

Concepts of Revival

by Glenn Meldrum

Glenn Meldrum's sermon explores the concept of revival as a divine work that transforms individuals and societies through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Habakkuk 3:2, Matthew 3:8, Acts 2:41, Acts 11:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Revival Movement"

Description

Glenn Meldrum preaches about the essence of revival as a sovereign, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, where God reveals His holiness and glory, leading to the transformation of individuals and societies. He delves into the historical account of the Hebrides Awakening in 1949, emphasizing the power of prayer, spiritual hunger, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Meldrum explores the Biblical principles of revival, highlighting the Old Testament revivals and the necessity of revival in our time to combat moral decay and societal issues. He discusses the fruits of revival, showcasing the profound impact on communities, nations, and individuals throughout history.

Transcript

Revival is a sovereign, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is God breaking into human history and revealing His holiness and glory. When the church is awakened from her spiritual lethargy she begins to see the world anew as her God given mission field. Men, women and children are converted in such large numbers that secular society is dramatically changed. One of history's wonderful accounts of revival is the Hebrides Awakening that began in 1949.

The Hebrides (hĕb´rĭ-dēz΄) are islands off the coast of Scotland. This awakening predominately remained within the traditional Church of Scotland. However, members from the various Free Churches would attend the prayer meetings, services or after-meetings (denominational prejudice hinders the best of revivals). The Lord used many ministers in the spread of this spiritual outpouring, but Duncan Campbell from the Faith Mission became the primary evangelist.

The first communities radically transformed were Barvas and Shader, which are located on the big island of Lewis. News spread over the island of what had happened in Barvas. Soon busloads of people were coming to the meetings from several villages. Other churches on the island also began experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. Work and normal activities were set aside for people to get right with God and for Christians to seek out those who had not yet met the Savior. Campbell held services in many villages for the next several years.

In August of 1951 he commenced preaching in a village called Bernera. He was having little success in the services due to the absence of prayer meetings so decided to send for the praying men of Barvas to assist him through intercession. The evangelist specifically asked that they bring with them 17 year old Donald MacPhail. Donald was dramatically saved in the revival. Two weeks later, he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the side of a hill. God imparted to this young man a powerful gift of prayer.

One night as Campbell preached in Bernera, he felt that the powers of darkness were doing all they could to stop the spread of the revival. In spite of this, Donald sat in the front of the church weeping. The evangelist knew that this young convert was closer to God at that moment than he himself. This compelled him to stop preaching and ask Donald to pray.

Donald prayed for about five minutes then declared, "I seem to be gazing into an open door and see the Lamb in the midst of the throne and the keys of death and hell on his waist." Then he began to weep. When he finally composed himself he looked towards heaven, lifted his hands and proclaimed, "God, there is power there. Let it loose!" (Campbell, *When The Mountains*). The Holy Spirit instantly fell upon the entire congregation with an overwhelming demonstration of power.

"When I said amen", Donald later recalled, "and looked around me, I was amazed, for people were on their faces in the pews. Many were bent over the pews. There were also those who went into trances or fainted. The power of God was intense. It was a wonderful evening of the revelation of God's presence and power. That night, and during that time of divine visitation, a number of people came to Christ in the little village of Kirkabost a few miles away" (Peckham, 236).

This awakening wonderfully reveals the Biblical principles of revival. First God stirs a hunger in a few faithful saints. Then He moves them to pray by filling them with compassion to see the church set on fire and the lost saved. Their impassioned prayers move heaven to shake earth. Revival first breaks out by awakening the church. Then the Holy Spirit descends upon the unsaved, bringing them to life-changing repentance that produces genuine salvation.

The word revival carries with it a vast array of definitions, opinions and emotions. This can make a discussion on the subject extremely challenging. Two people can use the same word and have very different definitions. In this chapter, we will define revival from a Biblical and historical point of view. From there we will examine some of the general fruits of revival and finish with its necessity in our time.

