

Revival – What is it?

by Stella Paterson

Today, when we hear so much about “wars and rumors of wars” we are also hearing much about “revival” or a “final harvest of souls” or a “great move of God.” There are many who are looking for and anticipating a great revival. Some are even relocating because they’ve heard “prophecies” of a “coming revival.” Then there are those who want to “make it happen” by preaching a “gospel” message that condemns their hearers. Is it an attempt in their own strength to create results like in the “good old revival” days? Does the Bible tell us there will be a great revival? What does revival mean and where would we see its evidence? Who needs to be revived – is it the “world” or is it the “church”?

We know from history that there have been some great moves of the Holy Spirit. Some lasted for extended periods of time while others were short-lived. What will stop a move of the Holy Spirit? Is it something God does just for the fun of it? His word tells us we are not to quench the Holy Spirit or to grieve the Holy Spirit. So, if His presence left and the “revival” came to an end, it was of man’s doing – not God’s. All too often, we creatures of flesh want to take something God is doing and put it in a “box”, giving it a name and drawing attention to it. The Holy Spirit is not an “it” – He is a person, the Spirit of Almighty God and the One Jesus said would lead us into all truth.

Let’s get back to the question, “What is revival?” Some refer to those days when God’s Spirit moved as being “revivals,” and those who preached are referred to as “revivalists.” One such preacher of whom we hear much is Charles Finney. He may not have measured up to today’s standards of a “theologically correct” minister, but he had a heart for God and a desire to see souls come to the Savior. That was all the qualification he needed, along with the Holy Spirit’s convicting power to cause Finney’s words to pierce the souls of hearers. We hear little about the man who prayed constantly for Finney and for the souls to whom Finney preached. God answered that man’s prayers and many came to know Jesus. There were times when the power of God was on Finney so much so that when he walked into a public place conviction came on the people and caused them to cry out for salvation. It was a work of God – nothing more and nothing less. Finney often challenged the “Christians” but many went on their carnal way, never truly being born again.

Many reading this article could probably name periods of great moves by the Holy Spirit, and give names of the men and women of God who preached back then. In more recent years, we have had men like Leonard Ravenhill who was a preacher of truth. And today we have David Wilkerson, a man with a deep heart-cry for holiness, constantly pleading for the “church” to come back to God. But we only need to look around us to see that apostasy is greater than the response

to these REAL preachers' messages. In fact, too many people prefer to have their ears tickled with great promises of God's material blessing. Then there are those seeking "signs and wonders" to keep them in awe. But the sad thing is that their "awe" is not of the true God, but some imposter of whom the Bible warns us.

Jesus said, *"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."* (Matthew 24:11-12) And Paul told Timothy, *"But evil men and imposters shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."* (2 Timothy 3:13)

How are we "revived"?

The New Testament study of the word tells us "revival" is very much the same as "to live again." If we are to "live again" we must first have died or "been dead." We know that death came with the knowledge of good and evil – at which time man became a creature of mortal flesh and separated from God. We also know that Jesus put flesh to death in Himself to reconcile man to God, was raised from the dead, ascended to the Father, and gave us His Spirit to be our Life. Before there is life there must first be a death. The Bible tells us that *"as in Adam all die."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) We are born dead and must receive the Spirit of Eternal Life – Jesus.

All mankind is born with the knowledge of good and evil, a creature of mortal flesh, and therefore dead spiritually. We go our own way, making choices according to our carnal knowledge. In reality we are Lifeless. There is something missing – we have a void that we don't understand. We look for ways to fill that void. The "world" is constantly looking for ways to fill the void, but so are "Christians." Sometimes we may "accept Christ" according to the modern-day "gospel" message and immediately become taken up with living a religious life, trying to fill the void with dead works. We are still dead in our sinful state but we have been told that we are "born again" and must now "serve God." We are merely full of self, even proud of our "righteousness," while constantly striving to fill that nagging void. But Jesus keeps knocking, desiring to be our Life. If only we would finally stop our bustling activity of "serving God." If only we would actually hear His voice, we might come to the end of "self" and die that death which comes only by way of the Cross – His as well as ours. Jesus said that we must take up our cross [Greek: self-denial] and follow Him if we desire to be His disciples.

