

Revival in God's Church

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What Is Revival?

We come to the subject of revival. What is revival? First, let us address what it is not. Revival is not something that we can conjure up ourselves. Perhaps you've driven past a church advertising, "Revival this Week—7:30 pm." Revival certainly applies to the church, but it cannot be planned by the church. We don't dictate how and when God will bring about revival. There are things we can do that will lend themselves to revival, but ultimately, it is the sovereign work of God.

Revival has been defined as "a special season of refreshing when many believers simultaneously experience a deep, Holy Spirit conviction of sin. It results in their confession and renunciation of sin (sometimes publicly). It culminates in a renewal of their dedication to the Lord."¹ Revival leads to a new commitment to holiness, a fresh evangelistic zeal, and a missionary vision.

You see, revival is something God does for His people when we have backslidden and grown cold to the things of the Spirit. Maybe we're still going to church, still carrying around our Bibles, still going through the motions, but in our hearts, we've moved away from that place of intimacy and total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In *The Spiritual Awakeners*, author Keith Hardman said this about the conditions leading up to revival: "Revival is usually preceded by a time of spiritual depression, apathy, and gross sin, in which the great majority of nominal Christians are hardly different in any substantive way from the members of secular society."²

Isn't this the situation we find ourselves in today? Many conversions appear to be taking place, new churches are being started,

and in some cases, people are coming in by the droves. When the facts are analyzed closely, however, it becomes clear that although many churches are filling up with people, the lifestyles of those within the churches and those outside of them are not significantly different. That tells me we need revival!

The Need for Another Great Awakening

An awakening is something that comes alongside revival and impacts those outside the church, bringing them to a saving faith in Christ. Generally speaking, revival and awakening happen simultaneously. As God begins to move in His church by His Spirit, bringing a fresh conviction of sin and

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Isn't that the great need in our world—for people to come under the conviction of sin? When you talk to people about sin, they dismiss the whole idea, saying, "There's no such thing." How can you convince a person who doesn't believe in absolute truth that truth exists and that all men are, in fact, sinners? We need something more than our ability to argue—we need the power of the Spirit of God!

In fact, it is through the power of this Spirit that we presently see His church being rebuilt all over the world. Did you know that there is more biblical Christianity in Russia and China today than there has been in any

previous years? A fresh work of the Spirit of God is beginning to blossom throughout Europe. There's an underground revival happening in Iran and similar activity going on all over the Middle East.

God is also moving in places like Sri Lanka, which is a Buddhist and Hindu nation. Prior to the tsunami, the Sri Lankan government supported the burning of churches, and the beating and imprisonment of pastors. However, after the tsunami, there's been a radical turn. Guess why? Christians the world over are descending on the shores of these Asian countries, and the people can't deny that there's something special going on. The same government that was previously promoting the burning of churches and the beating and imprisonment of pastors is now

asking, "Do you think that as you Christians are rebuilding this village, that you could put a church here to help the people too?" You see, God is doing a great work.

Hardman concludes *The Spiritual Awakeners* explaining that, "Awakenings begin

in periods of cultural distortion and grave personal stress, when we lose faith in the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions, and the authority of our leaders in church and state."³ Doesn't that describe where we are today? We are ripe for judgment, certainly, but we are also ripe for revival. We are ripe for an awakening. And I believe that as the people of God, we ought to anticipate it.

¹ Richard W. DeHaan. *How to Have Revival*. Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984, pp. 2–3.

² Keith J. Hardman. *The Spiritual Awakeners*. Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1983, p. 21.

³ *Ibid*, p. 20.