OLD TESTAMENT REVIVALS

The Hebrew word *chayah* is translated in the King James Version as "revive," "revived" and "reviving." *Chayah* is used 262 times in the Old Testament and is translated 153 times as "live," 12 times as "revive." The word is also rendered "alive," "save," "quicken," "surely," "life" and "recover" (Strong's number 2421). A strict definition of revive means to bring back to life that which is dead, or to resuscitate that which is dying. *Chayah* directly speaks of God reviving, or bringing back to life, a person, people or nation that is spiritually dead or dying.

In one sense, the Hebrew concept of revival presents the idea that a person, or people, previously had a relationship with Yahweh. Through compromise, indifference or persistent rebellion they turned their backs on God, thus reaping His wrath and incurring spiritual death that would have national consequences. Since the dead cannot raise themselves, it required a divine act to resurrect them.

The revivals of the Old Testament do not hold to the narrow rendering of Chayah. Many of the people who were transformed by the move of the Spirit were not actually "revived" in the strict sense of the Hebrew word. Because they never had a personal relationship with the Lord, they were being "saved" for the first time. The reason so many Israelites thought they were right with God even though they were not serving Him, resides in their understanding of salvation. Though the Old Testament does present a clear concept of personal salvation (Ps. 109:26), the Israelites also believed that Jehovah was saving His people on a national basis (James Orr, ISBE, vol. 9, 502-503).

This concept of national salvation comes out of the many covenants God made with Israel, beginning with Abraham. The Lord promised to save His people if they wholeheartedly walked before Him in truth. In time, the Israelites distorted the covenants by thinking that since Jehovah was saving the nation as a whole, individual lifestyles were not as important. John the Baptist dealt with this issue when he preached, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham" (Mt. 3:8-9). The people thought that the Mighty One of Israel was obligated to save them on the primary basis that they were descendants of Abraham. Yet, being descendants of Abraham brought upon them an even greater responsibility to walk in fellowship with the Lord. "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins" (Amos 3:2).

Whenever the Israelites turned from Jehovah to worship idols or resorted to dead religious traditions, they in turn taught their children such practices. This allowed whole generations to live and die without personally knowing the Lord. For Israel to turn to Yahweh as a nation they would have to turn to Him as individuals. If many of those who turned to Him in times of national revival never knew God in the first place, then the Old Testament demonstrates that genuine revival both awakens the spiritually dead and saves those who never served Him. Those Jews who never had a personal relationship with the Lord were Israelites by birth, but not by faith (Deu. 10:15-16; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:25-29).

The Old Testament gives at least seven accounts of revival.

1. Jacob and his household returns to Bethel (Gen. 35:1-15)
2. Asa's reforms (2 Chr. 15:1-15)
3. Joash's limited reform (2 Kings 11-12; 2 Chr. 23-24)
4. Hezekiah's reform and reinstatement of the Passover (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chr. 29-31)
5. Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chr. 34-35)
6. Two revivals under Zerubbabel in which Haggai and Zechariah play a prominent role (Ezra 5-6)
7. Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 9:1-6; 12:44-47)

There are other Biblical events that could be construed as revival, such as Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). When fire from heaven consumed the sacrifice, the people fell prostrate in the worship of Jehovah and then rejected their idolatry.

There are common characteristics to the above-mentioned revivals. They always occurred in times of spiritual backsliding, moral declension and national rebellion. As with all spiritual awakenings, they began

with a consecrated servant, or servants, who awaken the people to follow the Lord with all of their heart. In many of these accounts, the king and people entered into covenant with the Lord. God's Word was an integral part of these revivals and in some, powerfully proclaimed. Whenever the people consecrated themselves to the Lord, they destroyed their idols, returned to the worship of Jehovah and turned from their wicked practices. Finally, these revivals produced seasons of personal and national prosperity.

The Assyrian Revival

The Old Testament revivals stayed within the nation of Israel and Judah with one exception-Nineveh. Some scholars claim that this was evangelism, not revival. However, it keeps in line with the above stated truth that during times of revival, the unconverted turn to the Lord in vast numbers. This is consistent with the New Testament accounts of revival that continues to our very day.