This thing called "being born again" is so simple, but it has been complicated over the centuries. We are a creature of mortal flesh, live in a body of flesh and have a soul of flesh consisting of our mind, will and emotions. We have a spirit which is our breath, and without it we cannot live. When we realize we are without Christ and that our breath will one day leave our body, we must choose to receive His Life which is His Spirit if we want to spend eternity with Him. The new birth takes place when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our spirit so that

when we die our spirit goes with Him. He does not take over our soul or our body – the Spirit of Life gives us Eternal Life and we must choose to walk “by the Spirit,” as Paul said in Galatians 5:25, which tells us: *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”*

What a glorious truth Paul spoke! When the Spirit of Christ comes in we *“live by the Spirit.”* The Holy Spirit is in us! He is our Life. We need only to listen to His voice, leading us. If only we would hear Him!

The battle we will always face is that of choosing to walk by the Spirit or to walk by our fleshly soul with its mind, will and emotions. Another thing Paul said was *“walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* (Gal. 5:16) What is the *lust of the flesh*? I believe it is that constant pull of our mind, will and emotions to follow our own thoughts or those of “another spirit.” As long as we live on this earth, we will have that warring between soul and Spirit. The answer is in a relationship with Jesus, knowing God’s word to us, and learning to hear the voice of the Spirit as opposed to the voice of our soul. The Holy Spirit will never tell us something that cannot be confirmed by the word of God. He will not lead us astray. If we go astray, it is not His voice we are heeding. And if we will faithfully yield to the Spirit, His fruit will manifest in our life. There will be *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.”* (Galatians 5:22-23) Not one of those things will be of OUR doing – it is the Spirit’s fruit.

Definition of “revive”

The word “revive” has been translated in the Bible from both Hebrew and Greek words. The Hebrew word is “chayah” (pronounced “khaw-yaw”) and means *“to live, whether literally or figuratively; causatively to revive.”* The KJV translators translated that one Hebrew word as *“keep (leave, make) alive, X certainly, give (promise) life, (let, suffer to) live, nourish up, preserve (alive), quicken, recover, repair, restore (to life), revive, (X God) save (alive, life, lives), X surely, be whole.”*

Back in the mid-1990’s, there were times when I was in intercession and I found myself speaking in an unusual tongue. It was unlike any I had heard from my lips. I later found words in the Hebrew language that sounded like some words I remembered praying. One of those words was “chayah”. Only God knows the prayer I was praying those times when that language came from my lips. When I realized I had been praying in the Lord’s language I became so broken I could only weep and worship Him. What an awesome God to grant me such a privilege! This was one of His ways of confirming to me that He was leading me through His Word, teaching me the meaning of Calvary.

That word “chayah” was used more than 250 times in the Old Testament. Here are some passages where it was used:

- Genesis 45:27-28: “And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father **revived**: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.”
- Judges 15:19: “But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, **his spirit came again, and he revived**: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.”
- 1 Kings 17:22: “And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he **revived**.”
- Psalm 22:26: “The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall **live** for ever.”
- Psalm 69:32: “The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall **live that seek God**.”
- Ezekiel 18:32: “For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and **live** ye.”
- Isaiah 57:15: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to **revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones**.”

Keeping this last verse in mind, do we truly desire “revival”? Are we willing to be humble and contrite? As God’s word tells us, it is the *humble* and *contrite* who will be revived.

In the New Testament, the Greek word “*anapsuxis*” (pronounced “an-aps’-ook-sis”) is used once, and means, “**properly a recovery of breath, that is, (figuratively) revival**.” This “recovery of breath” is similar to that of the Hebrew word found in Judges 15:19 (above). The Greek word was translated “refreshing,” as found in Acts 3:19-21: “Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of **refreshing** from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ, who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began.”

The basis for belief of a coming revival

It would seem that those anticipating a great “end-time revival” lean heavily upon the words to Israel by the prophet Joel: “*And it shall come to pass afterward, that*

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:28-29)

The same words can be found in Acts, spoken by Peter to the Jews at Jerusalem: *“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:16-18)*

As we can see from Peter's words, the last days' fulfilling of Joel's prophecy began at Pentecost. Those speaking in tongues were Galileans and the language in which they spoke happened to be the languages of people from many nations. It so impacted them that in a short time 3000 souls came to Jesus. This was the beginning of the true Ekklesia of God. After 2000 years, what has become of God's Ekklesia?

