

Revival To Live Again

Part Five

By

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Chapter Twenty Two

Biblical Revivals and Awakenings

So far in our series we've looked at thirty-four examples of revival from the Old Testament. You can read the series in four free eBooks that we've linked to at the end of this study. Understanding how God worked with His people in the Old Testament will help you understand what He did centuries later in the New Testament.

While the Old Testament covers a period of thousands of years (Adam to Nehemiah and Malachi), the New Testament covers about a hundred years of history (birth of Jesus to death of the Apostle John). However, don't let that fool you. What God did in the New Testament period was the culmination of everything we read about in the Old Testament. The Old points to the New, while the New points back to the Old. This is God's Story.

The Messenger

The last prophet of the Old Testament was Malachi. He prophesied to Judah toward the end of the 5th century BC. Here is one that connects directly to events in the New Testament –

Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:1

God said He would send “My messenger” to prepare the “before Me.” That meant someone would precede God’s coming to His people and prepare the way for Him. “And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming.”

What we see in Malachi's prophecy are two messengers. One messenger will prepare the way for the other Messenger, who is identified as "the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight." Notice also that the messenger was going to prepare the way before God ("Me"). And the Lord who the people sought would "suddenly come to His temple."

These words of Malachi the prophet at the end of the 5th century BC were fulfilled in the early part of the 1st century AD, more than 400 years later.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'

Mark 1:1-3

Notice that the author of the Gospel of Mark references “As it is written in the Prophets.” Mark quoted from Malachi 3 and Isaiah 40 –

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Isaiah 40:3

Isaiah pronounced this prophecy during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. That would be a little more than 700 years before the events mentioned in Mark 1. God gave both prophecies for the purpose of comforting His people. The Assyrians had destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Judah would soon suffer greatly at the hands of the Babylonians. While that was part of God’s punishment for His people’s disobedience, He wanted them to know that He would forgive His people and would come for them.

Both prophets spoke of someone preparing the way for Him. Isaiah said the individual would be a voice crying in the wilderness. Malachi said the one preparing the way would bring a message to God’s people.

John the Baptist

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Mark 1:5-6

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.' Matthew 3:1-3

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of

Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' Luke 3:1-6

Jesus Christ also confirmed that John the Baptist was the “messenger” God had promised to send to Judah to “prepare” the way of the Lord –

When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and

more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' Luke 7:24-28

Remember the words of Malachi? “And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts.” John the Baptist, the messenger, came to prepare the way before God, the Lord of hosts. The Messenger of the covenant would come suddenly to His Temple. Who was the Messenger of the covenant? Jesus the Christ. When did Jesus come suddenly to His Temple?

Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Luke 2:46-50

This is the first mention in the New Testament that Jesus came to His Temple. Could that be what Malachi was referencing? Or might it be much later when Jesus suddenly comes to His Temple after the Great Tribulation? We don't know for sure, but we do know that Jesus Christ is the Messenger of the covenant. What covenant?

Messenger of the Covenant

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22:19-20

The New Covenant is in His blood, “which was shed for you.” Mark 14:24 says, ‘This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.’ Matthew 26:28 says, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

In the context of the Lord's Supper, Paul wrote – “In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:25). Paul also mentioned the “new covenant” in another letter to the Corinthian church – “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

The author of the Book of Hebrews also shed important light on the “new covenant” that Jesus brought to His people –

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of

the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Hebrews 8:7-13

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for

the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.' Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Hebrews 9:13-22

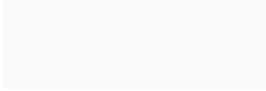
But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.
Hebrews 12:22-24

Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, is the Messenger of the covenant prophesied by Malachi. Jesus was and is the hope and comfort of Israel.

Comfort, yes, comfort My people!’ Says your God.
‘Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the Lord’s hand Double for all her sins.’ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth;

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

Isaiah 40:1-5



Chapter Twenty Three

The Message

Messengers bring messages, so what message did John the Baptist bring? God sent Him to *prepare the way*, but how?

First, John looked and sounded like a prophet. Though God's people had not seen a prophet for hundreds of years, they recognized John and came to him to confess their sins and be baptized –

Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Matthew 3:4

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. Mark 1:6

John's message was clearly that of a prophet of God –

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Matthew 3:1-2

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Luke 3:3

As we saw in the revivals of the Old Testament, God's prophets preached repentance of sins. God's people must agree with God about their sinfulness, repent of their sins, and confess their sins. That was the message of John the Baptist and many of the people responded by repenting and confessing their sins –

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. Matthew 3:5-6

Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' So the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?' He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.' Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Collect no more than what is appointed for you.' Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, 'And what shall we do?' So he said to them, 'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages. Luke 3:7-14

John also prophesied to the Jewish religious leaders who came out to him. In addition to calling on them to repent, John also told them about the One who would come after him. Remember, that Malachi's prophecy said the messenger would prepare the way of the Lord, "Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight." Malachi also wrote –

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord An offering in righteousness. Malachi 3:2-3

We see some of that in John's prophecy –

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise

up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matthew 3:7-12

Revival Beginnings

The number of people who went to John to confess their sins and be baptized probably numbered in the thousands, though we're not told an exact number. What we do know is that "Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan" went out to John to be baptized in the Jordan River. Their response had the beginning movements of what we would call **revival** today.

