Wesley**. Samuel was a graduate of Oxford and rector of Epworth. John was one of nineteen children.

In 1709 the rectory roof caught on fire. Sparks fell on the children’s beds and cries of ‘fire’ were heard in the street. The parents got all their children out of the house except John who was only five years old. With stairs aflame and the roof about to collapse, John was lifted out of the second floor window by a parishioner standing on another man’s shoulders. The experience left an indelible impression.

John **Wesley** was raised in a strictly devout Christian home. Children learned major portions of the New Testament by heart. Evening prayers were mandatory. Children spent one evening each week alone with their mother for intensive spiritual instruction.

In 1714, at age 11, **Wesley** was sent to the Charterhouse School in London, where he lived the studious, methodical and religious life in which he had been trained at home.

In 1720, **Wesley** entered Oxford. In 1724, Wesley graduated as a Bachelor of Arts and decided to pursue a Master of Arts degree. He was ordained a deacon on 25 September 1725, holy orders being a necessary step toward becoming a fellow and tutor at the university.

John read Law's '*Christian Perfection and A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*'. He said it gave him a sublime view of the law of God; and he resolved to keep it, inwardly and outwardly. He pursued a methodical and abstemious life, studied Scriptures, and performed religious duties diligently, even depriving himself so that he would have alms to give.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Wesley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wesley)

## THE HOLY CLUB

John's younger brother Charles along with two students formed a club for the purpose of study and the pursuit of a devout Christian life. John joined the club and became the leader. The group increased in number and greatly in commitment. The group met daily from six until nine for prayer, psalms, and reading of the New Testament. They prayed every waking hour for several minutes each day. While the church's prescribed attendance was only three times a year, they took communion every Sunday. They fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays until three o'clock as was commonly observed in the ancient church. In 1730, the group began the practice of visiting prisoners in jail. They preached, educated, and relieved jailed debtors whenever possible, and cared for the sick. One of the members was George **Whitefield**.

## ENCOUNTER WITH MORAVIANS

On a voyage to the colonies John **Wesley** first came into contact with **Moravians**. At one point in the voyage a storm came up and broke the mast off the ship. The English panicked, but the **Moravians** calmly sang hymns and prayed. This experience led **Wesley** to believe that the **Moravians** possessed an inner strength which he lacked. The deeply personal faith the **Moravians** practised heavily influenced **Wesley**'s theology. (See our paper [1727 AD](#)).

## MINISTRY IN AMERICA

In 1736 **Wesley** arrived in Georgia. Although his goal was to evangelize the Native Americans, a shortage of clergy in the colony largely limited his ministry to European settlers in Savannah.

**Wesley** gathered around him a group of devoted Christians who met in a number of small group religious societies. At the same time, attendance at church services and communion increased over the course of nearly two years in which he served as Savannah's parish priest.

Nonetheless, **Wesley**'s High Church ministry was controversial amongst the colonists and it ended in disappointment. **Wesley** fell in love with a young woman named Sophia Hopkey but she married another man. **Wesley** denied her communion after she failed to signify to him in advance her intention of taking it. As a result, legal proceedings against him ensued in which a clear resolution seemed unlikely.

In 1737 **Wesley** fled the colony and returned to England carrying a burden of personal failure.

## ALDERSGATE EXPERIENCE

In 1738, John **Wesley** visited a Moravian chapel. He wrote in his journal: "*In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.*"

**Wesley** explained his personal experience in a letter to his brother Samuel: "*By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him: And in the obvious sense of the word, I was not a Christian till May the 24th last past. For till then sin had dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but surely, then, from that time to this it hath not; — such is the free grace of God in Christ.*"

## WESLEY AFTER ALDERSGATE

In 1738 John **Wesley** went to Herrnhut to study with the **Moravian** society.

In 1739 on the invitation of **Whitefield**, John **Wesley** preached in the open air near Bristol.

Over the next 50 years **Wesley** would preach in the open air, in halls, and in churches. He and **Whitefield** organized their bands into the Methodist Society. They experienced much resistance from the Church of England and all manner of accusations. **Wesley** did flout Anglican regulations regarding preaching inside parish boundaries.

**Wesley** felt the Church of England failed to call sinners to repent and many of the clergy were corrupt. He felt his calling was to bring revival to the church and he worked with urgency.

In 1741 **Wesley** preached Arminianism. He attacked Calvinism as blasphemous: it made God to be '*worse than the devil*'. George **Whitefield** separated his ministry from **Wesley** after that.

Someone asked **Whitefield** if he thought he would see **Wesley** in heaven, to which **Whitefield** replied: "*I fear not, for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance, we shall hardly get sight of him.*"

**Wesley** and his brother Charles penned thousands of hymns. **Wesley** was said to have ridden 250,000 miles, given away 30,000 pounds, and preached more than 40,000 sermons.

## PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH

**"If that nation I have warned, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."** (Jeremiah 18 v 8)

God is saying: '*I will change my plan to harm you if you repent*'. This statement clearly indicates God is looking for man to do something. It suggests man has a free will to choose whether to change his way. If man did not have a free will, God's offer would be meaningless.

John **Wesley** saw the grace of God from the view that men's eternal destinies could be affected by their response to the proclamation of the gospel. (Arminian perspective)

George **Whitefield** and Jonathon **Edwards** saw the grace of God from the view that man is dead in his sins and trespasses and is unable to choose. (Calvinistic perspective)

Our study of Jonathon **Edwards** demonstrates that God honored the preaching of the gospel from an extreme Calvinistic perspective by releasing revival and converting souls. (See our papers [1732 AD](#) and [1734 AD](#)). We would see the same in the ministry of George **Whitefield**.

But God confirmed the ministry of John Wesley by also releasing revival and the conversion of souls! So, whether the gospel was preached from an Arminian perspective or from a Calvinistic perspective, God honored the preaching of the gospel.

How can this be? Arminianism and Calvinism are opposites. Shouldn't we conclude one is right and the other is wrong? This has been the assumption of generations of scholars on both sides of the debate. The recriminations (see Wesley's statement in 1741) are heated.



Both Arminianism and Calvinism are correct! (We should have guessed this because so many verses in the Bible support both perspectives of grace).

Behold a tin can. From the side perspective it looks rectangular. From the top perspective it looks circular. How can an object be both rectangular and circular? Only if it is a cylinder!



## SPIRITUAL NUMBER ANALYSIS

For a mind that has wisdom please read on. See truth from another perspective.

### PART ONE

Chapter **18** of Jeremiah is the **87<sup>th</sup>** chapter of The Prophets.

The spiritual number **87** means 'Saints Assembly'

John **Wesley** was an ordained minister in the Anglican Church, but he was cut from the same cloth as George **Whitefield** who said 'the world is my parish'.

The truth of the matter is believers belong to God, not to churches! It is the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross that purchases the redemption of a human soul from Hell. Neither churches, nor human priests, nor liturgies, nor water immersion, nor the saying of rites over the bread and wine can save a human soul.

So God sent his servant John **Wesley** everywhere to preach to anyone who would receive the truth and be saved. Although John **Wesley** personally saw himself as an agent of revival within the church, in fact he was simply preaching the gospel. It mattered not what was the church affiliation of the hearer.

### PART TWO

Jeremiah **18 v 8** is the **19,393<sup>rd</sup>** verse in the whole Bible starting at Gen **1 v 1**.

The number **19,393 = 41 x 473**

The spiritual meaning of **41** is 'Man's Rules'

The spiritual meaning of **473** is 'The Lord Thunders'

We can look at the spiritual number **41** 'Man's Rules' and infer a powerful notion: that man chooses his own eternal destiny. Man is the master of his fate! This is the Arminian perspective which John **Wesley** taught, which the Bible affirms, and which the Holy Spirit confirmed with revivals and conversion of souls. When man responds to God's offer of grace, the LORD honors his promise: 'The LORD Thunders'.

### PART THREE

Jeremiah **18 v 8** is the **1738<sup>th</sup>** verse of The Prophets starting at Isaiah **1 v 1**.

The number **1738 = 2 x 869**

The spiritual meaning of **2** is 'Division'

The spiritual meaning of **869** is 'So Deep in Sin – Beyond Healing'

John **Wesley** and George **Whitefield** preached at a time in England when there was a great moral decline in the general population. Britain in the 1700's was a cesspool of carnality:<sup>2</sup>

With the rise in Britain's commerce, London had become a busier place and had been gathering more people from England's rural areas and from Scotland, Wales and Ireland. London also had migrants from Germany, Holland and France. London had become a great center for the arts and fashion.

A new interest in variety and consumerism had developed. The idea that it was okay to find delight in buying things was taking hold.

Christian asceticism was in decline. The Puritanism of Cromwell's time was fading, and so too was adherence to Biblical admonitions regarding the accumulation of money or the lending of money.

English men and women had begun wearing lighter and brighter clothing instead of heavy wool and linen.

People in Britain drank, gambled and fought duels.

Prostitution was rampant. A German visitor to London complained of passing a "lewd female" every ten yards on a December evening along Fleet Street, including girl prostitutes as young as twelve.

From a human perspective it looked like Britain was lost to sin: 'So Deep in Sin – Beyond Healing'. But God honored the preaching of the gospel. Sinners were saved and converted in body, mind, and spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit in their heart they could overcome sin.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/h29-fr.htm>