

To The Cross Ministries

REVIVAL TODAY

America's History of
Biblical Revival and Its
Modern Application

WILL YOU NOT REVIVE US
AGAIN, THAT YOUR PEOPLE
MAY REJOICE IN YOU? SHOW
US YOUR STEADFAST LOVE, O
LORD, AND GRANT US YOUR
SALVATION.

PSALM 85:6-7

A brief look at the revivals of the Old and New
Testaments along with an analysis of various
revivals in American history

TO THE CROSS MINISTRIES

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

Revival. The word is used less and less today. And yet, in the American church revival is no longer an option, it is an absolute necessity. And I believe that it starts with you and me. If we are to see the wave of revival grace the shores of this great nation once more then we must follow the biblical pattern. We must study the biblical foundation of revival and seek to apply it to our churches.

It has been my pleasure to study the revivals of history and compile a few of them into this book. I would like to thank multiple professors and mentors who have been both a personal and professional encouragement to me. Dr. David Adams and Dr. Chris Jones of Liberty University provided vital guidance in the research and development of this book. I would like to thank also, Dr. James Nutter, who provided helpful insight and edited the original thesis. In addition, the encouragement of Wayne Atchenson, Tom Phillips, Anne Marie Armistead, Terri Hazen, and others at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has been crucial to the formation of this book.

It has been a tremendous blessing to be able to write on the important subject of revival. I pray that you will be equally blessed by reading about it. To Christ be the glory.

- Matt Musser

Visit www.tothecrossministries.com or email me at matt@tothecrossministries.com for more information.

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Definition of Terms

Revival: a moment in time when a prophet, apostle, or preacher goes to a gathered group of people and gives them God's message, which is followed by humble repentance and a genuine desire to follow the Lord in a renewed way.

Awakening: similar to revival, yet distinct in both its magnitude and effect, as it results in nationwide commitment and cultural changes.

Repentance: a key component in both biblical and historical revival, it involves the individual forsaking of sin and dependance upon the Holy Spirit for godly, daily living.

Youth Culture: consisting of both teenagers and young adults this group of people has had a significant impact on the religious influence of America's culture.

Social Movements: those events, usually coinciding with religious revival, that drastically impacted the landscape of America's political and collective culture.

The Church: described in both the local church and universal Church context, designated by capitalization. The Church exists as the primary means of conveying the gospel to the world, through equipping its members to share and show the love of Christ.

Introduction

We need a revival of revival within the church today. It is no secret that these types of meetings are becoming less and less popular in our time. Large evangelistic events have seen a steady decline in America over the past 50 years. Is this due to a subtle shift in America's culture? In other words, is it simply because "people don't do that anymore"? Or is this wane of religious revival the result of something deeper?

The question is what has changed? What has caused this swing towards evangelistic indifference in the church? Ultimately, we are left with a limited number of options. The first is that God never did use "revivals" or great evangelistic meetings in the first place. They were not the method he used to bring about repentance and revival in the Bible and throughout church history. They are merely a farce. Such meetings are not of God's Spirit and are instead the result of the schemes of man.

The second possibility is that though God did use these types of meetings in the past he no longer requires them. They are a relic of ages gone by and now God uses different means to renew the church. This view finds difficulties when it comes to the unchangeable nature of God. It straddles a thin line by saying that God's nature does not change but his methods do.

Lastly, there is the chance that God has used revivals in the past, and he does intend also to use them today, yet it is the heart of the people that has changed. In the past men and women have been willing to listen and repent, but today their hearts are hardened and their eyes blind. It is the sin and faithlessness of many within the church today that blocks the revival God is seeking to send once more to the church.

Part One: Revival In The Bible

In our attempt to find the correct viewpoint the first place we must turn is to God's Word. The doctrines and opinions of men change every day. Despite our best efforts to gather more scientific data and advance technologies the problems that plague the human heart remained unsolved. We are constantly trying to find something in which we can put our faith in, but these things often let us down much quicker than they hold us up.

We must realize that in the midst of everyone's changing sentiments there remains something constant. The Bible has been, and will always be, the baseline from which all change can be measured. Jesus vouched for the authority of the Scriptures (Matt 5:18). And when things seem to be at their worst and most chaotic, we have to turn back to the truth of God's Word. Through a solid reading of his Word (and subsequent study and preaching) we can see true revival.¹ Ultimately, it is this that will bring the hearts of men back to their Creator. Paul commended the Thessalonians who "received the word of God, which you heard from us, [and] accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers."² (1 Th 2:13) The same is desperately needed of us today.