After centuries of "silence," God was once again bringing life to His people. He began with the "messenger," followed by the "Messenger," just as Malachi prophesied. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, the Messenger of the covenant.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. John 3:6-9

Some of the people wondered if John the Baptist was the Christ, the Messiah. John was quick to let them know he was not –

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' And he answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?' He said: 'I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.' Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying, 'Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?' John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.' These things were done in Bethabara

beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. John 1:19-28

Though John didn't know it, preparing the way would include baptizing the Messenger. Jesus, the Son of God, was going to identify with His people. He had no sins to confess, but He was going to die for the sins of His people.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Matthew 3:13-17

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mark 1:9-11

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.' Luke 3:21-22

The words John spoke when He saw Jesus coming toward Him for baptism, and the words that followed His baptism, are testimony to the reason God sent His Son from Heaven to earth –

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.' And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God. John 1:29-34

Here we have the first mention of Jesus being “The Lamb of God.” It’s mentioned four times in the New Testament (John 1:29, 36; Revelation 5:6; 7:10). It reminds us of the wonderful words of Abraham to his son Isaac – “And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, offered Himself as the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world. Jesus is the Passover Lamb of Israel –

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. Exodus 12:21

Chapter Twenty Four

What can we learn about revivals in the New Testament? It covers a much shorter time period than the Old Testament, so do we find fewer revivals?

We saw the beginning of revival in Judea in the last chapter of our series. After 400+ years of prophetic silence, God speaks again to His people and they readily respond to the messenger God promised through the last prophet of the Old Testament. John the Baptist, the first prophet of the New Testament, prepared the way for “the Lord, whom you seek” (Malachi 3:1). Thousands of people came to John at the Jordan River to confess their sins and be baptized.

We saw John refer to Jesus of Nazareth at “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). We saw John baptize Jesus, who identified Himself with His people and because it was fitting “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). So, what’s next?

The Messenger of the Covenant

Christians often have a New Testament mindset, meaning they sometimes miss what Jesus did in the Old Testament. Jesus is the Son of God, and we see Him mentioned many times in the Old Testament. He was often referred to as –

- Angel of the Lord
- Mighty One
- Redeemer
- Glory of the Lord
- Root of David
- Branch
- Lamb of God
- Horn of Salvation
- Cornerstone
- Immanuel
- Light of the World

- Prophet
- Morning Star
- The Way
- The Lord
- Man of Sorrows
- Alpha and Omega
- Good Shepherd
- Shepherd of Israel
- Holy One of Israel
- Judge of Israel
- Lawgiver
- Commander of the Army of the Lord
- Wonderful Counselor
- Prince of Peace
- Desire of the Nations
- Jehovah
- God

Yes, Jesus is God in the Old Testament and New Testament. When you see God do or say something, know that the Pre-Incarnate Son of God did it and said it.

The reason I mention this is because of the idea of Jesus being the Messenger of the covenant. The Old Testament speaks of covenants God made with several of His chosen people (e.g. Noah, Abraham, David). The New Testament speaks of an old covenant and a new covenant. It's important to know that the Son of God is the Messenger of both covenants.

Each covenant has a special place in God's Eternal plan. God told Malachi that the "messenger" (John the Baptist) would prepare the way before Jesus, "the Lord, whom you seek," who is the "Messenger of the covenant,"

The Old Covenant

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, as a priest who prophesied about God visiting His people to redeem them. Notice what he said about God remembering His holy covenant –

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. 'And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge

*of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,
Through the tender mercy of our God, With which
the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to
those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:68-79*

Thousands of people followed Jesus at different points during His earthly ministry. He made it clear from the beginning that He had come to fulfill the Law and Prophets –

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Matthew 5:17-18

Jesus also explained the Law and Prophets to people in the proper way. That's because the religious leaders of the time were not teaching the Law and Prophets correctly. Jesus often said, "You have heard that it was said ... But I say to you." That's because the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees were so often wrong in what they taught.

The New Covenant

However, Jesus came to bring a “new covenant” to His people. The only times Jesus said the word “covenant” were when He was addressing the “new” covenant. The reason was because the new covenant was about the “blood” that He would shed for His people –

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Matthew 26:28

And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Mark 14:24

Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22:20

The Apostle Paul, who Jesus selected specifically to take His message to the Gentile world, explained the difference between the old and new covenants in one of his letters to Christians living in Corinth –

And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech

— *unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:4-17*

The author of the Book of Hebrews wrote that Jesus Christ is the “Mediator of a better covenant” –

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their

unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Hebrews 8:6-13

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a “better covenant.” That statement doesn’t mean the old covenant was a mistake. It simply means that the old covenant had fulfilled its purpose. The old covenant was supposed to make way for the new covenant. As Paul wrote in Galatians –

For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar – for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. Galatians 4:24-26

The old covenant from Mount Sinai “gives birth to bondage.”

