

# Revival Tornadoes -- No New Name for Revivals

by Martin Knapp

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*A revival tornado is a mighty progressive movement in the spiritual world, sent by God to purify the atmosphere, test the righteous, and compel attention to an unseen power, ultimately leading to the salvation of souls.*

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 107:28, Jeremiah 23:19, Ezekiel 37:9, Matthew 3:11, Acts 2:2, Hebrews 4:12, James 4:8, 1 Peter 4:17, Revelation 3:16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Revival", "Divine Transformation"

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## Description

Martin Knapp preaches about the powerful impact of genuine revival, likening it to a tornado in the spiritual world, accompanied by divine truth, disturbed elements, and saving power. Revival tornadoes are sent by God to bring about soul-saving transformations, just as Ezekiel prayed for a mighty revival. The preacher emphasizes the importance of meeting the conditions set by God for revival, including prayer, fasting, confession, and turning from sin. Through powerful descriptions and analogies, Martin Knapp highlights how revivals, like tornadoes, purify, test the righteous, alarm the wicked, and compel attention to God's power.

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## Transcript

"A tornado is a tempest distinguished by a progressive whining motion, usually accompanied by severe thunder, lightning and torrents of rain."

A genuine revival is like a tornado, in that it is a mighty progressive movement in the spiritual world, accompanied by the lightning strokes of divine truth, the thunder of the disturbed elements and torrents of saving power.

"Revival tornadoes" is no new name for great religious awakenings. Ezekiel, with inspired vision, looking down the ages from Babylonian Chebar's banks, saw, beyond the Babe in the manger, His miraculous life, His death and His resurrection, to this revival dispensation, when the Spirit's power should be manifest as a "whirlwind which came out of the north a great cloud and a fire, unfolding itself, and a brightness was about it."

The same prophet, pleading over the "dead bones" of Israel backslidden, 'Come, from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live,' simply uttered a prayer for a mighty soul-saving

Revival Tornado.

Jesus Himself compared the Spirit's work to the wind, and His coming at the great initiatory revival of this Pentecostal period is compared to "a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind."

All who are acquainted with Bro. Weber and his extraordinary religious awakenings, will see at once the especial appropriateness of this figure to his work. Rescued by saving grace from vice and Catholicism, he has been marvelously led of God, until thousands of souls have been converted through his agency, and the facts that he has never given an invitation but that souls have responded, and that his work is thorough, and that for years he has engaged in no revival meeting that has not been a blessing and that hundreds of souls are often saved in his meetings in a very short time, make him and his revivals startling wonders, such as have their counterpart, in part, at least, in the tornado, and furnish, in many respects, as inviting a source of revival inspiration as can be found anywhere in the history of the Christian Church.

It may not be amiss in these pages, introductory to his revival work, to stop and see in what particulars real revivals are like the cyclones of the atmospheric world.

They are from God. He declares that the mission of the wind is to "fulfill His will." "Revival tornadoes" are sent by Him upon a like errand. Men cannot "get them up," but must pray them down from above. Men may get up "protracted meetings," coax the unconverted to come out, to rise for prayers, express a desire to "go to heaven when they die," say that they "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," be baptized, and to unite with the church, and yet there be no more of revival power in it all, than there is in the purring of a cat, the cooing of a dove, or the twitching of a corpse under the currents of an electric battery. Such efforts are "clouds without water," and are evidently from some other source than above.

Tornadoes are governed by fixed laws. These laws determine their existence, their movements, and their cessation. Like laws govern the revival movements of the spiritual world with the exception that, in the material world the storm is not conditioned on human action, while in the spiritual it is. God declares, "If my people ... shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then WILL I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and will heal their land." And again, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me nowherewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." God cannot lie. The conditions of the revival are plain, and the promises of it are great, precious and changeless.

From John the Baptist and beyond, God has seen fit to employ, and bless with great success, "evangelists" in special revival work. Ignorance and ecclesiasticism have sometimes been arrayed against them, but "God is not mocked," and very often one of the conditions of revival victory is the engagement of their aid. The true evangelist, like the true pastor, labors, not where some wild impression might suggest, but where the Spirit leads, and providential openings point the way. Mr. Weber's engagements are conditioned upon the call of God, corroborated and confirmed by invitation of pastor and official board, and their pledged agreement to sustain him in the work.

