

# *WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT REVIVAL*

by Dr. Neil Chadwick

During the past 250 years of American history, church people have been almost continuously preoccupied with the subject of revival. From the first Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century, to the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements of the twentieth century, the idea of revival has always been a hope, if not a reality.

As with many other historic religious or social movements, revivals have had a great variety of ways they have been perceived, and thoughts and conversations about revivals elicit a number of different expectations. For some, a revival is a time of great fervor, excitement and intense emotions. It is accompanied with new and vibrant music, and pumped up preaching, often of the most extemporaneous type. The loud, and often tearful or angry pronouncements of such preaching are usually accepted uncritically, for who would dare question the anointing? For others, revival is a time for the display of great manifestations of God's presence and power, whether by unusual physical responses such as jerking or falling down, or by dramatic instant healings. And in our western preoccupation with bigness, revivals are viewed as authentic if they draw a lot of attention and cause crowds to swell, whether out of spiritual interest or at least curiosity.

Volumes of books have been written about the histories and nature of revival. An abundance of prescriptions have been offered to explain how we can get it, and there are always plenty of angry sounding preachers ready to berate the rest of us for not having it.

But what interests us is not what this multitude of expert revivalists have said about it, but rather, we want to understand what the authoritative Word of God has to teach us. Here are eight Biblical ways of understanding revival - hopefully increased understanding will lead to informed and earnest prayer.

## **1. Revival is linked to salvation:**

Twice in Psalm 80 there is a prayer for restoration: verse 3 - "Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." and again in verse 19 - "Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." (Psalms 80:1-3, 18, 19)

And in Lamentations 5:20-22 there is a similar prayer, "Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old."

This is why "Revivalism" is so closely associated with "Evangelism" - to be saved is to be "born again," to receive new life.

## **2. Revival is a result of repentance and humility:**

It is in the midst of David's well known prayer of contrition, after having been confronted with his sin, that he pleads, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalms 51:10)

The promise given through Isaiah is that God will not only live in heaven, but in the hearts of those who are "lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

In Peter's great sermon preached to the crowds who gathered after the lame beggar had been healed, he called for repentance, ". . . so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of

refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19, 20)

### **3. Revival is connected with forgiveness and joy:**

Following a plea for restoration, there's a kind of rhetorical question asked by the Psalmist, "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" (Psalms 85:4-7) Certainly it is assumed that the answer from heaven will be a resounding "Yes." Certainly, one of the more constant elements of revival is the ecstatic joy experienced by those who become aware of the presence and love of the Lord.

### **4. Revival includes building up what was broken:**

In the wonderful story about Nehemiah leading the residents of Jerusalem to a successful rebuilding of the wall, their critics asked the question, "Will they restore their wall?" The (KJV) renders this question in these words, "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" (Nehemiah 4:1, 2) And we know that is exactly what was done. The wall was revived!

Later, another famous leader during this same period of Israel's history, Ezra, gave wonderful words of encouragement when he declared "God has extended mercy unto us . . . to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations. . . ." (Ezra 9:8, 9 - KJV)

### **5. Sometimes, revivals happen in the midst of difficulties:**

It is in a great Psalm of praise (Psalms 138:1-8) that these words are included, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life." The KJV renders it this way, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."

The prophet Hosea provides two great promises to the people of his day, which are still applicable to us in ours, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." (Hosea 14:7)

Previously Hosea had called out to the people this message of encouragement, "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence." (Hosea 6:1-3)

### **6. Revival results in the renewal of strength:**

One of the Songs of David we often sing is from Psalms 103:1-5 - "Bless the Lord, O my Soul." The paragraph ends with the reminder that one of the things God does is that He ". . . satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

And of course this reminds us of the often repeated message in Isaiah 40:29-31 that ends with ". . . those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

### **7. The ultimate revival is resurrection:**

It may come as a surprise that both of the passages we'll mention here are from the Old Testament. Obviously, Job knew that his question would be answered with a resounding "Yes!" "If a man dies, will he live again?" So he follows with this assertion, "All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come." (Job 14:14)

And Ezekiel relays this wonderful promise, "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live." (Ezekiel 37:14)

## **8. There is a longing for revival in the present generation:**

**The prophet Habakkuk, who lived in one of the more desperate times in Israel's history, prays a prayer we need to repeat in our own day, "LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day. . . ." (Habakkuk 3:2)**

**In summary then, we have these powerful Biblical connections to revival:**

**salvation, repentance, joy, rebuilding, preservation, strength, resurrection - and we can believe it is for our own generation.**

### **What the Bible Says about Revival Discussion Questions**

- 1. What are some of the revivals in history that you are aware of?**
- 2. What are some of the signs most people expect to see accompanying a revival?**
- 3. What is the connection between revival and salvation?**
- 4. What attitude of the mind prepares a person for true repentance?**
- 5. Which human emotions are usually associated with revival?**
- 6. How is the rebuilding of the Jerusalem's walls like having a revival?**
- 7. How do life's struggles help prepare us for revival?**
- 8. If revival involves renewal - what can we expect to be renewed?**
- 9. What is the ultimate revival, and who in the Old Testament wrote about it?**
- 10. Why is it important that revival touch every generation?**

#### **Readings:**

**Reader #1. Psalms 80:1-3, 18, 19**

- 1. Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth**
- 2. before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.**
- 3. Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.**
- 18. Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.**
- 19. Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.**

**Lamentations 5:20-22**

- 20. Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long?**
- 21. Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may return; renew our days as of old**

**22. unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.**

**Reader #2. Psalms 51:10**

**Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**NIV Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."**

**Acts 3:19, 20 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you - even Jesus.**

**Reader #3. Psalms 85:4-7**

**4. Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us.**

**5. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?**

**6. Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?**

**7. Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.**

**Reader #4. Nehemiah 4:1, 2**

**1. When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,**

**2. and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble - burned as they are?"**

**Ezra 9:8, 9**

**8. "But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage.**

**9. Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.**

**Reader #5. Psalms 138:1-8**

**1. I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise.**

**2. I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.**

**3. When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.**

**4. May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth.**

**5. May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great.**

6. Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.
7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you will revive me: you will stretch forth your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand shall save me. (JKV)
8. The LORD will fulfill [his purpose] for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever-- do not abandon the works of your hands.

Hosea 14:7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Hosea 6:1-3

1. "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.
2. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.
3. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."

Reader #6. Psalms 103:1-5

1. Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--
3. who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
4. who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
5. who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Isaiah 40:29-31

29. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
30. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
31. but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Reader #7. Job 14:14

If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.

Ezekiel 37:14

I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'"

Reader #8. Habakkuk 3:2

O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of

**the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.**