

LASTING REVIVAL

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What is Revival?

There are many ways of explaining 'revival'. Dr. Elmer Towns said, "An evangelical revival is an extraordinary work of God in which Christians repent of their sins as they become intensely aware of His presence in their midst, and they manifest a positive response to God in renewed obedience to the known will of God, resulting in a deepening of their individual and corporate experience with God." Charles Finney said, "Revival is the people of God renewing their obedience to God."

Peter says, "*Repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out and that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*" (Acts 3:19) Revival is when God refreshes His people. I believe that is the biblical definition of revival.

Our Response to Revival

Revival is agonizing. It so terrorizes you over your sin that you repent deeply. Revival is also consuming. It leaves you no time for hobbies, for chores around the house, for work, or for sleep. Revival wrecks your appointment calendar, interrupts TV times, becomes more important than sports you are devoted to, demands your full attention, and wears you out.

People respond differently to revival but one outward expression is not better or worse than another. The true issue is inward reality. Does outward expression lead to right living and right thinking; does it change lives? You can kneel, sing, pray, or cry for hours; the only thing that counts though is what happens when you exit the sanctuary and start living.

Throughout the Bible and in history there have been sovereign moves of God in revival that have

- Sparked a dead church,
- Moved a cold-hearted people back to the Lord,
- Caused an indifferent people to fall on their face in true repentance,
- Turned the hearts of the church back to the Word of God, and
- Set the church on fire with the power of the Spirit of the Lord.

Revival in the Bible

The Bible records such a revival in the book of 2 Kings Chapters 2-23, under the leadership of young King Josiah, that turned the heart of a nation back to God. After years of bad leadership and evil kings in Judah, the people were in need of a revival. It began with King Josiah's desire to open up the house of God for worship once again. During the cleanup process they found the Word of God and read it to the King. It caused King Josiah to really see the Lord and to fall on his face before God in repentance, which

in turn, caused the nation to repent and the Lord healed the land.

The book of Ezra tells us of the beginning of the revival in Jerusalem under the priest Ezra and the governor Zerubbabel, when the Jews in captivity began to return from Babylon. During this revival, they repented for the ungodly things they had allowed to enter their lifestyles and they turned back to God. The foundation of the temple was once again laid. Worship was restored as well as the feast days and celebrations such as the Passover, and God once again blessed them as a nation.

Later, in the book of Nehemiah, we see how Nehemiah continued the revival that was started in Ezra and the sovereign move of God was taken to a new level under his leadership. Under Nehemiah, they rebuilt the walls around the city of Jerusalem for its protection. They had such a hunger to return to God and His word that they stood all day long from the oldest to the youngest for the reading of the Word of God when it was found again. This revival too was marked with them seeing God, followed by a deep repentance and return to God, and the Lord blessing them.

In Acts 2, the Holy Ghost is poured out upon God's people for the first time. It has been referred to as the first wave or the initial wave of the Holy Ghost outpouring.

Revival in History

Throughout the pages of history there have been great revivals recorded. The great awakenings, as they called them, occurred at different times in history. One such "awakening" started on July 8th 1741 in Enfield, Connecticut at a Congregational Church with Jonathan Edwards preaching his now famous sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." History records that Jonathan Edwards was a Trinitarian preacher. He came at the invitation of this Oneness pastor, who he did not like, from Enfield, to preach. He brought what he considered to be his worst message for he intended to shame this Oneness pastor and his congregation. He delivered the message in a low and monotone voice with no emotion whatsoever. One man in the congregation said he just looked straight ahead at the rope on the bell of the church until he looked it off. But something happened there that day. The message did not affect the congregation but people who were walking by and driving by in horse and buggy were drawn into the church and came crawling down to the altar calling out to the Lord in repentance. This caused the people in the church to then begin to call out to the Lord. It was a sovereign move of God in revival. This move of God was not brought about by Jonathan Edwards. He even at one point told the people to be quiet and let him finish his message. But God was in control and it was God who brought revival.