Paul addressed this earlier when he told the Galatian believers that the old covenant, the Law, was given to teach (tutor) them that they needed the new covenant that had Jesus brought. The old covenant shows us we are sinful and in great spiritual need of God’s grace. The new covenant shows that we have received God’s grace through the forgiveness of our sins. That forgiveness is because of the shed blood of Christ.

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under


guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 3:19 – 4:1-7

Another thing we see is that the *Messenger of the covenant* brought “A new covenant” and “made the first obsolete.” What is becoming obsolete and growing old “is ready to vanish away.” That’s what Malachi prophesied – “And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,’ Says the Lord of hosts.”

When we compare the prophecy of Malachi and the fulfillment of that prophecy through Jesus Christ, we can better understand Isaiah’s prophecy in chapter 61 and why Jesus quoted from it at the Nazareth synagogue. Jesus came to bring comfort to His people –

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The

oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. Isaiah 61:1-3



Chapter Twenty Five

No one is, was, or ever will be like Jesus Christ. He is the Eternal God who created the heavens and the earth, everything visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16). So, when Jesus came from Heaven to earth two-thousand years ago was He met with gratitude, praise, and respect by those who met Him?

Let's take a closer look to answer that question.

New Testament Prophecies about Revival

It's good to remember some of the New Testament prophecies that prepare us to understand the revival God was going to bring to His people. Here are several for us to consider. First, from the Angel Gabriel who stands in God's presence –

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. Luke 1:30-33

Here is what Mary said prior to Jesus' birth –

He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever. Luke 1:51-55

This is what an angel told a group of shepherds near Bethlehem after Jesus was born –

Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

Here's what an old man in Jerusalem said after seeing the baby Jesus at the Temple. The Holy Spirit had told him he would not die until He had seen Messiah –

Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel. Luke 2:29-32

Anna, who was an elderly prophetess, saw the baby Jesus and gave thanks to the Lord, “and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38)

All of this would lead a reader to think that the time of great revival was about to come upon Judea, but is that what happened? Let's look at Jesus and revival after He began His earthly ministry.

Jesus and Revival

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him— from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. Matthew 4:23-25

It didn't take long after Jesus began preaching and healing that "great multitudes" began to follow Him. Why wouldn't they? He healed everybody they brought to Him. That was a big deal in 1st century Judea. The country didn't have hospitals or medical clinics. People suffered greatly, so they were excited to learn that Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher and healer. He was able to heal people of any and every

disease, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. That will get a crowd!

Jesus also fed thousands of people through miraculous means. That also impressed people to follow Him –

Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:19-21

So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those

who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala. Matthew 15:35-39

Opposition to Revival

What Jesus did by healing and feeding thousands of people made Him very popular. However, what He said caused many problems with some people, especially with the religious leaders. There are so many examples in the New Testament, so I'll share just a few.

Let's begin with what Jesus did and said to people who had known Him from childhood. Jesus was already well-known in the area near his hometown for teaching in synagogues and healing people in many towns and villages. The day came when He went His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. He was handed the Book of Isaiah. Jesus opened Isaiah and started reading –

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:18-19

Jesus closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. Everyone was watching Him to see what He would do or say next.

And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Luke 4:21

All it took was just eight words – eight words – and that changed everything. The people in the synagogue questioned how someone who had grown up in their own village could say such a thing. Jesus then added fuel to a growing flame –

He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.' Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way. Luke 4:23-30

People who Jesus had grown up with, people from His own village, became so angry at what He said that they tried to murder Him.

Here's another well-known example, the Sermon on the Mount. We find the long version in Matthew chapters 5 – 7, and the short version in Luke 6. Jesus saw the “multitudes” who followed Him and went up on a mountain. He sat down with His disciples and began to teach. The first part of the sermon included blessings and how believers are the salt and light of the earth. The next part took on issues of the heart (e.g. murder, adultery). Then Jesus took on the issue of loving your enemies, blessing those who curse you, doing good to those who hate you, and praying for those who spitefully use and persecute you. Why? “... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:45).

Jesus taught about fasting and prayer, laying up treasures in Heaven, and dealing with worry. He addressed the issue of judging other people, and entering through the narrow way. Jesus warned the people to beware of false prophets who came to them in sheep's clothing, but were inwardly ravenous wolves. Then He said this –

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'
Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus went beyond being a teaching healer to claiming to be God. The people were astonished at His teaching.

Jesus continued His ministry of healing, working miracles, and teaching, but His words began to divide many of the people who followed Him. He also angered the religious leaders. What looked like a revival began to look more like an angry mob as Jesus continued to speak the truth.

