

Revivals And Church History :: Revival: Blessing Or Judgment? -duewel

Revival: Blessing Or Judgment? -duewel - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/24 19:15

Revival: Blessing Or Judgment?

by Wesley Duewel

Our God is the God of revival. Revival is an essential part of His plan of redemption. From the time God created Adam and Eve and they fell into sin, Satan has tried to alienate humanity from God. He has tried to get us to disobey God and sever our relationship with Him.

Revival Is God Visiting In Love

God is a redeeming, blessing, reviving God. Why? Because God is love. "This is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4:10). "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

In the Old Testament period, Israel repeatedly forgot God, turned away from Him, and backslid into idolatry. But God did not give up on Israel. His heart was revealed by His words through Isaiah: "All day long I have held out My hands to an obstinate people" (Isa. 65:2). But Israel disregarded God's outstretched arms of love. God responded to stubborn, backsliding Israel, "How can I give you up...For I am God, and not man" (Hos. 11:8-9).

From one viewpoint, revival is the manifestation of God to His people, convicting by His awesome presence and by His infinite holiness. From another viewpoint, revival is God holding out His arms of love to us and refusing to give up on us.

Again and again during the Old Testament period God held out His arms to Israel through prophets, righteous kings, or leaders whom He raised up to call Israel back to Himself. The greatest revival visitation in history was Jesus. "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son" (John 3:16).

God followed up Jesus' ministry with the mighty revival of Pentecost, in which Christ founded His New Testament church. The church was born in revival fire. It is the nature of the church to experience revival through the Holy Spirit.

The history of the church from Pentecost till today shows the repeated need for revival. Read the letters of Christ to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. No church, no matter how holy or godly, has not at times needed refreshing and reviving. Even Ephesus needed to seek again her first love (Rev. 2:4).

God understands. God loves. God has provided an answer. Call it renewal, call it revival, call it refreshing, or call it whatever you will: God planned the ministry of the Holy Spirit to meet this great need of ours. We all repeatedly need God's reviving touch. But there are special times when the church needs revival in an unusually urgent way. I believe we need revival desperately today.

Revival Or Judgment?

In the long line of kings that followed Saul and David, after the division of the nation into Israel and Judah, most of the kings were not known as righteous kings. All of the kings of the northern and larger nation of Israel are said to have done "evil in the eyes of the Lord." Such words are found at least forty-six times in Scripture.

The first king of Israel was Jeroboam. He set up idols in the north and the south, and the people bowed before golden bull calves. Although they kept a semblance of worship of Jehovah, the calves were an attempt to combine Baal worship with the worship of Jehovah.

God sent prophets to Israel and to its kings: Ahijah, Jehu, Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and Oded, plus an unnamed prophet. But neither the kings nor most of the nation truly repented. There was not one real revival in Israel.

When God calls for repentance and people refuse to repent, how can God awaken them to their danger? He has no alternative but to send judgment. Israel was eventually taken into captivity a century and a half before little Judah was. The nation as a whole never returned after captivity. When people who have had God's light reject revival, judgment is inescapable.

Judah, the tiny nation in the south, centered in Jerusalem, also had prophets, more than Israel had. Shemaiah, the son of Oded, Jehu, Jahaziel, Eliezer, Elijah, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Huldah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Uriah--these were prophets before Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel, Obediah, Jeremiah, and Daniel were prophets during that captivity. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were prophets after the remnant of Judah returned from their Babylonian exile.

Many of the kings of Judah were more responsive to spiritual things and more faithful to Jehovah. Five of Judah's kings were especially righteous. They cooperated with and responded to the prophets' call to repentance. Some degree of national revival or reformation was experienced during each of these five reigns.

Judgment Can Lead To Revival

Please let me repeat: God is a God of revival, a God of love. God desires to visit His people with revival rather than with judgment. God longs to bless, longs to forgive, and is slow to punish (Ex. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-12). But when His people drift away from Him or turn away and refuse to repent, God may need to send punishment, wake His people up, and bring them back to repentance so He may be merciful to them.

Backsliding into idolatry was the constant danger and frequent sin of Israel and Judah until God finally sent them into awesome judgment during the captivity. Jerusalem and the temple of Solomon were destroyed. Most of the remaining Jews were taken into captivity to Babylonia, where they were forced to remain at least seventy years.

Then through Nehemiah and Ezra, God sent a time of revival, and many went back to Jerusalem again. God was able to fulfill His plan as prophesied in Scripture, and in the fullness of time Jesus Christ became incarnate and provided salvation in His atonement on the cross.

When judgment is humbly accepted and people repent, God is always ready to forgive and to restore. The Jews learned their lesson through the judgment of captivity. Never since that time to this day have any considerable number of Jews ever gone back into idolatry. The judgment of God became a blessing to them as a nation.

In the book, *Revival Fire*, we will look at three times during Judah's history when God was able to send revival because He had a leader to whom the people responded. When they humbled themselves and returned to God, He manifested His grace and mercy. He is ready to do the same today!