At the turn of the century, there was a sovereign move of God all over the world -in Topeka, Kansas, Azusa Street in Los Angeles, England, Wales, Korea, China and in our own land, India. When we study the history of revival either in the Bible or in recent history, the Word of God was the catalyst for each awakening or move of God. It is God's Word that teaches us about God and His nature. The reason the revival that happened in Kerala is still going on is because people like KE Abraham and others taught

with a balanced approach to the move of Holy Spirit and the Word of God. But the danger we see today is that people are overemphasizing experiences that are not based on biblical principles.

Characteristics of Biblical Revival

Revival cannot be organized, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from heaven when God chooses to blow upon His people once again. It is very significant that when there is obviously an experience of revival in lives, those who are revived do not talk about revival but rather they talk about Jesus! Paul is one of the best examples. Ever since he had the revelation of God, he talked only about Christ. While he was with people on the ship, in synagogue, in prison - anywhere and everywhere, to anybody and everybody, he had only one subject - Christ.

So my definition of revival at its simplest is '**God's people seeing Jesus again as He really is**', which in turn should cause other things to happen.

The elements of revival are found in the book of 2 Chronicles 7:14-16.

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. 16 I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

By studying the elements accompanying this revival, we learn how God moves to awaken His people.

Revelation – *“if my people, who are called by my name,”*

We are the people of God's Name. We have a revelation of who Jesus really is. We see Him as He is.

Recognition – *“will humble themselves”*

When we see Him, the natural response is that we recognize how little we are in comparison to God and we humble ourselves before Him.

Responding – *“and pray and seek my face”*

When I recognize Him, it causes me to respond to God in prayer and in seeking His face.

Repentance – *“and turn from their wicked ways,”*

When I continue in the ways of God in revival, it brings a natural repentance.

Remission – *“then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin”*

When we repent, God will hear us and will forgive us.

Receiving – *“and will heal their land.”*

We will receive the healing we need for our land from revival.

Remaining – *“Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever.”*

It is God’s will that we would always be in revival mode. It is God’s will that we never again get off of this wave of revival.

Reproduction – *“My eyes and my heart will always be there.”*
God wants revival to be reproduced over and over again.

We see the same pattern in Acts 2: 36-39, 42-47

36“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

38Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

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Why Don't We Experience Lasting Revival?

We want stirrings without change: we only want it to work inside the Church. We want to be a reservoir and not a river. But something that is in and not putting out is a Dead Sea! We want the benefits of God's blessings but we do not want to be a blessing to others. Remember revival is the experience of the Church to empower us for evangelization, the expression of the Church.

We want shouting and singing without personal involvement. We want to be spectators, not partakers. We want sound doctrine without compliance. We want talk about separation from the world, but live like the world. We want to talk about being a stranger in the world but we live like we will never leave this place.

We want sermons to shout about but not to challenge us. We do not want to be challenged about our giving, our tithes or offerings. We do not want to be challenged about our spiritual growth or our service in God's House. We do not want to be challenged to go and spread the gospel to the lost. We want to hear only things that will benefit us or bless us.

We criticize those who do not obey what we do. We label as fanatics those who live sacrificially. We want to follow the convenient gospel. We want Jesus to bless us, without following His commandment to love one another, which is how we are to be known as Christians by the world.

We want satisfying experiences without commitment. The lack of commitment is the curse of modern church. We do not have lasting revival because we refuse to deny our 'self'.

The single greatest need in our land today is heaven-sent revival. Revival comes at the sovereign, gracious decision of God to send a fresh movement of His Spirit among his people. Revival will not come unless it is desired. It is an invasion from heaven at the request of the saints on earth.

Let us pray that God will give us a new glimpse of His glory. Then, may we respond to it with open hearts, repent of our sins and remain in deepened commitment and obedience to Him, producing much fruit for His glory. Let us pray "Lord revive us again!"