Here's an example of what happened while Jesus was teaching in a synagogue in Capernaum –

Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever ... Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can understand it? ... From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. John 6:53-58, 60, 66

We learn in John 6:5 that even His brothers didn't believe in Him. Surrounded by unbelief from His own family members and followers, and opposed by the religious leaders of His time, it looked like there would be no real and lasting revival. Even the revival that appeared to be growing under John the Baptist had fallen apart. John was arrested, imprisoned, and murdered.

Chapter Twenty Six

Jesus started His earthly ministry with what appeared to be such great potential for revival. He healed and fed thousands of people, worked miracles, raised the dead, and taught truth. The Jews were ready to receive their Messiah with open arms – right?

As we saw in the last part of our series, the things that Jesus said angered a lot of people. That included many of His followers and the religious leaders of Israel. What looked like a revival quickly turned into what looked like a mob. In fact, it would turn into a mob that would lead to the murder of Jesus. Would this derail God's plan for His people?

Let's take a closer look to answer that question.

God's Revival

We learned in the Old Testament that revival happens when God wants it to happen, and it happens only in the way He plans and approves. Opposition by mere humans cannot stop God from accomplishing the pleasure of His will. The same was true for what Jesus was doing two thousand years ago.

God's Eternal plan for true and lasting revival on earth was always based on the Son of God becoming flesh, dying for people's sin, rising from the dead, ascending back to Heaven, and returning at a future time to defeat His enemies and establish an everlasting Kingdom.

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray for true and lasting revival –

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.. Luke 11:2

When God is praised for He is, His Kingdom comes, and His will is done on earth as it is in Heaven, then we have true and lasting revival. However, that earthly Kingdom where God's will is done here as it is in Heaven hasn't happened yet and won't happen until Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom. Something else had to happen first, but even Jesus' closest disciples didn't understand it –

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. Matthew 16:21-23

Peter was part of Jesus' inner discipleship circle and even he didn't understand why Jesus was talking about suffering, dying, and rising. It didn't make any sense to him, but that was always God's plan –

So the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:14-15

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8

How would Jesus “destroy” the works of the devil? By dying, rising, ascending, ruling, and returning to rule and reign. This was a plan God designed before He created the universe, before time began –

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Timothy 1:8-10

Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was

committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior. Titus 1:1-3

... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:18-21

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6

God will revive His people – give them life again – at the appropriate time – at a time He determined before time began.

Resurrection and Revival

Jesus told His disciples multiple times that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. After Peter's rebuke, the disciples didn't challenge Jesus or ask Him any questions. Matthew 17:23 does say that the disciples were "exceedingly sorrowful" at what Jesus told them was going to happen in Jerusalem. Jesus was specific in telling the disciples that He would rise "the third day" (Matthew 20:19). However, they didn't remember His words until after He rose from the dead.

The disciples all abandoned Jesus when He was arrested by Israel's religious leaders. Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus. John was the only one of the male disciples who showed up when Jesus was crucified. Several of the women who followed Jesus were there as well. They saw Jesus die and some of the women saw where He was buried. All seemed to be lost. However ...

Jesus' crucifixion was God's plan. Jesus' resurrection was God's plan. Everything was going according to plan! Revival was about to begin. Jesus showed Himself alive to His disciples, then spent more than a month teaching them about Himself from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). After He finished teaching them and telling them what He wanted them to do, Jesus ascended back to Heaven to take His rightful place as Lord of lords and King of kings.

The Holy Spirit was involved in every part of this Eternal plan. He was involved in coming upon the virgin Mary so that she would give birth to Jesus. The Holy Spirit was at the baptism of Jesus. The Holy Spirit took Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to leave the earth, but the Spirit would be a "comforter," and guide them into "all truth." The Holy Spirit would glorify Jesus, "for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." (John 16)

Jesus told His disciples to go into Jerusalem and wait to receive power, “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1) The Holy Spirit did come upon the disciples on Pentecost, and saved thousands of people through the preaching of God’s Word.

Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call ... Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. Acts 2:38-39, 41

Notice that Peter told the people to “repent” and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ “for the remission of sins.” Doesn’t that sound just like the preaching of the Old Testament prophets? God’s ways of reviving people do not change. They are the same today as they were thousands of years ago. New ways of trying to “make” a revival happen don’t work. There’s only way – God’s way.

What we find as we read through the Book of Acts is God’s Spirit bringing life to Jews, then to Gentiles. It as always God’s intention that revival would impact all people. God made that clear to Abraham four thousand years ago – “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3b).

And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious. Isaiah 11:10

Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. Isaiah 42:1

Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' Isaiah 49:6

We see the Holy Spirit bringing life to His people throughout the Book of Acts. We see how thousands of people believed in Jesus and were added to the assembly of believers. We see how the Holy Spirit protected the disciples as they stood up to the religious leaders of Israel. We see how the Holy Spirit continued to reach people for Christ even after severe persecution broke out after the death of Stephen. We see how the Holy Spirit took the Gospel to the Samaritans and Syrians. We see how the Holy Spirit used Philip to take the Gospel to an influential Ethiopian who would take God's Word back to his country's leaders.