I think that part of our turning away from religious revival is our neglect to appreciate its biblical foundation, particularly in the Old Testament. Too often we chalk up such meetings as charismatic and emotional. Revivals today are seen as a ploy of the modern church to gain new members and eventually new money. Or people see them as outreach events that are designed to draw in tremendous numbers of people and boost the church's popularity. Again, whether or not this is the case (I pray it is not) matters little to the outside world, or even those who are nominally Christian, because that is how they see it. Obviously, such a structure is not biblical and should not be accepted by anyone. However, most revivals that are

based in God's Word and prayer, are not this way. It should come as no surprise, but to gain a biblical understanding of revival we must open up the Bible! Let's get started.

Table 1. – Examples of Biblical Revival in the Old and New Testaments.³

| Scripture | Date | Location | Leader | People Group |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Deu. 30:1-10 | 1462 B.C. | Mt. Sinai | Moses | Israel |
| 1 Sam. 7 | 1074 B.C. | Mizpah | Samuel | Israel |
| 2 Chron. 19 | 870 B.C. | Judah | Jehoshaphat | Judah |
| Jon. 3:1-10 | 767 B.C. | Nineveh | Jonah | Gentiles |
| Ezra 10:1-15 | 458 B.C. | Jerusalem | Ezra | Returned Exiles |
| Luke 3:1-17 | 26 A.D. | Jordan River | John the Bapt. | Jews |
| Luke 4:14-15 | 27 A.D. | Galilee | Jesus | Jews |
| Acts 2:14-41 | 30 A.D. | Pentecost | Peter | Jews |
| Acts 8:4-8 | 31 A.D. | Samaria | Phillip | Gentiles |
| Acts 13-28 | 48-57 A.D. | Mediterranean/Europe | Paul | Everyone |

Obviously, there is no shortage of such examples in the Bible. For brevity, this book will focus on the key revivals in the Old Testament, the ministry of Jesus, and his Apostles in the book of Acts.

Revival in the Old Testament

First, I feel it is important to describe what we should be looking for as “revival” in the Bible. The modern concept of revival involves large meetings of individuals, most of whom are from the church, who come together to hear God’s Word spoken by a preacher or evangelist and then are given an opportunity to respond. In recent years the use of the word revival has also included large evangelistic meetings intended to present the Gospel message. So, for our purposes of looking at revival in the Old Testament, we will look at those times where a prophet goes to a group of people and gives them God’s message and encourages them to repent, which is also a central part of modern revivals.

*REVIVALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ARE THOSE TIMES
WHERE A PROPHET GOES TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE AND
GIVES THEM GOD’S MESSAGE AND ENCOURAGES THEM TO
REPENT.*

Obviously, there is no shortage of such examples in the Old Testament. For the purposes of time, I would like to focus on the three primary instances. These samples carry the same themes and messages as many of the other cases found throughout the Old Testament. As mentioned, repentance and an emphasis on the attitude and behavior of the listeners plays a large role in the revivals of the Old Testament. In his book, *Return to Me*, Mark Boda discusses how repentance in the Old Testament serves several purposes. At times, repentance causes the disciplinary hand of God to cease, and elsewhere it causes the people to experience the full blessings of the land. It can also cause the surrounding nations to be drawn to Yahweh as they see the forgiveness he offers to Israel.⁴ Each of these will take place in the following stories of Revival in the Old Testament.

Chapter One: Revival Under Moses (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

Most of us know the story of the 40 years of wilderness wandering that the Israelites endured after their lack of faith. However, there are many applications for our own lives that we ignore. These are simple principles that God wished to teach his people during this time. Moses sums up all that the people of Israel need to know in his farewell address. If ever there was a time of revival it was now. The people were in a similar position as the fathers. Would they display the same level of disbelief or would they step out in faith? Moses' message to them was straightforward and basic. He set before them two options: blessings or curses. Two choices: life or death.

We have all lived long enough to see both the blessing and the curse. There is not a person alive today that has not had moments of happiness—however brief—and moments of pain—however long. The question most people have is this: *Is God the cause of the blessing and the curse?* Is he to blame for the curse just as much as he is to praise for the blessing? Moses knew these people would have the same question. And he gave them the answer.