Then let the conditions of prayer, of fasting, of humiliation, of confession, of turning from all sin, of seeking the Father's face, of personal work, in a word, of bringing "ALL the tithes into the storehouse," be faithfully met, and just as certainly as the thunder's peal follows the lightning bolt, just so surely will the spiritual temperature rise, the air become heavy with spiritual moisture and charged with electricity from above, and soon the Church become the center of a cyclone that shall be awfully destructive to all spiritual buildings that are not founded on the Rock of Ages, and to all trees that are not rooted and grounded in love; and

whose lightnings shall leap with gleeful and destructive fury upon all who are not insulated from the power of sin.

Tornadoes purify the atmosphere. The air that was heavy and hot and malarious, breeding all kinds of deadly diseases, is left sweet and pure and healthful. So with their counterpart in the spiritual world. Moral miasma disappears, and many that were wild with delirium, caused by fevers contracted in the swamps of sin, or in the hot, foggy atmosphere of unbelief, or on the burning sands of atheism or infidelity, are completely cured in an instant by the atmospheric change, and will praise God forever for the tornado.

The following reference to the results of the great revival which attended Bro. Weber's labors at Union City, Mich., is forcibly illustrative of this point. In scores of places where he has labored the same is true.

"Readers of this paper (Michigan Christian Advocate) have read accounts of the work of grace here. I give a demonstration of its reality. Some three months since I had occasion to travel through the southern part of the township, where at one time were but two Christian families. Desolation marked many a familiar spot. Ruin seemed to be written on the face of many homes, while their owners were at town spending their time and money in the various vice-dealing dens that infest our beautiful city. A few days ago I paid another visit to this same neighborhood, and such a change as had taken place. Buildings were repaired; men were industriously working at the different kinds of business pertaining to a farmer's life. Everything bore an indication of thrift. What had caused this change? It was because the power of God had been at work, and by his love, his kindness and his gentle persuasion, had turned the hearts of these men from the low depths of degradation and lifted them to the best, the grandest and highest attainment within the reach of man. In other words, they had been converted to the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus are the benefits of Christianity practically demonstrated."

Tornadoes are a terror to the wicked. So are revivals. "Behold," shouts Jeremiah, "the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked." The wicked have heard that they "shall be like the chaff which the wind driveth away," and when revival gales begin to blow, they are reminded of the near approach of their long-dreaded doom. The hypocrite has been warned that "his hope shall perish," and the formalist that his trust is foundationless, and the disobedient that they are "building upon the sand," and all who are determined to resist the truth feel that the revival tornado is but the outer circle of the mighty cyclone that shall sweep away all their props and hopes, and continually gather new force until finally it will sweep them up to the left hand of the judgment seat and from thence, with mighty momentum, bear them forever along, the sport of hissing fiends, upon the broad expanses of eternal doom, whence it must be said of them, --

"O sin-cursed souls, wind-driven and tossed,

Henceforth to find no resting place,

But ever along the shores of the lost

To be beat by the living storms of God."

Tornadoes are usually attended by chain-lightning, and it often hits someone. A revival in which the lightning of divine truth hits no one and kills no one, is a stupendous sham. God save us from sheet-lightning revivals, that bring no rain and destroy no malaria. On every form of modern and antiquated evil, on saloon and ball-room, and brothel, on pen and press inspired by Satan, on gambling hell's running

under the names of agricultural fairs, and otherwise, on political trickery and private dishonesty and public roguery, on hypocrisy under the cloak of religion and without it, on worldliness and formality, on secret vice and open sin, a black thunder-cloud is gathering, and upon one and all death-bringing lightning of divine truth shall leap, attended with such tornado power as shall destroy them all forevermore. Then will come the sweet and peaceful reign of Christ, and the holy atmosphere of His heavenly kingdom will prevail.

There is a tendency in every age to forget that the Lamb of God is also the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and that Jesus' character, less the lion-like in it, would be just as imperfect as if shorn of the lamb-like. That His mission is to "break every chain" just as really as to atone for the sins of His people, and that He "came to send, not peace, but a sword," to all who will persist in impenitence -- a tendency to forget that Jesus, in all ages, has hurled red-hot thunderbolts upon Pharisaism, pride, hypocrisy, and formality, just as really as He has sent the sunshine of pardon and the dew of His sanctifying grace upon the humble believer. Every revival that Jesus has honored by His abiding presence has heard not only the tender bleating of the "Lamb of God," who taketh away the sins of the world, but also the thunderous roaring of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" against sin and those who will defend it. Both of these elements of true Christian character are prominent in Bro. Weber, and here lies much of his strength. Like Savonarola, --

"To him the smiles of earth

Are little worth,

His eyes have seen the lifted sword

Gleam wild in the north,

And he speaks as one to whom is given

To know the wrath of outraged Heaven

And to pour it forth.

