

Walter C Kaiser - Revive us again

Biblical insights for encouraging spiritual renewal

Broadman & Holman 1999

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Author American, professor of OT at Gordon-conwell Theological seminary. Book offers helpful introduction, and chapters on each of 16 revivals from scripture, with commentary.

To some extent it seems 'revival' is the word used in US when maybe in UK we would be less demonstrative and talk about 'renewal'. The word revive itself doesn't crop up often in scripture itself.

Introduction

Need for awakening – 'for many good people, even within the church, life has lost its meaning. There is no sparkle in the eye, no spring in the step'. Robert E Coleman.

About ninety years ago, a college student in Wales named Evan Roberts, age twenty-six, obtained permission to leave college to return to his home village of Loughor to preach his first sermon. Seventeen people showed up to listen to his four points: confess any known sin to God and put away any wrong done to others, put away any doubtful habit, obey the Holy Spirit promptly, and confess faith in Christ openly.

No one could have predicted the nationwide impact that event would have. J Edwin Orr related that "within three months, a hundred thousand converts had been added to the churches of Wales. Five years later a book debunking the revival was published and the main point made by the scholarly author was that of the 100,000 added to the churches, only 80,000 remained after five years." This same revival jumped the ocean and spread to America's shores and was the last major nationwide revival we have seen since 1905. xi

The first requisite for any significant planning, praying or writing in this area would be the study of revivals in the Bible.

Definition of revival – 2 Chronicles 7.14: *if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

CE Autrey: 'revival is a reanimating of those who already possess life.. It revives spiritual life which is in a state of declension'. Hosea 10.12 – revival consists of breaking up fallow ground that's got overgrown. J Edwin Orr: 'times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord' (cp Acts 3.19). Revival presupposes a decline in the church's appetite for spiritual things and in her championing the cause of morality and justice in human affairs. It also presupposes that believers either don't know the standards of scripture or don't follow them.

There are 10 great revivals in the OT. Wilbur Smith lists 9 characteristics of great revivals:

- Most are preceded by spiritual decline and despair
- Each begins in the heart of one person
- Each rests on a new and powerful proclamation of the word of God
- Each was marked by a return to the genuine worship of Yahweh
- Each was accompanied by destruction of idols
- Each brought a deep sense of sin and desire to be separated from it
- In each there was a return to the offering of sacrifices
- Each was brought an unbounded sense of joy and gladness
- Each was followed by a time of productivity and prosperity

Why study OT revivals? Motivation; method; type of people God uses; preparation.

Old Testament Revivals

1. Psalm 85:1-13 – sons of Korah
2. Genesis 35:1-15 - Jacob
3. Exodus 32:1-34:7 – Moses
4. 1 Samuel 7:1-13 – Samuel
5. 1 Kings 18 – Elijah
6. 2 Chronicles 14-16 – Asa
7. 2 Chronicles 20 – Jehoshaphat
8. 2 Chronicles 30:1-9 – Hezekiah
9. 2 Chronicles 34:1-33 – Josiah
10. Haggai 1; Zechariah 1:1-16 – Zerubbabel
11. Nehemiah 8 – Ezra & Nehemiah

New Testament Revivals

12. Matthew 3:1-14 – John the Baptist
13. Acts 2:1-47 – Peter at Pentecost
14. Acts 8:1-25 – Philip in Samaria
15. Acts 10 – Peter in Caesarea
16. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 – Paul & Silas in Europe

Epilogue – revival on God's terms : 2 Chronicles 7:14

Verb 'to revive' comes 5 times in OT (KJV) – quotes below from NRSV:

- Ps 80:18 - Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.
- Ps 85:6 - Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you?
- Isaiah 57:15 (twice) - For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.
- Hosea 6:2 - After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

In NT it comes only twice, in KJV

- Romans 7:9 - I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.
- Romans 14:9 - For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

All the revivals in scripture began among believers. Their purpose was to call the church back to a new hearing of and responding to the Word of God. The verse in 2 Chron 7:14 is God's answer to Solomon after a plea for forgiveness for Israel. God gives 4 conditions:

- Humble yourselves
- Pray
- Seek my face
- Turn from your wicked ways