The book of Jonah presents the story of a prophet who the Lord sent to the Assyrian city of Nineveh to warn them of divine judgment and call them to repent. Jonah rebelled against the call and fled from his assignment. This reluctant prophet typified the inwardness of Israel who refused to be evangelistic. God intended Israel to be a blessing to the world by bearing His message of salvation to all people.

When Jonah finally preached God's message to the large pagan city the results were astounding. Repentance spread like a wild fire as both king and subjects cried to God for mercy. They prayed and fasted for three days under tremendous conviction of sin. The Lord poured mercy upon repentant Nineveh instead of wrath. This is the fruit of revival and serves as an example of what has happened throughout church history.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN

The first years of the church were not unlike the revivals of the Old Testament. The move of the Spirit predominately remained within Israel. It awakened the God fearing and saved many Israelites who never knew Him. It was only after the stoning of Stephen that persecution grew intense enough to force the church beyond the borders of Israel. Even so, for the time being, the gospel mostly stayed within Jewish communities.

With great reluctance, Peter ministered the Gospel to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Cornelius and his household were marvelously saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. This forced Peter to accept the fact that God would save and fill Gentiles who did not adhere to the Mosaic Law.

The disciples criticized Peter for reaching out to the Gentiles (Acts 11:2). Peter presented a thorough account of the events and demonstrated how God saved and filled these non-Jews just as they themselves had been. Only then did the objections cease. The brethren confessed, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

Though God used Peter to prepare the way for the conversion of the Gentiles, the apostle Paul became the champion of revival among them. Paul began his ministry by going to Jewish synagogues to minister the Gospel. Two situations arose that changed his early approach to ministry and compelled him to pursue aggressively the conversion of the Gentile world. The first was the rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the majority of the Jews. The second was the Gentiles joyful acceptance of the Gospel.

The power of the Holy Spirit working through Paul made him a controversial figure. Wherever he traveled there was revival, riots, or both. The fire of God consumed him and everywhere he went the fire spread.

His reputation preceded him as the man who "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6; KJV). Though he passionately reached out to his own people, he became the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul is a beautiful example of how the church must move beyond her comfort zone to reach a perishing world.

In the New Testament, revival began with the preaching of John the Baptist, was furthered by Jesus and spread around the known world through the early church. The New Testament incorporates the Old Testament pattern of revival that awakens the people of God and saves those who never knew Him. It makes common the dynamics of the Assyrian revival in Nineveh that transformed secular society by radically saving vast numbers of people in a short period. As Dr. F. B. Meyer stated, "There has never been a great religious revival without social and political reforms" (Olford, 64).

FRUITS OF REVIVAL

An honest examination of the fruits of revival will inevitably lead to the conclusion that there is no other hope apart from God rending the heavens. The profound effects of revival upon the world are not new. Local awakenings change the character of a community, national ones the course and nature of a nation. "Revival does more than wash away moral impurities and pull drunkards out of the ditch. It determines the type of government under which we live and the polity of the churches . . . The Colonial Revival was the determining factor in the formation of the government of the young nation, as well as the religious coloring of the people" (Autrey, 22).

For example, the 1904 Welsh Revival changed the character of the nation and stirred saints around the world to seek the same blessing for their own land. It began with a handful of intercessors that paved the way for the conversion of over one hundred thousand people in Wales alone. The percentage of converts that kept the faith was over 85%. "Drunkenness was immediately cut in half, and many taverns went bankrupt. Crime was so diminished that judges were presented with white gloves signifying there were no cases of murder, assault, rape or robbery or the like to consider. The police became 'unemployed' in many districts" (J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical*, 101). The people even abandoned their national obsession with football (soccer) for chapels full of the Holy Ghost.

The Christmas of 1904 was the happiest Wales ever knew. When the miners came to Christ, wives received as back from the dead their husbands and children their daddies. Their conversion caused domestic abuse to drop dramatically. When the men ceased their immoral practices, even the economy was affected. They brought the money home, began paying off long standing debts and purchased things that the families had been forced to live without. The God of revival radically transforms individuals who then change the character of their home, city and nation.