Notice first he said, “when all these things come upon you...” (Deu 30:1) It was not a question of if but *when*. And you can be sure that the blessings of the Lord will catch up to you if you are faithful. In the same way, the curse will catch up to you if you disobey. This is important to remember, especially in a culture, and at a time, where everyone thinks they can get away with everything. Recompense and reward should both be stressed from the pulpit.⁵ The reality of a just God who will make a just **judgement** must be emphasized. God does not play games (Gal 6:7). And there will be a time for all of us—due to our fallen, broken, sinful nature—when the rains Jesus spoke of will come upon us (Matt 7:24-27).

I have found that most of these “storms of life” often come unexpectedly. I live in the Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia. We are too far inland to receive much destruction from hurricanes. The mountains protect us from most tornadoes. I do not remember every being affected by an earthquake. So, needless to say, the threat of a natural disaster is not on my mind as much as it might be for someone who lives near the ocean or on a fault-line. However, when I was young there happened to be a large tornado that formed in a town not far from where I lived. And I remember driving through that town even years after, and you could see the scars from where that tornado had ravaged the land. Part of the reason why it was so catastrophic was because it was unexpected.

Moses was trying to stop something similar from happening to the people of Israel. He was encouraging them to prepare. If a storm comes, we prepare physically. Likewise, we should prepare for the storms that come spiritually. We must be ready for when these things come upon us.

Then Moses says clearly “which I [God] have set before you” (Deu 30:1). Both the blessing and the curse. Some people might think that this shows the cruelty of God. But I believe it shows the **sovereignty and power of God**. He does not just use the good things in life to draw us to himself. He is able to help us in the deepest, darkest moments of our lives, if we will let him (Rom 8:28).

Next, he says we must “call them to mind”. And this is something few people do. They do not think about how God is at work in their lives. They go day-to-day thinking that they are in control of their own circumstances. And it is often when we develop this type of mindset that God will drive us out to a desolate place, as he did the people of Israel. There is an abundance of examples—both in the Bible and modern history—where people turn to God as a last resort. They are out of options, so they turn to the One they never considered an option in the first place. And

though it would have been far better to never step away in the first place, in his great love God allows us to return to him. Many of us in the church have experienced this firsthand.

I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. (Isaiah 44:22)

The key to returning to God is **repentance** and this involves forsaking one's selfish, sinful ways. Instead, we are to obey the voice of God and his commandments. And to do this wholeheartedly (as Moses said we should) we must give up on the sins we have held onto. The key to returning to God is repentance and this involves forsaking one's selfish, sinful ways; instead, now obeying the voice of God and his commandments.

Obviously, this is not easy, but it is necessary. The reality of possible exile and continual wandering is also seen here. Additionally, elsewhere in the Old Testament narrative it is seen that "[t]he discipline of exile will prompt a remembrance of these covenant principles and motivate them to 'return' and 'obey' Yahweh..."⁶

*REPENTANCE INVOLVES FORSAKING ONE'S SINFUL,
SELFISH WAYS AND INSTEAD OBEYING THE
COMMANDMENTS OF GOD*

From this point the message can be broken up into four sections, or two pairs of conditional promises. First, what God would do. He would restore their fortunes (v.3). And you can be sure that "the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (1 Pet 5:10).

Then it says he will have mercy on us. It is his mercy that gives us hope. Hope in life (1 Tim 1:16). Hope in death. Hope after death. And hope for salvation (Tit 3:5).

Next, it says he will gather you (v.4). And in recent years we have had the opportunity to watch as the nation of Israel has been reestablished and God has kept his promises. But God's promise to gather his people does not stop with the people of Israel it extends to all who will believe in his Son (John 11:52). It says even if they were in the uttermost parts of the earth, still God would gather them. And it does not matter how far you've run, or how much you've messed up, God's arm is not shortened that he cannot save.

Then it says he will bring you. This carries with it the idea that once God has brought us together, he will place us where we need to be. Now, despite how tempting it might be, it is not you or my place to pick where this place might be. It is easy to say, "God I could do so much more if I was here" or "If only I could do this then..." But we are to simply trust that the Good Shepherd will lead us beside the still waters.

Then it says he will make you prosperous and numerous. Notice, that this is just one small part of the plan that God has for us. Too many people get caught up in this and they think that all God is good for is to make them rich and happy. However, he is not some comic genie that you can just go to in order to get more money or more of whatever you want. And he should not be portrayed as such in the church.