Then we saw how Jesus Christ specifically called the persecutor Saul of Tarsus to become a believer and take the Gospel to the Gentiles –

... he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' Acts 13:46-47

That's what Paul (Saul) did. He took the Gospel to the Roman Empire, started churches, and wrote letters inspired by the Holy Spirit that continue to impact people all across the world.

Chapter Twenty Seven

One of my favorite sections of Scripture is 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. It explains the Gospel simply, clearly, and powerfully. It lists the truth claims, followed by the evidence for each claim.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

- Truth claim – Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
- Evidence for claim – He was buried
- Truth claim – He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures
- Evidence for claim – He was seen alive by His closest followers, members of His earthly family, and by hundreds of other witnesses

Another reason I like this section is because the Apostle Paul was most likely repeating one of the earliest Christian creeds. Paul declared the Gospel that he had received.

The Gospel and Revival

Revival happens when God says revival will happen. The Lord established all of the rules that govern the outpouring of His blessings upon His people. In Christ, Paul wrote, we have been blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

People often think of revival as receiving spiritual “blessings,” but we already have “ever spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” So, what is it that people are asking for when they ask for revival? The Hebrew word means “to live, preserve life” (חַיָּה). The Greek word means “come to life again, regain life, revive” (ἀναζάω).

Just like in the Old Testament, revival is about something coming back to life. It was alive, but need to be revived. That’s what God does with His people. We see the beauty of revival in the story of the prodigal son (also called the parable of the lost son).

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Luke 15:22-24

The Greek word for “is alive again” is ἀνέζησεν. The son who demanded his inheritance early, left home, squandered his money (“wasted his possessions with prodigal living”), and returned home hoping to become one of his father’s hired servants, was instead met with love, grace, and mercy. The father said “my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” That’s revival! “And they began to be merry.” Rejoicing follows revival.

This is important to understand. The son confessed his sin against his father and was remorseful for what he had done – “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.” The father saw his son coming to him and had compassion on him. The son confessed his sin. The combination of the loving, compassionate father, and the repentant son brought about a great time of revival to their home.

This is a picture of how God views His children. He loves them. He has compassion on them. He wants them to return to Him. However, it’s important that those who return are truly repentant, confessing their sin against God. That’s the good news we share with people today. God loves people so much that He sent His one and only Son into the world to die for their sins. Those who repentant and confess will find God’s forgiveness.

'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Romans 10:8-13

Just as the prophets called on God's people in the Old Testament to repent and confess their sin, Jesus Christ calls on His people to do the same.

So, can we have revival without Gospel preaching? What I mean by the term “Gospel preaching” is the preaching we find in the New Testament. Can we set aside all or part of the whole counsel of God and expect God to bless us with revival? The Apostle Paul made the point with the elders of the Ephesian church that “I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). This was in the context of Paul warning them that after his departure, “savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29-30).

False preachers and teachers will kill any possibility of revival in a Christian congregation or denomination. Whenever I hear a church or denomination with false preachers and teachers at the helm claiming to have experienced “revival,” I know they are lying. God doesn’t bless the preaching of a false gospel. The Apostle Paul made that abundantly clear to Christians in Galatia who were inundated with false preachers and teachers –

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10


God is not going to bless a church or denomination that He's already cursed because they follow "a different gospel." The answer to this kind of problem is to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). Revival happens when God's people throw out the false preachers and teachers, tear down the high places and idols, confess their sins, repent, and obey God again.

Understanding how to have revival is easy. The hard part is doing the hard part. Christians, just like the Jews of the Old Testament, have struggled doing the hard part – confess, repent, believe, obey. That’s the Gospel of God –

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith. Romans 1:16-17

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus

the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6



The Power of Revival

The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. That's where it begins. As we read through the Book of Acts and the letters of the apostles, we see many outpourings of God's Spirit in great power. We think of Pentecost and Peter and the family of Cornelius. We think of Antioch and Thessalonica where some of the Jews claimed that Paul's preaching of the Gospel was turning "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

The power of revival is first and foremost the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There will be no real revival without the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. People who do not preach the whole counsel of God can pretend they are experiencing revival, but they are pretending and deceiving. It's heartbreaking to watch so-called revival movements across the world and know that people are being deceived. God only blesses what He says He blesses, and false preaching and teaching are not what He blesses.

God also does not bless half-hearted attempts at obedience. We see that throughout the Old Testament. People say one thing and do another. The same is true in the New Testament. Paul made that clear in his letter to Titus –

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Titus 1:10-16

Judging Real Revival

Who says whether a revival is real or pretend? God does. How do we know what God is thinking when people claim to be involved in a “real revival?” Simple. Read Revelation chapters 1 – 3. Jesus Christ came to John the Apostle and gave him a revelation to share with seven churches in Asia Minor. Even though the Apostle Paul was involved in starting some of those churches, Paul had died many years earlier. However, those churches knew John well. Jesus chose John to be the apostle who would write His revelation for the leaders of each church to read to their people.

Revelation chapter one addresses the authority of Jesus Christ to reveal certain things to John so that he could reveal those things to seven church in Asia Minor –

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.

