

Lord, Send a HOLY Revival

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Ezra 9:8–9 (NKJV) “And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. ⁹For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.”

These words were penned by a Jewish scribe named Ezra, one who returned with a remnant of Jews to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem after their seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Ezra was a man called for the revival of a nation. Ezra's job was to restore true worship and to teach the people God's laws. Even then the people sinned. Ezra feared that their disobedience threatened to close the door of God's favor and blessing in revival. Ezra reminded the people of why God had shown mercy by bringing them out of captivity.

In the same way it seems the church has forgotten why God saved and called her out from this world. While Christ has called the church to be His voice of salvation to a dying world, it seems the church itself is in need of saving. Many churches today are sick with sin, weakened by compromise, asleep in a coma of apathy, and sustained on a life support system of religious machinery. Newfangled “cures” being marketed by the today's church are more like useless placebos. A. W. Tozer lamented, “In many churches, Christianity has been watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone, and if it were medicine it would not cure anyone!” In receiving placebos, the latter state of the sinner is worse than the beginning. Sinners are still dying in sin while imagining that they are cured. Without a *holy* revival in the church, judgment is sure to come.

The idea of “revival” has changed a lot over the years. Unfortunately, the devil has introduced *unholy* substitutes for revival to distract the church from the revival it really needs. It is sad when people are hesitant to talk about revival because of the confusion and distortion being promoted in the name of revival. Revival is a Biblical term and a real need of the church. We need revival! Unfortunately charlatans have been systematically redefining it. Fifty years ago, when people talked about revival they were usually talking about a series of special meetings held in a church once or twice a year to get people saved. People would say, “Our church is holding a revival this week.” Although the intention was good, it was somewhat misleading because a church cannot hold a revival any more than a man can hold a tornado. God has his way in the whirlwind!

Today many so-called “revivals” being promoted and held within Charismatic churches are a complete sham. They are a mockery of both God and revival. Some have even promoted the notion that revival is God throwing a “party”. Crowds of people are told to come to “Joel's Bar” or to receive the “drunken glory”. I ask you, where is that kind of revival taught in Scripture? Sadly, very few of these meetings even mention the Scriptures. The stated goal of one “preacher” in this “drunken glory” movement is to “get sloshed, stay sloshed, and live a sloshed life.” In these places the “church” has been transformed into a mixture of bar, circus, and comedy central. Promoted in these meetings are such things as being “drunk in the Spirit”, “high on the Holy Ghost”, “tokin' the Ghost,” “smoking the baby Jesus”, taking drags off of imaginary “Jehovah-juana” joints, and “snorting the Word”. All the while the participants cackle like hyenas and stagger like drunken sailors in full party mode. Is the Holy Spirit inspiring this

kind of “revival” with its manifestations? I believe these things are works of the flesh at best and works of the devil at worst. It is more consistent with Israel dancing around the golden calf at Mount Sinai as they proclaimed to be worshiping the LORD!

Others believe that revival is all about manifestations of gold dust, angel feathers, jewels, and glory clouds. That is the focus. That is what some want to see. They will travel from meeting to meeting and place to place trying to find such things. Never mind the anointed penetrating preaching of the Word of God calling people back to God. In their mind, if these sensational manifestations aren’t happening, they run to find “revival” somewhere else.

Others believe revival is all about apostles and prophets. In these movements revival seems to depend upon big name “apostles” and “prophets” getting together to authorize and declare the kingdom of God. Dreams, visions, revelations, out of body experiences, encounters with angels, portals into the spiritual realm, guided tours of heaven, and the like are being promoted in such meetings. Unfortunately many of these things have more in common with the New Age and divination than the Holy Spirit.

Sadly many Christians are so undiscerning and gullible that they are easily convinced that such things are evidence of a move of God! The problem is that there is a spiritual dearth in the land caused by a famine of the true preaching and teaching of the Word of God. As a result, people believe that revival is about strange mystical experiences and “manifestations”. Once they embrace this unbiblical definition of revival, it is open season for the wild, the weird, and the whacky. There is no limit to what can be taught and justified in such circles. In fact, the wilder, the weirder, and the whackier things get—the heavier the anointing and glory is said to be. Those who demonstrate unquestioned openness to receive any and every new experience are deemed the most spiritual and yielded to God. The Biblical command to “test the spirits” is now regarded as quenching the Spirit and doubting God. The promotion of these unbiblical experiences amount to substituting profane fire for the holy fire of God. Profane fire is not holy. It does not originate from the message of the Cross. It does not produce holiness. It is not of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not revival fire. It is deadly.

The devil’s hijacking of the term “revival” leads me to qualify the kind of revival that we need—we a “holy” revival. A holy revival is a Biblical revival. All true historical revivals are Biblical revivals. If a so-called “revival” is not Biblical, then it is not a holy revival. The goal of Biblical revival is to bring God’s backslidden people back to holy covenant faithfulness and devotion and back to true worship of the God of the Bible. That means returning to the Bible. The Bible tells us who the true and living God is, what He is like, and how He wants to be worshiped. Biblical revival will be characterized by a spirit of intercession, prophetic preaching of God’s Word, a bold call for sinners to repent, conviction of sinners by the Holy Spirit, the tangible return of the fear of the Lord, a commitment to holy living, the return of Christ’s Lordship over His church, the seeking of God’s face rather than His hand, a love for God that pours out to others, and a passion for the Great Commission. A holy revival honors a holy God, brings forth a holy people, and ushers in holy worship.

