

The Revival Encounter

The VISION Newsletter / July 2015

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2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) “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 HEAL THEIR LAND.”

This is my sixth and final article in a series entitled, “God’s Prescription for a Troubled Nation”. America is a troubled nation. America is sick with sin, blinded by pride, deaf to the truth. America is dying and is in need of a cure. God has the prescription for what ails America. The prophet Jeremiah lamented, “*Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?*”¹ Is there hope for America? Is there a cure for what ails America? Yes there is. God’s prescription for a troubled nation is not a change in Washington or Wall Street. God’s prescription for America is revival in the church.

In previous articles I talked about other ingredients in God’s prescription for revival. First, God seeks a godly remnant, a “Revival Core”. Second, the Revival Core must have the “Revival Attitude” which is humility. Third, this Revival Core must pray and thus acknowledge their need and dependency upon God. Fourth, the Revival Core must have an encounter with truth as they seek God’s face. I call this the “Revival Reformation”. Fifth, the Revival Core must prepare the way of the Lord through true repentance. I call this the “Revival Highway”. Each of the above is an ingredient that can help foster revival in the church and an awakening in the nation. When God’s people meet His conditions, God has promised to intervene for their rescue. I call this the “Revival Encounter”.

Is revival and spiritual awakening possible today? Christian History Magazine’s edition on “Spiritual Awakenings in North America” stated: “Many have questioned: Can awakening ever happen again in North America? For many reasons we might say ‘probably not.’ Yet, how can we conclude that God cannot, and will not do again what he had done before—is the Holy Spirit bound by our limits of probability? Are social, ethnic, regional, economic, sexual, and spiritual barriers too great for the God who created us? Is the One who made us all different hindered by the complex nature of our pluralistic society? Does awakening come from below...or from above?”² Revival is an encounter with God...a moment when God comes to His people.

Before a revival encounter, God waits...“*For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue.*”¹⁵ *I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.*”³ Why does God wait? He waits for His people to return to Him: “*Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.*”² *After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.*”³ *Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.*”⁴

A Revival Encounter begins when 1) God hears when people meet His conditions for revival (the heavens are opened), 2) God forgives the sins of His people against Him (offense toward God is forgiven), and 3) God heals the hurt and damage caused by sin (God comes to rescue and save).

¹ Jeremiah 8:22 (NKJV)

² Christian History Magazine, Volume VIII, No. 3, Issue 23 (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today Inc., 1989), p. 4

³ Hosea 5:14–15 (NKJV)

⁴ Hosea 6:1-3 (NKJV)

A Revival Encounter can be described in two words...GOD CAME! Habakkuk 3:2–3 (NKJV) declares, “O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.”³ GOD CAME from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise.” When God comes in grace and mercy to His people, revival is the result. Revival is a miracle in the hearts and lives of His people that completely transforms them and rescues them from their sad condition.

First, God comes in revival because He is willing to hear the prayers of those who before He refused to hear: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”⁵ This refers to God’s mercy extended to His people. Second, God comes in revival because He is ready to forgive the sins of His people against Him. This refers to God’s readiness to be reconciled to His people. Third, God comes in revival because He is willing to heal their land. This speaks of God’s readiness to restore what sin has destroyed. Revival is like God’s rescue intervention into a burning house.

When we think of God coming to His people, the question needs to be answered, “How will God come to us? How will God come in a Revival Encounter?” The Scriptures are not silent on this matter. First, God will come to His people like a refiner’s fire and as launderer’s soap: “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap.³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, as in former years.⁵ And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me,’ says the LORD of hosts.⁶ ‘For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.’”⁶ Launderer’s soap removes the spots and stains on the surface of the vessel while fire melts and brings to the surface the dross embedded within the substance of the vessel itself. When God comes in revival, He will cleanse away the sins of His people and purge iniquity from their hearts.

This cleansing and purifying work is called *sanctification*. Ephesians 5:25–27 (NKJV) describes this sanctifying work in the context of Christ toward His church: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Christ will use the purifying work of the Word of God to wash and sanctify His people. True revivals always include a return to the authority of Scripture and its fiery application in the lives of backslidden believers. Revival Encounters are a time of God’s corrective discipline in the church: “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”⁷

Second, God will come to His people like the former and latter rain! “...He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.”⁸ God’s people are very dry spiritually before revival comes. Therefore God comes in order to refresh His people with His presence: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,”⁹ God actually tells His people to ask Him to send this rain of refreshing: “Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone.”¹⁰ Notice that as God’s people pray, God will “make flashing clouds”. In other words, when there is no rain in sight, God will supernaturally and suddenly bring about the refreshing that His people need!

⁵ Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)

⁶ Malachi 3:2–6 (NKJV)

⁷ 1 Peter 4:17 (NKJV)

⁸ Hosea 6:3 (NKJV)

⁹ Acts 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Zechariah 10:1 (NKJV)

While revival encounters are meant for God's people in the church, these encounters can initiate a "spiritual awakening" in those outside the church. A spiritual awakening takes place when a large number of non-Christians begin to come to faith in Christ. Spiritual awakening is aptly described in Isaiah 60:1–3 (NKJV): *"Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. ² For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. ³ The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."*

In many cases, a "spiritual awakening" follows a "rude awakening": *"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.' ²⁷ Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire."¹¹ God will allow things to happen that shake the security of people who are trusting in this world so that they will turn to Him. At that time, a revived church is like a refuge city on a hill whose light shines in the darkness bringing hope to the perishing.*

Can a spiritual awakening transform a nation? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" Consider what Christian History Magazine reports about the effects of Spiritual Awakenings in America:¹²

1. Most of our great popular denominations in America grew to strength because of the 19th-century awakenings?
2. Of the nine colonial colleges in America, six were born as the result of awakenings.
3. American and British awakenings led to the worldwide Evangelical Awakening, which spread the gospel around the world throughout the 19th century. In 1800, Christians were concentrated in Europe and North America; by 1900 many Christians were in China, India, and Africa.
4. George Whitefield, the great evangelist of the Great Awakening who preached all through the colonies, was an Anglican priest, and gladly worked with Christians from different backgrounds. His voice was so loud and clear that he could be heard by 30,000 people!
5. Awakenings started the foreign missions movement in America, and American missionary work started in a haystack, during a thunderstorm! In 1806, during an awakening at Williams College in Western Massachusetts, Samuel Mills and four other students hid themselves in a haystack to avoid a summer thunderstorm. While there they united in prayer, and pledged themselves to go as missionaries wherever God might lead them. Out of this group went the first American missionaries.
6. Some of the most notable movements of social reform in America's history have come from awakenings.
 - a. The anti-slavery movement in America was mainly a part of the reform movement generated by the Second Great Awakening
 - b. Prison reform
 - c. Child labor laws
 - d. Women's rights
 - e. Inner-city missions
7. The Third Great Awakening of 1858-1859 was brought about by prayer meetings in cities in Canada and America, and was led not by clergy, but by devoted laypersons.

Do you believe that America needs another spiritual awakening? If so, it will come when the church meets God's requirements for a Revival Encounter. Do you need a revival encounter in your life? Are you meeting God's requirements? Are you a part of the Revival Core? Are you humbling yourself before Him? Are you praying for God's help and deliverance? Are you actively seeking God's presence, favor, and blessing through an encounter with His Truth? Are you seriously turning away from your sinful ways? God has a prescription for what ails America. It is revival in the church. If we meet God's conditions, God

¹¹ Hebrews 12:25–29 (NKJV)

¹² Ibid, Christian History Magazine

has promised to hear from heaven, forgive our sins, and heal our land! God has done it before; He can do it again!

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