Revelation 1:1

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia.

Revelation 1:4

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the

seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. Revelation 1:17-20

Revelation chapters two and three are the specifics of what Jesus Christ wanted each of the seven churches to know. Out of the seven churches, only two received high praise from Jesus. Those churches were located in Smyrna and Philadelphia. Each of those churches faced persecution and opposition. Jesus told His people in Smyrna that He knew their “works, tribulation, and poverty.” He knew the “blasphemy” of religious people living in their community – “those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9). Jesus told them not to fear “any of those things which you are about to suffer.” The Lord told them that the devil was behind what was going to happen to them, but that there was a reason for it – “that you may be tested.” Jesus told them to be “faithful until death.” The Lord said He would give them “the crown of life.”

If you were to see a small church on the corner of a street in your town or in a rural part of your county, what would you think of them? Many Christians wouldn't think of them at all. Those who did probably wouldn't think much of the church. Just a small building with a small congregation of poor people.

Unfortunately, many Christians today are impressed with large buildings, wealthy pastors, big staffs, lots of programs for kids, teens, and adults, and thousands of people parking expensive vehicles in massive parking lots on several church "campuses."

I say "unfortunately" because God's people often don't see things the way God sees them. What Jesus saw in Smyrna was a group of Christian saints who loved Him deeply, served Him faithfully, and stayed true to Him even though they faced serious tribulation and poverty. Would you think that the church in Smyrna was experiencing revival? Probably not, but Jesus Christ pronounced it more alive than most of the other churches. Who determines when a church is revived? God does. Don't be misled. Stick to what the Bible says and you won't go wrong.

I might add that one of the great church fathers to come out of the church in Smyrna was Polycarp. Based on his stated age at his death in about 160 AD, he may have been one of the young church leaders who received a copy of the Revelation. You can read more about the [life and ministry of Polycarp here](#).

The second church that received high marks from Jesus Christ was in Philadelphia. Jesus began by saying, “I know your works.” It’s important that we don’t miss those four words because it’s true of every church in the world. Jesus “knows your works.” Jesus knows what you do, what you think what you preach, what you teach, what you believe, and how you behave. Nothing gets past Jesus Christ. He is building His Church and knows everything that’s going on in every church that belongs to Him. I say that because thousands of “churches” aren’t His churches. There are a lot of buildings with the name “church” added to it that aren’t part of the “Church” that Jesus is building. False preachers and teachers equal false churches filled with false believers.

The Christians in Philadelphia had kept the Lord's "command to persevere." Jesus promised to "keep" them from the "hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." Jesus then said He was "coming quickly" and told them to "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." (Revelation 3:7-13)

Now we move to the other five churches addressed in the Revelation. Each of them received a rebuke from Jesus Christ

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1. The Ephesian church, started by the Apostle Paul decades earlier, had fallen into a loveless relationship with God. Paul warned the Ephesian elders many years before (Acts 20:25-31) that after his departure, "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." Fast forward four decades and that's what had happened. By the time Revelation was delivered to the church in Ephesus, the damage from the "savage wolves" was underway. Jesus Christ gave the

church some praise, but what He had against them was that they had “left” their “first love.” Jesus told the leaders and members of the Ephesian church that they had “fallen.” He told them to “repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent” (Revelation 2:5). For Jesus Christ to tell a church they had fallen and were in danger of His removing their lampstand from its place was very serious. Hundreds of thousands of churches have already lost their “place” in the past, and thousands more are in similar danger today. Christians in Ephesus probably thought they were in pretty good shape because of their works, labor, patience, and intolerance of “those who are evil.” They had even tested people who said they were apostles and found them to be liars. They had persevered and not become weary. Yet, they still “fell” and needed to repent and “do the first works.” Why? Because they had “left” their first love. If you attended a church like that, you might think everything is going well. You might even think the church had experienced or was experiencing revival. Don’t be

misled. What and who is the “first love” of the church? Is it the Word of God? Is it the Son of God? Is the Gospel of Christ first and foremost in the preaching and teaching of the church? If not, ask why not. Christians need to learn to love as God loves. Oh, one other thing. Jesus did say. “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” We also need to learn to hate what God hates.

2. The next church was located in Pergamos. Again, Jesus Christ said He knew their “works.” He knew that some had held fast to His name and had not denied “My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (Revelation 2:13). However, Jesus said that He had “a few things against” them. Some members of the church (possibly including leaders) “hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.” Jesus called on them to, “Repent, or else I will come to

you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Jesus started His statement to the church in Pergamos by saying, “These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword.” Christians often have an incorrect view about Jesus. I blame some of that on the media portrayal of Jesus in movies and TV shows. Jesus is a mighty warrior who has “the sharp two-edged sword” that is His Word. Jesus is read to wield that sword in any direction that pleases Him. We often think of Revelation 19:15 – “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” What we forget is Revelation 2:16 where He was addressing members and leaders of His church in Pergamos – “Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Jesus Christ actually said that if church members did not repent, He would come against them quickly to fight them with the sword of His mouth! I’ll bet that got their attention. How many churches across the world are like

Pergamos that allow members and leaders to hold and teach false doctrines, and commit sexual immorality? The number of pastors and church members committing sexual immorality today is stunning. It seems like I read about another Christian leader being involved in sexual immorality every day. As for allowing church members and leaders to hold and teach false doctrines, it's out of control and getting worse. There are lots of Pergamos churches across the world.