Revival is a rescue effort for a sick and dying church. The need for revival is an indictment rather than endorsement. A holy revival is not an end but a means to an end. The goal of revival is not perpetual revival. The goal of revival is to bring the church back to life again. A holy revival comes like a fire to purge out sin and disobedience. God wants a holy church. A holy church will come with a holy revival.

The church stands in need of a holy revival. Sometimes God will bring revival to a man or to a church that He will then use as a catalyst for revival. Unfortunately a revival movement often falls victim to the egos and marketing agendas of men. For them revival is not the real goal. Revival becomes the marketing tool used to build their own church or ministry. Rather than

being catalysts for revival, they become catalysts for rebellion and rivalry. Self-righteousness and criticism of those who “reject” their version of revival undermines the true Biblical revival that the community needs. God is looking for those who will be recipients of a holy revival.

What will it take to experience a holy revival? First, it will take a work of God’s grace. Ezra says, *“Now for a little while grace has been shown to us from the Lord our God.”* Revival does not begin with man. Men cannot generate revival. Holy revival begins with God. We are dependent upon God to pour out the spirit of grace and supplication upon our lives and upon His church.

Second, a holy revival will take a release of God’s mercy. Ezra says, *“God did not forsake us in our bondage.”* The church in need of revival is in bondage to sin, the flesh, and the devil. God does not send revival because we *deserve* it but because we *need* it. God sends revival to rescue us from our sin and backsliding ways.

Third, a holy revival will take a work of divine revelation. Ezra says, *“That God may enlighten our eyes.”* People and churches do not see their need for revival. Only God can open their eyes to see their need. Jesus said to the church at Laodicea: *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”* (Revelation 3:15-19 NKJV) Revival begins where the need is clearly seen and felt.

Fourth, a holy revival will bring a measure of revival in our bondage. Ezra says, *“And give us a measure of revival in our bondage.”* Bondage and slavery are judgments that come to those who refuse to live under God’s authority. Bondage is the condition of God’s people prior to revival. Like Israel in Egypt, God allows bondage to bend us so that we cry out to Him.

Fifth, a holy revival will take the cooperation of a holy remnant. Ezra says, *“to leave us a remnant to escape.”* God never starts with a majority. He starts with a remnant. God enables a remnant to hear His call to come out from the world and be separate unto Him. The remnant hears the Spirit’s call to be a holy people prepared for God’s purpose. God will use a holy remnant to usher in a holy revival.

A holy revival also brings needed benefits and blessings. First, a holy revival rescues the church from the judgment of God. Ezra said that God left a remnant *“to escape.”* The remnant in Ezra’s day escaped dying in captivity in Babylon. They were rescued out of the full penalty of God’s judgment. Holy revival brings a spiritual breakthrough that destroys the yoke of the curse so that God’s blessing can return. It sets people free to seek and serve the Lord.

Second, holy revival brings the blessing of God’s presence. Ezra says that God brings revival *“to give us a peg in His holy place.”* Holy revival brings God’s people back into His holy presence. A peg driven into a wall or into the ground speaks of stability. The “peg in His holy place” speaks of a secure place in God’s holy presence, in His temple. God’s presence restores God’s blessing and promise. It gives God’s people a firm hold on God’s holy purposes for their generation. God hammers His remnant down deep into the wall of His presence so that they will not be moved and so that they will be strong enough to hold the weight of His purpose.

Third, holy revival brings the blessing of spiritual renewal. Ezra says, *“to revive us”*. Revival is a resuscitation of what is almost dead and gone. Prior to revival the church is spiritually dry and dying. There is little or no fruitfulness. When God sends a holy revival, the spiritual life and vitality of the church is restored. People begin to pray, worship, study their Bibles, give, and serve like never before. The church is said to be on fire for God again.

Fourth, holy revival brings the blessing of restoration. Ezra says, *“to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins.”* The temple of God in Jerusalem had been destroyed years earlier by the Babylonians. The temple was in ruins. The altar was in ruins. Without the temple and the altar, there was no way to worship the Lord according to His prescribed order. Therefore Ezra made it a priority to restore Biblical worship by restoring the altar and the temple. Prior to revival, the dying church stands in spiritual ruins through sin, neglect, deception, and spiritual attack. Holy revival restores what is damaged, defiled, and destroyed. Holy revival tears down false systems of worship and begins the process of reordering, restructuring, and rebuilding the church according to God’s pattern as found in the Bible. Holy revival restores the truth of God’s Word, acceptable worship, and godly leadership. Holy revival restores the church so that she might shine with God’s radiating glory.

Fifth, a holy revival brings the blessing of divine protection. Ezra said, *“to give us a wall.”* Not only did the altar and temple lay in ruins but so did the walls around Jerusalem. Walls speak of protection, strength, and security. Without walls, the remnant was vulnerable to attack. During times of sin, the hedge of God’s protection is lowered and the church is barraged by the enemy’s attacks. A holy revival rebuilds the walls of divine protection around the church. Secure walls discourage and thwart the enemy’s plans. When holy revival comes, the enemy may attack but the walls of divine protection are high and strong.

The church needs revival—a “holy revival”. Holy revival always brings a holy change. Since God never changes, the change must be on our part. Change requires humility—we must admit that we have a need that only God can fix. Humility enables us to ask God for His help through prayer. Praying for God’s help leads to seeking His face—seeking His solutions to our problems. Embracing His solutions means repenting of our control and of our way of doing things. The principles for a Biblical revival are set forth by God in 2 Chronicles 7:14: *“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 I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* My prayer is, “Lord, send a holy revival!”

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