Yet are there softer hours

When his voice sinks low,

And they see as it were an angel's face;

So sweet the glow

With which he prays them all to come

To the arms of Christ, who is our home,

And loveth so."

While towards the weeping penitent and the honest inquirer he is overflowing with tenderness, at the same time towards hypocrisy and his hydra-headed children, who seek deceptively to hinder God's work, he is as furious as a lion robbed of her whelps.

Tornadoes are a test to the righteous. When the sky is black, and storm clouds, like runaway steeds, are plunging swiftly by, men are brought to think of death, judgment, and eternity. If really right, they may be

able, like the saved Moravians, who, when with Wesley were crossing the Atlantic, sang joyful songs of praise, when all the angry elements of air and ocean conspired to sink their ship. Within a few rods from where I now am sitting, some time since, there passed a cyclone. A few days before it came, a Christian woman dreamed that she was going to heaven in a whirlwind. She did not fear it, but sure enough it came, shattered her house, and upon its currents, like Elijah, she was borne to her Father's many-mansioned house. She was tested, but found true. Just so truly will a revival try God's people. The testings of experience, the vivid unfoldings of the truth and the pressure to do personal work, all combine to compel people to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith or not. The true saint challenges such inspection, and, rejoicing in the storm, comes out of it, as gold from the crucible, purer for the process.

In the opinion of some tornadoes do more harm than good. The man whom God chastises by it often hardens his heart and curses both the storm and the God who sent it. Such, beholding an unroofed house or a few uprooted trees, forget that but for the tornado to purify the earth and air thousands would have died by fever and by pestilence. "Don't go to the revival, Aaron; it's a place of wildfire and excitement," said a minister to Aaron Burr, when a young man under conviction he was inclined to seek revival influences. He stayed away, and his convictions were quenched. Who would want to stand in the place of that false minister at the judgment? Ministers whose pet theories are spoiled by its success, worldlings and formalists whose hypocrisies are exposed by its plain preaching, weak professors who fear that its plain proclamations will offend, Jezebels and Jehus who are determined to rule or ruin, Ananias and Sapphiras persistent in their perfidy, and other slaves to sin, who had rather be lost than to give up their wickedness, usually will unite in proclaiming that a revival does more harm than good, and especially a revival tornado attended by the power of the Holy Ghost. Such raise this cry on the same principle that saloonists shout, "Prohibition won't prohibit." The daughter of one of this fraternity once said to Evangelist Sam Jones, "My father don't believe in revivals." "That's where your father and the devil are alike," was the prompt and truthful reply. Many of this class, like pirates who have stolen their country's colors, maintain a profession of religion, and are thus enabled to do double harm, and in the great day of reckoning will receive double damnation.

Brother Weber's meetings are no exception to this rule, as the following extract from a pastor's report of one of them indicates. "Some of the members of the church were so badly disaffected as never to be reconciled. For instance, one of the class-leaders met me one day, and when I asked him how he liked the meeting, he said, 'Not at all,' that the preaching was hypocritical and doing more harm than good, and that if the meetings continued on in that way, that he should not attend them. He came once more, but left the house in great rage and became an open enemy to the meeting from that time. Yet this was one of the most thorough and sweeping revivals ever known in Michigan."

This class-leader doubtless was spiritually blind, had backslidden in heart, had wrong that he would not make right, or something similar. Of all such Jesus says, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved."

Woe unto the man that by either open opposition or silence stands in the way of the salvation of the people. The prophecies of this class of revival opposers, like those of Baal's prophets on Mt. Carmel, prove false, for, in answer to the prayers of this modern Elijah, the fire falls, multitudes are saved, and the people shout, "The Lord He is God, and this is His servant." All glory to the Lamb!

Tornadoes compel the attention of men to an unseen power. No matter what their minds are centered on, the cyclone will compel them to see and feel the power of God as manifested in the aerial elements.