3. The third problem church Jesus addressed in Revelation was located in Thyatira. Jesus reminded the church leaders that He had “eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass.” Jesus told the church He knew their “works, love, service, faith, and your patience.” That sounds good, so what's the problem? There were many in the church who had gone off in other directions – “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she

did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:20-23). Notice the important words “you allow.” That’s a HUGE problem in many churches today as well. Christian leaders are “allowing” sexual immortality and pagan practices. You might remember earlier in this series when some of the kings of Judah tried to make positive changes to the worship and behavior of the people, but did not tear down the “high places” where people went to sacrifice to idols. The same thing is going on in tens of thousands of churches (at least) across the world today. Pastors meet together with committees and boards to talk about budgets, church programs, and missions, but they don’t talk about the elephant in the room. Sexual immorality and pagan practices are being “allowed” to continue by members and leaders. Jesus will give leaders and members “time to repent,” but that time

will eventually come to an end. That's when Jesus will respond in ways that no one will want to face. Remember, we are dealing with the Son of God "who searches the minds and hearts." Jesus Christ "will give to each one of you according to your works."

4. The fourth problem church was located in Sardis. Jesus knew their "works." He also knew they had "a name that you are alive, but you are dead." That sounds like many of the best-known churches in the world. They have a name that makes them sound like their are alive, but they are really dead. Who says so? Jesus Christ says so. What's His advice? "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (Revelation 3:3-4). Again, that sounds like a lot of churches in cities and towns across the world. You walk into a church service and nobody greets you. You listen to the music and it makes you sick to your

stomach. The music is either like a rock concert or deader than a funeral procession. The preaching, if you can call it that, is dead. No Gospel message. The Bible is rarely mentioned. Just a bunch of dead, uninteresting little stories about what the preacher did last week. Dead, dead, dead. If there is any life left in the church, it's about to die. As Jesus said, "they are ready to die." What should church leaders and members do if they find themselves in a dying church? "Hold fast and repent." "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain." If they don't, they will die. Thousands of churches close every year. What Jesus told the church in Pergamos would happen to them is happening every week in countries across the world. They are dead. Many others are already dead. Jesus Christ gave Pergamos and every church like them the answer to their problem centuries ago, but they don't listen.

5. The fifth problem church was located in Laodicea. Jesus knew their "works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot." Jesus said that because they were "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I

will vomit you out of My mouth.” I remember the first time I read this after becoming a Christian. My first thought was of many churches in the United States. Why? Because they claimed to rich and in need of nothing. What the Laodicean church, and most churches in the United States and some other wealthy countries, is that they “are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Those are Jesus’ words, not mine. That’s how God sees so many churches in wealthy countries today. What’s the answer? Here’s what Jesus told leaders and members of the church in Laodicea – “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.” Why would Jesus say that? “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” That where revival starts. Because God loves His people, He rebukes and chastens them. How should God’s people respond to His rebuke and chastening? “Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice

and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:14-21)

God wants to revive His people. Jesus is standing at the door of thousands of churches and knocking on the door right now. If “anyone” hears His voice and opens the door, Jesus promises to “come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” If you read these verses in context, you realize this is God’s call to real revival. God rebukes and chastens. God’s people need to respond by hearing God, being zealous, repenting, and opening the door to Him as Lord of their lives and the life of their church. That’s when we can experience revival.

I highly recommend that every Christian and every church leader read Revelation 1 – 3 carefully and prayerfully. Let us lay aside our pride, hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, and do as we’re told. Then, and only then, can real revival come to our churches and to our nation.

Chapter Twenty Eight

I started this series about two-and-a-half years ago to help fellow Christians look carefully at what it means to be “revived,” to experience “real revival.” The sons of Korah desperately wanted God to revive Judah after its lengthy captivity in Babylon.

Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, Lord, And grant us Your salvation. Psalm 85:5-7

Real Revival

Many Christians today are desperate to see God revive their churches and nations. Unfortunately, there are many “false revivals” being promoted as if they are a real “move of God” in the land. The reason we study God’s Word carefully is so we will know when something is true or false. Preaching and teaching can be true or false. Preachers and teachers can be true or false. Churches can be true or false. Denominations can be true or false. People who claim the name of Christ can be true or false. All of that is clear from an honest study of the Bible where God’s Word is “rightly divided.” People can fool people, but they can’t fool God. God know what’s true and what’s false. God knows when revival is real because only He can give His people “life again.” That’s why we must look to God’s Word to know the difference between real and not real, true and untrue.

