

Revivals And Church History :: The Path of Revival -ziegler

The Path of Revival -ziegler - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/8/13 17:58

The Path of Revival

By Jeff Ziegler

In traveling across the United States and Great Britain, I have had opportunity to hear many a serious inquiry concerning the nature of revival and spiritual awakening. Most often these questions revolve around what our expectations should be when revival indeed comes to the Church and what effects spiritual awakening brings when it dawns upon the nations.

The views which I shall present are in harmony with those of the great Puritan expositor Matthew Henry and the revivalist Jonathan Edwards, whose ministry spanned the First Great Awakening. I take this approach because many of the modernistic approaches to interpreting the prophecy of Isaiah, especially chapter 60, willfully ignore any application of its principles to the Church, thus robbing from the Church the glory and grandeur of her inheritance and absolving her of responsibility for revival and spiritual awakening.

This approach not only rightly includes the Church's participation in Isaiah's picture of revival, but shows that it is only through the Church and the dynamic power of the Gospel that there can be any hope of seeing the great blessings of this chapter brought to fruition. As you read this, my hope and prayer is that you will begin to pray for a revival that affects every sphere of society and establishes a dramatic increase in the kingdom of God on earth.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1).

Oh, what an awe inspiring vision this sweet sentence gives! Can you see it? Does it capture your heart? God's people, the elect, the Church of God, rising in the light of Christ's holy perfections, to exhibit and be animated as a testimony upon the earth! I can think of no greater more beautiful picture of revival coming to the Church, than the glory of God coming to the people of God!

Yet even in the light of such resplendent vision, many Bible scholars and historians depreciate and limit the value of this verse and the entire sixtieth chapter of Isaiah. They do so by declaring the sum of all which is spoken of in these passages as a foretelling of Israel's deliverance from the Babylonian captivity and her subsequent restoration in the land.

There can be no doubt that Israel was indeed delivered and restored from her captivity under great and inspired leaders such as Nehemiah and Ezra, but the scope and vision of these passages are far greater than this single event. Their magnitude and force are of such a spiritual dimension that only a revived Church working exploits in the power of the Gospel could ever bring a comprehensive fulfillment of Isaiah's all encompassing declarations.

Thus to relegate Isaiah's far-reaching global vision to a past age and one specific event can only spell disaster for a generation of Christians who so desperately need revival.

Isaiah's vision contains many revival principles that we can expect to be fulfilled by the Church when revival and awakening come in the fulness of God's power. We will consider just four of these principles.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1-2).

Revival Principle #1

In a time of deep spiritual decline, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ dawns upon the elect in unusual power and His character is recovered and expressed among His people.

Revival is not a planned evangelical meeting! Rather it is a unique and dynamic out raying of the Father's glory through Christ toward the Church as a testimony of His supremacy upon the earth. Winkie Pratney describes revival as, "God sp

ringing a convicting surprise upon His creation."

If you genuinely long for revival, then begin seeking the glory of God - His divine character. Pray with faith and the unction of Moses, "Lord, show me Thy glory." The Lord Jesus Christ, by the very nature of His loving character, will grant you a mighty transfiguring and reviving, for the Lord Himself has always shown His desire in regards to His beloved ones seeing the glory of God.

Revival Principle #2

Revival comes when moral decline is rampant among the nations and there is a gross or greater spiritual darkness among the people.

This gross darkness is a hellish numbing agent which parches the sinner's conscience, leading both individuals and whole nations into a senseless, demonic stupor, seemingly impervious to Gospel light. This malignant malaise is hell's most potent weapon for it atrophies the Church, thus leaving whole people groups spiritually neutered. Nevertheless, it is in the midst of such carnal chaos that God sends revival to cheer and to guide His downcast, despairing remnant.

Consider 18th century England just before the Great Awakening. On the average every third house was affected by drunkenness. Violence and sexual promiscuity was widespread and having dramatic increase. The Church was morally corroded and consistently ignored by the masses. Yet under these deplorable, nation-ruining influences, God sovereignly raised up uncompromising men having revival vision, both in England and America, thus heralding unprecedented spiritual awakening.

The testimony of Christ was recovered and held high in that generation. Will not the God of the Great Awakening, the God of revival perform the same in our day? For all who are despairing at the disrepair of spiritual life in the Church, take heart and pray in faithful anticipation for the King of Glory to revive the house of His glory.

Revival Principle #3

When the greatness of Christ's glorified testimony is revived in the Church, the lost are awakened in large number.

"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side" (Isaiah 60:3-4).

Our third revival effect is that of power evangelism or Great Awakening. "The gentiles (the unsaved) will come into thy light." Notice that because the Church is alive with the light of Christ's character, she now shines as an ascended beacon of righteousness! No longer scorned or ignored, a great harvest of souls is wrought. The triumph of an awakening is always loosed through a revived Church.

Jonathan Edwards once wondered aloud at the prospect of the First Great Awakening continuing unabated, with the glorious consequence being that there would be no one left in 18th century America to save. Such is the overwhelming dynamic of revival and spiritual awakening upon our vision. Do you have the faith to pray with this vision before you?

Revival Principle #4

Revival also brings a restoration of those who have backslidden in the quagmire of soulless, selfish living and have left the Church for the attractions of worldliness.

"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side" (Isaiah 60:4).

Can there be any greater heart joy to see the Church's prodigal sons and daughters return to the God of their Fathers? In the day of revival, the Church again becomes a relevant and distinctly spiritual voice both to those who have rejected and spurned Christ's love and to those sincere children who have tired of lifeless religion and have left the fold.

If you have a genuine concern for the heritage of the Church, I can think of no greater reason to pray for revival in the Church! Revival is the surest way to prevent and arrest decline and worldliness in our families and churches. It is time to pray.

ray for a revived Church receiving her wayward sons and daughters back into the fold.

It is time to prepare the fatted calf for a feast of revival joy for the return of those dead in trespass and sin that they may be alive again in Christ - that the Church will once again be enlarged and nurse her sons and daughters at her side!

In a future issue we will continue to examine Isaiah 60 and see how revival affects economics, government and the kingdom of God.

Jeff Ziegler is president of Christian Evangelistic Endeavors, a ministry dedicated to bringing a great and mighty revival to the Church and spiritual awakening throughout the nations. C.E.E. sponsors Intensive Revival School, a two year discipleship training program designed to prepare students for the ministry. Revival Flame, a bi-monthly newsletter published by C.E.E., contains articles written by staff members and revivalists of old concerning revivals past and present.