And the final thing Moses says here is that God will "circumcise your heart" (v. 6). It is no coincidence that the passage is symmetrically centered around the idea of the people having a pure heart.⁷ The implication made by the language the Moses uses is that the use of the mind, or intellect, is important in knowing God.⁸ In

other words, it is God who makes it possible for you to lay aside your stubbornness and listen to him (Deu 10:16). When God does this, he will not stop with you. He can even take the lives of you family and friends and convict those who you'd never imagine would be open to him.

But then the tone of the passage changes, Moses says “so that you...” (v. 6b) God does not dispel these blessings so that we can just hold on to them. We are under certain obligations as Christians. Moses said they were to “love the Lord your God...” And you will not get far in the Christian life without a genuine **love for God**. Do you really love God? I know we say we love God, but love does not live in the mouth, but the heart.

Our love is so divided today. People say they love their job (at least a few do), or they love their sports team, or even their church. But how many of us love God and can leave it at that? I mean love him so much that we would be willing to do anything for him. Sacrifice is an essential component of love.

And once you begin to love God, it is then that you are able to truly live. I know that everyone reading this is alive (some of you maybe near asleep but that is a different matter) but physical life and spiritual life are two different things. The Bible does not indicate that all there is to life is to mope around and drag yourself from home to work, or school, and back home. Yet, that is the life many live.

There is **new life** that come to you on this very day. And there is also the promise of eternal life to come in Heaven for those of us who love God.

At this point it goes back to God, and he will put the curse that we once were under on our enemies (v. 7). Now, I do not mean your neighbor or your in-laws, but your true Enemy. And the curse that Satan is under should serve as a reminder to all of us to obey God and keep his commandments. Then God will bless the work of

our hands—but we must make sure we are working so that there is something for him to bless!

And then God will delight in us. How great is that? That the One who created us can actually look upon us and be pleased with his creation! This can happen to you when you “obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

MOSES EMPHASIZED:

- The Reality of Judgment
- The Sovereignty and Power of God
- The Need for Repentance
- The Promise of God’s Mercy

MOSES KEY TO REVIVAL:

There is a “formula” of sorts to revival. Repentance leads to forgiveness. Just as the new life leads to a new love for God and his people.

Chapter Two: Revival Under Jonah (Jonah 3:1-10)

The story of Jonah is also well-known by most Christians today. Indeed, even some in the secular world have heard this great tale and marveled at its miracles and intense plot line. But this book is more than a story and it records the events of history accurately and faithfully. Jesus attested to the legitimacy of the story of Jonah (Matt 12:39-40), and if he believed it, then so must his Church.

Historically, there is recorded a great religious revival in the city of Nineveh outside of the biblical testimony. Harold Willmington explains: “It is known that about this time there was a religious movement in Nineveh, which resulted in a change from the worship of many gods to that of one God, whom they called Nebo.”⁹ He goes on to describe how this change to monotheistic religion was likely caused by the preaching of the prophet Jonah. Willmington states that Jonah “did not preach repentance to the Ninevites in the name of Yahweh (the Hebrew God of the Covenant), but in the name of Elohim (the triune Creator of the universe; Gen 1:1).”¹⁰ This explains the historical evidence of Nineveh’s repentance and allows modern readers to trust that the Bible’s representation of history is correct, and moreover, beneficial to us today. In its four brief chapters the book of Jonah outlines a story of God’s command, his judgement, and his compassion and grace.

The record of the Bible and ancient history clearly determine that the people of Nineveh were extremely **wicked**. The city itself was founded long ago—around 2350 B.C.—by the ancient king Nimrod and had now grown to cover a vast area, over a three day’s journey in diameter (cf. Gen 10:8-12).¹¹ It was a hub of commerce and trade for the Assyrian Kingdom. It would eventually become the capital of the empire before its subsequent collapse around 612-609 BC.

The people of the city were ruthless. They were known for their ability to torture and murder.¹² So then, it should come as no surprise that Jonah, out of fear

or anger, was hesitant to go to Nineveh to preach to them. And so, he fled the call of God, going in the opposite direction to try to get away from the mission placed on his life. What a comfort it should be to ministers today that no matter their past decisions, even if they have deliberately turned their back on God's command, he can still use them to accomplish his task.