I started my life as a Christian with people who were committed to seeing revival come to the United States. That was more than 54 years ago. I became a Christian during what was called the “Jesus Revolution” or “Jesus Movement.” Many Christians point back to those days as the beginning of real revival in our country, but was it? Many people repented of their sins, believed in Jesus Christ, and were saved, but was that revival? Many people gathered together to praise God and ask Him to revive our country, but did He? Have we experienced real revival in our land?

The history of Christianity is two-thousand years old. In that period of time we have seen many wonderful movements of God’s Spirit to revive His people. My question is whether those of us old enough to remember the beginning of the “Jesus Movement” have seen God revive His people. Maybe He has in past years, but are we experiencing real revival now?

Here's why I ask. Christianity as a number is in decline. By that I mean the number of people who claim to be Christians, and the number of churches still open and holding regular services. I'm not saying that numbers necessarily determine whether God is reviving His people, but numbers are one way to gauge one part of what God may be doing with His people. The numbers show that Christianity is in decline in the United States and across the Western part of the world. The number of church closures far surpasses the number of church openings each year. The percentage of people who say they are Christians has been in a steep decline for years. The number of people who say they are not Christians is growing every year.

That has an impact on a society and culture. It affects how Christians are treated in society and culture. It affects how Christian beliefs are treated in society and culture. What do you think? Is Christianity in a better place than it was ten years ago? Twenty years ago? Thirty years ago? Does Christianity have the same kind of influence on society and culture now that it had at the beginning of the "Jesus Movement?"

I was still an atheist journalist when *Look* magazine used the name “Jesus Movement” in February 1971 to describe what it viewed as a spiritual phenomenon. I had just started investigating the truth claims of Christianity a month earlier, so I took note of the article in *Look*. I became a Christian in May 1971. That was the same month *Life* magazine published an article titled, “The Groovy Christians.” A month later, *Time* magazine published an article titled “Jesus Revolution.”

I was also a witness of what came before – the turbulent 1960s. Like many other teenagers I knew in 1960, we attended church and were basically obedient to the laws of our parents and our towns. However, many things happened during the next ten years that led a lot of us to leave churches, and become disobedient to parents and the laws of the land. I became a journalist and had a front row seat toward the end of the 60s. It was a wild and crazy decade.

The 1960s gave way to the 1970s, and that led to many young people looking for answers to tough questions about life. Many of us became Christians during the 70s – thus the name “Jesus Movement.” We joined churches, got married, had children, and began living as Christians in a society and culture that had more tolerance for Christianity than it does now. If you watch the news even once a week, you are aware that Christians and Christian beliefs are under serious and coordinated attack in most Western nations.

Revival or Ruin

So, here we are. Christians are under societal and culture attacks. Christianity is on a steep decline in the United States. Are we heading toward revival or ruin?

I began asking this question in the 1970s because the signs of spiritual and physical decline were apparent. I wrote a series in 2021 titled “**Warning and Lament: The Collapse of Civilizations.**” Historical research shows that civilizations have a pattern of rise and fall that lasts about 250 years. Some last longer, some shorter. The United States is close to the end of the civilization cycle. Some historians believe the United States is already showing signs of rapid decay and decline which could bring it to an end within ten to twenty years (if not sooner).

The collapse of a civilization does not mean that everyone dies or that the land mass with its cities and populations disappear. What it does mean is that life changes dramatically. New societies emerge and transform life in societies that collapse. If a civilization collapses violently because of war, many people will die. However, some civilizations have collapsed without a shot being fired. Even though the United States has many external enemies, there is the possibility that the U.S. will collapse from the weight of its own internal problems. Other nations could take advantage of American governments and citizens at that point.

God's people have gone through many civilization collapses. That includes Jews and Christians. Many Christians across the world are already living as part of a tiny minority. They live in what are known as "hostile" or "restricted" cultures. Many Christians lose jobs, homes, churches, and even their lives. Most Christians in the United States have no experience living in that kind of hostility and persecution. Christianity has been the dominant religious belief in the U.S. since its founding. However, Christians who emigrated to the United States from countries where Christianity is a persecuted religion know

how wonderful it is to live here. However, that may change drastically and soon.

Even though Christians in the U.S. may see our country ruined by a civilization collapse, that does not mean the end of Christianity here. It also does not mean Christians cannot experience revival in the midst of a societal collapse. Look back at the early parts of this series for a reminder of what God has done for His people through the centuries. You'll find a series of free eBooks at the end of this article.

I'll end this series the way I ended *Warning and Lament*. This is my advice to fellow believers in how to experience revival and deal with ruin –

- Stay close to God
- Stay close to worship
- Stay close to prayer
- Stay close to the Word
- Stay close to truth

- Stay close to wisdom
- Stay close to family
- Stay close to fellow Christians
- Stay close to friends
- Stay close to sinners

Stay close to God's purpose for our lives.

Stay close and we'll make it through ... together

Free eBooks

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This is the eBook for parts twenty two through twenty eight of this series.

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