Statistics

Listed below are some statistics of revival. Nothing can compare to the wonder of God revealing Himself in the beauty of His holiness. Because these statistics come from a wide variety of sources, only a few references are given.

On the day of Pentecost 3000 were saved (Acts 2:41). The church quickly increased to over 5000 men, the number not including women and children (Acts. 4:4). Converts were added to the church on a daily basis. Before long the early church swept through large portions of the Gentile world, even entering Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22).

Though revival has been a reality throughout the history of the church, the statistics prior to the seventeenth century are hard to establish. Chrysostom (A.D. 344-407), called the "Golden-Mouthed" because of the eloquence and power of his preaching, saw true spiritual awakening. Attentive hearers thronged the church where he ministered. They hung on every word that came from the preacher's mouth. "Numberless were the conversions in his day; God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved" (Whittaker, 20).

Florence, Italy, experienced revival in 1496-98 under the ministry of Savonarola. The Spirit of God poured through his preaching as he "denounced the sins of the people." They came from all walks of life to hear him preach. Deep conviction gripped their souls as they wept over their sins. They walked the streets "half-dazed and speechless" under the Spirit's influence. The tremendous moral change was demonstrated when a great pyramid of worldly possessions were burned in the town square. "It towered in seven stages sixty feet high and 240 feet in circumference. While bells tolled, the people sang hymns as the fire burned" (Duelwel, 45-46). The Catholic Church sought to silence him by cruelly taking his life, yet his voice and influence powerfully lived on.

The Great Reformation of the sixteenth century presents an enormous difficulty in determining the vast numbers converted. In Scotland alone, church historian Richard Owen Roberts, maintained that, "While the effects of the Great Reformation were partial in Europe, 'in Scotland the whole nation was converted by lump. . . . Lo! Here a nation born in one day; yea, molded into one congregation, and sealed as a fountain with a solemn oath and covenant'" (Roberts, Scotland, 15). The results of the Reformation are so profound that virtually every born-again believer today is the byproduct of that revival.

The Great Awakening in New England began in the 1730's and added roughly 50,000 people to the church in a population of only 340,000. The camp meeting era began on New Years day, 1800, in Logan County, Kentucky and produced an increase in the church of 300%. Overall, between 1825 and 1832, 200,000 were added to the church in America.

Charles Finney saw 500,000 people come to Christ. In 1830, one hundred thousand came to the Lord through the far-reaching affects of the Rochester, New York revival that began under his ministry. By the end of the Rochester Revival, every doctor, lawyer, and businessman in town was converted (Towns, 103). Dr. Henry Ward Beecher commenting on this awakening stated, "That was the greatest work of God, and the greatest revival that the world has ever seen in so short a time (one year). One hundred thousand were reported as having connected themselves with churches as the results of that great revival" (Finney, Autobiography, 164-165).

The laymen's Prayer Meeting Revival of 1857-1858 is an indirect result of the Spirit's work through Finney. One million people in America came to Christ, 50,000 from New York City alone, which then had a population around 700,000. During the height of the revival, 50,000 were saved weekly (Duelwel, 131). The awakening jumped the ocean in 1859. Over 1,000,000 surrendered to Christ in the British Isles; Ireland had 100,000 saved out of a total population of 1,000,000, Wales saw 110,000, Scotland 300,000 and Britain 500,000. A conservative estimate for the 1859 revivals in Sweden and Norway rests at 250,000.

There were over 5 million saved through the worldwide revivals between 1903 to 1910. Evans Roberts prayed for 100,000 souls and the 1904 Welsh revival produced near 150,000. England alone saw 300,000 added to the body of Christ. Church membership in seven major US denominations increased by more

than two million in five years. This does not include the gains in the younger Pentecostal and Holiness denominations whose dynamic rate of increase was dramatically higher. The Christian church in India increased by 70% while the Korean church quadrupled in size, 80,000 being added to the church in the city of Pyongyang alone. The church in Indonesia grew from 100,000 to 300,000. The island of Nias won two-thirds of the population and Malagasies increased 60%. In Africa, the church grew from 300,000 to 500,000 (J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical*, 99-105). "When John G. Lake departed Africa after five years of ministry, he left behind 125 white congregations and 500 native ones" (Lindsay, 53).