Because, as it were, God gave Jonah a second chance. After he had brought him to the shores of Nineveh (not by boat, but by fish) God's speaks to Jonah a second time. From this it can be seen that an important principle is that the spoken **word of the Lord** is what starts any true revival.¹³ Whether it is spoken for the first time, the second time, or the thousandth time, revival is initiated by the word of the Lord and not the word of man. Notice Jonah was to preach "the message that I [God] tell you." (v. 2) Jonah was not to preach the message he wanted to preach. Neither was he to preach the message that the people wanted him to preach. Sadly, each of these in great abundance today. Preachers who are quick to use the pulpit for their own personal agenda or to espouse the popular, trending ideologies of their day.¹⁴ The pulpit is not meant to be another platform for man to speak, but a place where the Holy Spirit of God can speak through man.

*THE PULPIT IS NOT MEANT TO BE ANOTHER PLATFORM
FOR MAN TO SPEAK, BUT A PLACE WHERE THE HOLY
SPIRIT OF GOD CAN SPEAK THROUGH MAN.*

So, Jonah gets up and makes his way to Nineveh. And he does so "according to the word of the Lord" (v. 3). His message was of judgement. It was simply this: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (v. 4). Yet, the people responded. Also, that his message had a **time element** to it. The people had 40 days. Too often preachers neglect the fact that the tolerance of God is only temporary. Thus, people

are under the delusion that they have all the time in the world. They live it up while they can, unaware that they are storing up judgement for themselves on the day when God's righteous anger will be revealed. Yet, God says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man..." (Gen 6:3. KJV). If the Church is to have effective ministers of the gospel, then it must make "the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16).

And it was such a message that caused **belief** in the people. Verse 5 states, "the people of Nineveh believed God." Autrey states that it seems that the entirety of the city now believed the word spoken to them by the prophet Jonah.¹⁵ And now they feel it is necessary to change. They sought the Lord with desperation. They displayed a hopeful trust in the Lord, that Autrey observes was unique among the Gentile nations in the Old Testament.¹⁶

They repented in sackcloth and ashes. Word of the approaching judgement reaches the king, and he issues a command that the people are to do three things. First, he said "let man and beast be covered with sackcloth" (Jon 3:8). Sackcloth was simply a *sign* of repentance. It was uncomfortable and abrasive. But the people would put it on to show outwardly, what they had decided inwardly.

Then, they "call out mightily to God" (Jon. 3:8). This means, of course, *prayer*. Occasionally, the president of the United States has called on the people for a day of prayer. But you don't hear much about it. Very few news outlets will cover it. Very few people will observe it. But there is much to say about the power of united prayer (Matt. 18:19-20; Jam. 5).

Then finally, came the *act* of repentance itself: "Let everyone turn from his evil way..." (Jon 3:8). It is one thing to repent on the outside. But even hypocrites can repent on the outside. That's why Jesus says, when it comes to repentance and faith, it is more important what you do in private, than in public.

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:16-18)

And neither is it enough to pray a prayer and expect repentance. These are good things for a start, but they are not enough by themselves. And so it is, that a sign of repentance, and a prayer of repentance, should be followed by the act of repentance.

A sign of repentance, and a prayer of repentance, should be followed by the act of repentance.

This repentance was done with the hope that somehow, someday God might stop the impending disaster that was before them (v. 9). It is interesting that believers today have a greater hope. For we have Jesus, who is a greater prophet than Jonah. He said, “[t]he men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:41). Moreover, Christians do not have to question and wonder whether or not God will forgive them. They can look at the cross and know, without a shadow of a doubt, that God can forgive them because of what Christ has done.

Because the truth is that, in God’s sight, each person is no different than these Ninevites. To be sure, they may not go around killing and fighting. But, even today, the wickedness of this generation has not escaped God’s sight. Though people

today may be more cultured, they are no less sinful. And as a result, they are in just as much need of revival, and the mercy of God, as the people of Nineveh were.

JONAH EMPHASIZED:

- The Wickedness of the People
- The Word of the Lord
- The Belief of the People
- The Repentance of the People

JONAH'S KEY TO REVIVAL:

Even an exceedingly wicked people can, and will, repent when the word of the Lord is faithfully proclaimed to them.

Chapter Three: Revival Under Ezra (Ezra 10:1-15)

If the revival under Moses' came at a time of decision, then revival under Ezra came at a time of disobedience. It was Ezra that led the second wave of returning Jewish exiles back to the land of Israel. The people had experienced times of fluctuating faith. They had started to rebuild the Temple but—after suffering persecution and opposition—their work was suddenly halted. Along came such prophets as Haggai and Zechariah who encouraged the people to continue their restoration efforts. Eventually, the people were able to celebrate the Passover in the Promised Land after many years.