Seeking a sign

When Jesus was still on earth, some Pharisees were tempting Him and asking for a sign from heaven. *“And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.” (Mark 8:12)* Jesus left them and went to the other side of the lake. But the disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf. Jesus' heart must have been very heavy, remembering the Pharisees' question, because His first words to the disciples were *“Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.” (Verse 15)*

Do modern-day “Pharisees” [Greek: exclusively religious] seek a sign? We hear so much talk of “signs and wonders.” And we need only to turn on the television to a “Christian” channel if we want to hear “what God is doing” – some even suggesting that God will rain down gems from the sky! There are many extremely dramatic, and strange, happenings that even common sense will tell us is not right. But the most deceptive “leaven” of today's “Pharisees” is that which is “from the Word” but has “only” a tiny twist to it that we may fail to discern it and possibly fall for it. Deception is stealthy and creeps up on the unsuspecting who are unaware of the leaven of error. There has never been a time when we needed more to be “tuned in” to the voice of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to guide us.

Are those who are expecting a great revival being deceived by “signs and wonders”? Is it possible that they may be chasing after a “great move of God,” believing it is just around the corner – maybe next week, next month, next year?

All the while apostasy is spreading its tentacles throughout the “church,” blinding eyes until they can see only flesh – self-increasing religious flesh that has the appearance of “born-again believers.” Will the revival-seekers be so intent on having “revival” that a “feel good” counterfeit revival of religious flesh will keep them from the death to self that must precede the Life they think they are seeking? Will they still be taken up with a counterfeit when Jesus comes for His Bride, the remnant who has gone the way of the Cross?

If only we could grasp the extent of the apostasy, and the multitudes who are in bondage today! There truly is a need for “revival” but God’s word does not tell us we can anticipate one. The Bible speaks only of apostasy, deception, evil imposters, love growing cold, etc. – and Revelation speaks of the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans. Then Revelation 18:4 makes the call to “*Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.*” How many will be trapped in this delusion of a great end-time harvest of souls?

The greatest true harvest of souls is taking place where believers are subjected to dreadful persecution. These believers are following after the true and living God – not some counterfeit. Their relationship with God means so much to them that they would die rather than deny Him – and countless souls have died for their faith. The glorious news is that their spirits are alive - revived - and are with Christ, their Reason for living and dying.

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### **Comments:**

Great article.

I think the problem with some members of the church, is they are trying to revive something that was not of God. Why would God want to bring back to life something that is not of Him?

- Rose

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The subject of revival as it is so often discussed is something I have long had trouble swallowing, just as nations being saved. The simple reason for me is the matter of individual choice, and willingness to follow Jesus. How can this be applied to multitudes of people? Surely it has always been, and always will be an individual choice, borne out of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit acting upon the heart of the individual.

I do believe times occur when a heightened perception of God's presence becomes more apparent, for instance in the accounts in the book of Acts, but does this constitute revival? Is it really revival when more people realise that the Lord is for real, and then do nothing more than seek to find what good things they can relieve from His grip? I think not. In my view this is nothing more than opportunism dressed up as godliness.

True revival, or at least my understanding of what true revival means, is when the Holy Spirit convicts the heart of someone He has already chosen. By the gift of His grace, that person then becomes willing to pick up their own cross, allowing all they once held dear to be crucified at their own personal Calvary. This person is then willing to walk a path that would be fled from by most in the world as though they are being pursued by the devil himself, for there is little room for self-interest. The confidence of this person is beyond imagination however, for they know that their new found treasure is in a place that it will never be destroyed or taken away from them again. Their hearts and minds will be focussed on what is to come, not what is temporal.

As you so often say in your articles: Jesus Christ is returning for a pure spotless Bride, and nothing less! In my opinion this Bride will be made up of those, and only those, who are willing to make an impossible decision of their own accord. It is the decision to willingly forsake what they have in this world, for that which is to come. And it is a decision that can never be made unless inspired and initiated by the Holy Spirit Himself.

We have a God whose name is Jealous. Regardless of how much He loves the world, He will not accept those who turn to Him and yet are unwilling to go through the process of being refined by fire. For this reason I don't think it as important to cry out for revival of the masses, as it is to cry out to be refined and made holy oneself.

- John

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