A revival tornado makes men see and feel this power in the spiritual world. Unless Attention can be captured Soul Town never will surrender. Men's minds are fixed and their affections centered on things below, and in many instances the question of their salvation is a question of getting their attention from things ordinary to the things of eternity. The sunshine, the dew, the zephyrs and the gentle showers of ordinary religions effort, fail to move them. Then God sends forth a John the Baptist, a Luther, a Wesley, a Whitefield, a Finney, a Harrison, or a Weber, as the storm center of a mighty revival tornado, and the attention of the people is arrested and they are won for God. In the revivals with which God honors Mr. Weber, a whole city will stand awe-struck at the displays of Divine power.

Tornadoes are a source of alarm. The following illustrative incident is related by Evangelist Caughey, who was present when the incident occurred, and declares it to have been a "solemn and awful hour." He says, "We had preached every night, but could make no impression on hardened sinners. One night just as the congregation was retiring, and before we knew of a single case of awakening, and I should think before fifty of the audience got out, a most tremendous storm of thunder, lightning and rain burst over the town. The windows of the church were unusually large, and they seemed all ablaze from the effect of the lightning. The mass of people were arrested in a moment ... the storm raged in fury, and one of the preachers, a plain young man, began to exhort, and wielded with power that passage in the eleventh Psalm, 'Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup.'

"Thus while God thundered and lightened outside, the minister did the same within. It was a scene of terror and awful grandeur. Some began to tremble and weep and pray. At length there was a movement toward the ministers, where they were standing at the altar; not to take vengeance upon the fiery exhorter, but to cry for mercy from that God who was thundering through the heavens, and to seek an interest in the prayers of His people. Still the storm continued, with peals of loudest thunder, which were re-echoed by successive bursts of most impassioned appeals to the consciences of terrified sinners. Nothing was heard but, --

"See the storm of vengeance gathering

"O'er the path you dare to tread

Hear the awful thunder rolling

Loud and louder o'er your head."

And all of this attended by the deep, subdued groans of sinners slain by the sword of the Spirit. Victory was on our side from that hour; and the victories achieved through a preached gospel during the three or four weeks following amazed the whole town. A large majority are still living in the enjoyment of that grace which the terror of the storm drove them to seek ... I visited some of them on their death-beds, and the scenes of holy triumph I witnessed there were sufficient to convince the most abandoned infidel of the truth of religion."

True revivals, like this tornado, often prove a source of alarm to the unconverted. Under the influence of the piercing preaching, the persistent prayer, and the persevering and ardent personal appeal, all mighty through the Spirit's power, the sinner sees himself as he really is, suspended by but a brittle thread over a yawning, bottomless abyss. His past sins, like lead, seem bound to his back, and about to sink his soul forever. On every side he sees the darting of the lightnings of the "wrath" of an offended God. Judgment

scenes startle him with all the great realities about to be, and he sees himself standing condemned before the Judge and an assembled universe, Heaven's gate closed to him forever. He hears the hoarse grating of the hinges of the gates of doom as they close behind his lost soul, and the click of the key that makes his exit hopeless forever pierces his soul like a javelin. As he seeks a place of safety, an evil nature, acquired habits, inherited propensities and wicked associations, like so many huge cobras, seem to paralyze him in their murderous folds. "Oh," he moans, "why did I not see this sooner? How could I have sported as I have with destiny? Moved with fear that takes his appetite, his mind from his business, his sleep and absorbs all his powers, he seeks safety, and finds it in a look at the Saviour of the world.

During the revival tornado at Quincy, Michigan, when Mr. Weber was laboring there, a man found himself in just this condition. His sense of his awful danger grew deeper and deeper, until he could not wait for help another hour, and in the night he sent for the pastor and was brightly converted to God, and today is one of the most earnest members of the church in that place.

Tornadoes are often preceded by a dead calm. So are revivals. "What was the condition of the church here when the revival began?" asked the writer of the presiding elder in the midst of a great revival in a prominent appointment. "It was spiritually hopeless; they were a dancing, card-playing, theater-going people," was the sad answer. Many memberships before the revival begins, if united at all, are frozen together. Often all other means have been used to no avail before the evangelist is sent for, and he is invited as a last resort.

"Many of the churches in southern Michigan are dying of the dry rot, and, unless something is done, will have to be put on the missionary list," said a prominent church official, as he referred to the deadly calm that had settled down upon them. Such was the sad condition, that the question of consolidating districts was being agitated. Thank God, this deathly calm was simply the forerunner of an on-coming spiritual cloudburst and the revival tornadoes which shortly followed left life, strength and beauty where there was but present or threatened desolation.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/martin-knapp/revival-tornadoes-no-new-name-for-revivals/>

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