

The Lie Called Revival

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There is perhaps no concept more popular with “church” leadership than “revival” (especially the kind that can be scheduled months or even years in advance) because it is an almost sure-fire way to lure new members (and their “tithes” and “offerings”) into the so-called “local church.” For those who seek to walk only in purity and righteousness before the Lord, however, we must come to a recognition that the common buzz word “revival” fails to present the whole counsel of God and succeeds in presenting a false picture of how we are to win souls for Christ. Let us also be clear that there is a vast difference between “revival” (especially the programmed, institutional kind) and true preaching that results in repentance from sin and obedience to God. The latter is just good preaching! It does not need to be included in the deceptive buzz-word – good preaching that results in changed lives does not need to be categorized at all!

The first problem that should be noted is the literal meaning of the word “revival” – to bring to life again. Implied in the word is the idea of resuscitating dead people! In the “church” version of “revival,” this is good business because spiritually dead people are potentially good consumers of a dead religion, especially if that dead religion is glossed over and disguised with all manner of intellectual, emotional or formalized gimmickry. In the New Testament, however, we find that “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace.” (Heb. 6:4-6)

There are at least two aspects of “revival” that we should notice. First, if the people who attend “revivals” (especially the institutional, regularly-scheduled kind) have already been enlightened from the word of God and experienced the goodness and power of God, if they are in a condition of *death*, there is *no possibility* of reviving or resuscitating them. To even try is to participate in comforting them in their apostate (fallen away) condition.

Second, we need to question why the “church” produces and perpetuates this condition of death. If the “church” tries to deny that their people are in a condition of death, then why do they need “revived”? So what is it about the “church” that keeps its people at a spiritual level where they need regular (usually annual) “revival”? Any person, speaking of the physical body, who needs regular, life-saving resuscitation is readily recognized as being in a severely unhealthy condition – but it’s “business as usual” at “church”!

Nor should we assume that the book of Hebrews was written to people already dead and beyond reach. A few verses after this dire warning, the writer goes on to say, “Even though we speak like this, dear friends, [warning you of the dangers of falling away – also see vv. 7-8 where the writer uses an agricultural example to make the same point], we are confident of better things in your case – things that accompany salvation. God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” (Heb. 6:9-12)

It is here that we see the fine line between true preaching and “revival” preaching: the former encourages, exhorts and rebukes to stir up diligence in living but perhaps lazy or

confused people – as the writer of Hebrews says elsewhere “to stir up love and good works” (Heb. 10:24) – but “revival” preaching is aimed primarily at bringing about new life. In truth, the latter is simply and rightly called evangelism. The preaching suffers loss and everyone’s understanding is darkened when the additional meanings associated with “revival” are added.

Why does the “church” need “revival”? One answer surely lies here, in recognizing the nature and purpose of most “revival” preaching: it is a curious mixture of evangelism with some exhortation, encouragement and sometimes even of rebuke thrown in. This latter is the work of the prophets (1 Cor. 14:3, etc.) yet most “revival” preachers consider themselves “evangelists.” The “church” does not tolerate true prophets because it is very bad for “church” business to have someone around denouncing the major, fundamental practices of the apostate “church” speaking truths that come from the heart of God and the mind of Christ. The presence of all this confusion as to what is being accomplished in contrast with what is being advertised (especially in the previously-scheduled “events”) and attempted, should clearly demonstrate that God is not the author of “revival.” (1 Cor. 14:33)

What do we do, then, with historical “revivals” like Azusa Street, the Welsh and Wesleyan “revivals” where obviously many works of God were accomplished? We need to re-analyze and discern again the fruit of these events with renewed and opened spiritual eyes. Too many, still under the influence of various elements of the “church” paradigm, count ongoing “church” attendance or the formation of yet another “denomination” (division, sect, heresy – Gal. 5:20, also see 1 Cor. 12:24-25) as “good fruit”! Others fail to recognize the deceptive demonic counterfeits that have sprung up and count bizarre, wild, ecstatic (but truly demonic) activities as “works of God”! In summary, all that can be safely and rightly concluded from the historical accounts is that the fruit that comes from all historical “revivals” shows only that the works of God, the works of Satan *and* the works of men were each accomplished on various levels and to various extents. Few other incontrovertible conclusions can be drawn other than that *some* of the works were of God, *some* of the works were of Satan and *some* of the works were of men. And sometimes, the arguments over which were which are unresolvable because those measuring the results refuse to give up their own paradigms. Also, those who think that the divine aspects of the historical “revivals” occurred because of the implementation of “secret” methods or techniques (beyond simple, persistent prayer and explicit obedience to God’s directives) are deceived indeed. Again, if we can see, here lies the fine line between the work *of* God and men doing works *for* God.

The dual streams of power (divine and demonic) that are visible in historic “revivals” is the evidence of two things:

- 1) men, in addition to the gospel message being preached, also believed lies which the demonic installed somewhere in their beliefs and thoughts, and,

- 2) God still met the people where they were at and He met them on the basis of their faith, not on the basis of their correct understandings of spiritual matters.

The purification away from the deceptions (many of which are fundamental parts of the “church” paradigm) is the work which the “church” resists most strongly. It is the resistance to this purification which most produces the spiritually lifeless condition that causes “pastors” (many of whom have at least some genuine desire for God) to believe their congregation needs

resuscitation and “revival”! Thus the religious hamster wheel rolls on endlessly in the religious squirrel cages!

Rather, what is required is to step away from the “church” paradigm (also known as the “pulpit” paradigm – the pulpit does not exist in the New Testament yet it is given an exalted, central and preeminent place in churchianity), cease doing works *for* God and persistently pray until God gives specific directives. The “church” will never be able to do this – the biggest “churches” most often have only a tiny handful who attend the prayer meetings, if they even have prayer meetings!

Those who want true revival – meaning a fresh infusion of life from Christ or a deepening of one’s commitment or interaction with Christ and not just some recurrent heightened emotional or spiritual “high” (experience or feelings) – need not, indeed *must not* look to men but should rather turn to their “prayer closets” and “secret places.” (Mt. 6:6) If one is blessed with the company of other believers who have similar desires, these should gather together – even if only by means of long distance technology – in committed, persistent prayer that the needed purifications (as *God* requires them) would be accomplished and the work of God (which might result in many or in few or perhaps even in no new converts) would go forth and His will be accomplished. The lie called “revival” is a very effective lie – not because there are no elements of truth in the notion, but precisely because it combines elements of truth with elements of deception and error.

If there is any truth that most people need to hear again – those both in and out of the “church” – it would be Jesus’ prophetic warning: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but *only he who does the will of My Father* who is in heaven.” (Mt. 7:21) Surely there will be many who will say to Him, “Did we not hold many revival meetings in Your name?” But He will reply, “Revival was your understanding of what I wanted you to do and the method that was right in your eyes. Leave Me – I never knew you.” (see Mt. 7:22-23)

Knowing Christ, being known by Him and doing the will of the Master must be our “prime directive” – not holding meetings that conform to our understandings and methods. One is the real way of following Christ and the other is merely another form of the deceptive “church” paradigm. The one participates in the works *of* God and leads to eternal life with Christ and God while the other leads to eternal condemnation and separation from God, no matter how many works one has done *for* God or what titles one attaches to one’s names. In fact, the more of the latter one has to boast of, the more condemnation that one can expect to receive. “Revival,” when practiced apart from Christ, is merely another form of “church” deception that diverts people away from the true way of following Christ and God. It has been rightly, even though colloquially, put that it doesn’t matter how high you jump but it matters greatly how straight you walk.

Let he who has ears hear.

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