During the 1965-66 Indonesian revival in Timor, 200,000 were saved, 100,000 from animism. The Latin American churches during the 1960's formed 47,000 churches, 35,000 prayer cells, trained 160,000 workers, and won 140,000 to Christ (Cairns, 242-243, 336). Today, the church is increasing at a rate of three times the growth of the population.

The revival in Almolonga, Guatemala won 80% of the population to Christ, and of the thirty-six bars that the city had, only three are left. Moreover, they closed the city's four jails because they are no longer needed. God has also abundantly blessed the land, which is now producing three crops a year (Otis).

This statistical overview of the fruits of authentic spiritual awakenings would not be complete without noting the explosive growth of the Chinese underground church. In 2000 Brother Yun, one of China's underground church leaders, claimed that believers in the house-church movement numbered 58 million. Current information now amazingly places the numbers upwards of 80 million.

These are just a few of the results of genuine revival. Volumes of books could not contain all the eternal and temporal benefits of God rending the heavens.

NECESSITY OF REVIVAL

We pay a fearfully high price when there is no revival in the land. This is most cruelly seen in the moral and spiritual condition of our children. They have followed the example of their parents. Only they have taken the wicked practices they learned to deeper depths.

Our children are being robbed of their innocence through the flood of sexual immorality that is sweeping the land.

Venereal diseases have increased from three in the 1960's to over 30 today. By the end of the last millennium, one in four high school students were infected with one or more of these diseases, the majority of which are not curable.

Children are either birthing children, or they are killing their unborn babies.

Homosexuality is sweeping through our schools. One charter schoolteacher in the southwest was overwhelmed with the lesbianism that swept through her class of 11 and 12 year olds. A pastor in that same area lamented the fact that bisexuality has become vogue among middle and high school students in his town.

A growing number of teens consider oral sex no different from making out. Girls as young as eleven have been found in oral sex parties. Venereal diseases are just as contagious through this form of sexual perversion.

Incest is at epidemic levels with conservative estimates that thirty-eight percent of American children are suffering under its wicked curse.

Pornography is destroying individuals and homes as adults and children literally become addicted to the vile material. Children and teens then practice the sexual perversions they view on pornographic sites on the internet.

Cyber-sex has recently become America's greatest adult past time, surpassed only by TV viewing.

The break down of marriage is a scourge upon the land. More disturbing are the newest statistics placing the church's divorce rate above that of secular society. Even atheists are less likely to divorce than evangelical Christians are.

The American dream of prosperity consumes the minds and hearts of Americans at the expense of the family. Gambling has become a plague loosed upon the land, with even our government lining its pockets through this evil industry. The pain of hopelessness in the land of prosperity has propelled suicide to the eighth leading cause of death in our nation (2nd cause among Anglo-American youth and 3rd among African-American youth). There has been a 400% increase in teenage suicides over the past decade. Eighty-five people die each day as a result of suicide, over 30,000 each year, while 500,000 are hospitalized every year due to an attempt (crosswalk.com; 10/2001). Professionals are more prone to attempt suicide. Doctors and dentists have an attempted suicide rate of 6½ to 1, while lawyers have a rate of 5 to 1 (logosresourcepages.com; 10/2001). All this demonstrates that prosperity has not satisfied our desires nor has our depravity gratified our lusts. Where has the church been through all of this?

These statistics are just the tip of the iceberg of our nation's moral and spiritual plight. Until Christians are convinced that revival is the only answer for our country we will not desperately pursue it. We need to see what God has done in the past, is presently doing in many parts of the world, and plead with Him to make it a reality in America. It is time to passionately, and persistently pray as Hosea did. "LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2).

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