Ezra was thrust into this position to teach a ready people about the Word of God. Ezra was a scribe, skilled in the word of God, and specifically chosen for this task (Ezr. 7:6). The Bible teaches that Ezra was a student of the Law of God. It says he “had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel” (Ezr. 7:10).

Notice first, Ezra *studied*. Revival is founded in a careful study of God's Word. To think on the acts of the Lord is one of the greatest blessings of the Christian. In fact, “Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them” (Psa. 111:2). Berding comments that “[i]f we are going to have a revival of the Bible, one area we need to address is how to understand it when we actually do read it.”¹⁷

Next, Ezra was careful to *do* the Lord's Law. It is no secret that much gets lost from the head to the hand. Ezra did not allow this to happen to him. He was not like the hypocrites Jesus spoke of when he said, “do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do” (Matt. 23:3). True revival will never get far unless it is initiated in the faithful actions of its leaders.

*TRUE REVIVAL WILL NEVER GET FAR UNLESS IT IS
INITIATED IN THE FAITHFUL ACTIONS OF ITS LEADERS.*

Finally, Ezra was able to *teach* the people of God about the Law of God. There is no shortage of people trying to teach others about God. Every religion has their own kind of evangelism, each one trying to win more members to its cause. What sets the Christian preacher apart is his willingness in “declaring...the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). He must not pick and choose the portions of the text he preaches on, as is popular in many heretical sects.

Before Ezra began his return journey, he called for a time of fasting and prayer. He did so in order that he and his people might humble themselves before God (Ezr. 8:21). Revival starts with *humbleness*. And if it starts with it, then a humble spirit should not be far from revival at any time. One of the quickest ways for ministries to derail—especially larger ministries—is through the pride of a leader. Pride puts ministries in opposition to God and to his people. If one were to think that pride and self-centeredness endear them to the common man, then they would be sorely mistaken. People will follow a humble leader far quicker, and far longer, than they will a prideful one.

*Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might
humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for
ourselves, our children, and all our goods. (Ezra 8:21)*

And so, Ezra gets ready to preach to the people. He is aware of their problems. He knows their sin. And they are ready to listen. There is displayed a genuine desire within the people to hear and learn the Word of God.¹⁸ Though, they have abused the opportunity of returning to their homeland to intermarry with the foreigners who were displaced in the land, they are now prepared to follow the Lord.

Of course, the foreign people of the pagan cultures brought with them their own gods and religious ideologies. And so, it might be on the part of revival to call the people once again to a pure, untainted faith.

Now comes the crucial moment in Ezra chapter 10. After praying and confessing his sin, and the people's sin, Ezra is found weeping and mourning in the house of the Lord. Therefore, it is not always great excitement and enthusiasm that was the catalyst that sparked revival. The passage reads "a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly" (Ezr. 10:1). To be sure, there is great excitement in the church today. There is a great deal of hand-raising, joyous singing, and confident proclamation in the modern church. And so, many people go to church for the boost it gives them. They get by week- to-week off of the spiritual support they receive on Sunday morning. Perhaps, in the midst of the halleluiahs and amens the modern Church has lost the *brokenness* that accompanies true and genuine repentance. The church today could do well with a little less shouting and a little more weeping.

*PERHAPS, IN THE MIDST OF THE HALLELUIAHS AND
AMENS THE MODERN CHURCH HAS LOST THE
BROKENNESS THAT ACCOMPANIES TRUE AND GENUINE
REPENTANCE.*

And so, the people admit their failings. "We have broken faith with our God..." (v. 2) they say. And the Israelites go on to say, "but even now there is *hope* for Israel in spite of this" (v. 2, emphasis mine). The gospel presentation that stops at the sinfulness of man is not sufficient. The grace of God must always be emphasized. Revival offers the hopeless help and the helpless hope. It is interesting to note that it was only after the people wept bitterly and admitted their own

shortcomings that they were able to affirm the hope that remained in God. False hope is abundant and prevalent today. And it is a real problem. False hope comes from telling people they can make it on their own. That their own schemes, and adherence to certain principles are enough to save them. The problem with such teaching is that it appeals to the pridefulness of men and, more frankly, it is quite unbiblical. The psalmist puts it this way: “The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue” (Ps. 33:17).

Finally, they make a *commitment* to follow the Lord. Verse 3 starts with “Therefore let us make a covenant with our God...” Covenants or oaths in the Old Testament were used to affirm one’s commitment to a certain set of principles or guidelines. If one were to take an oath, then they were expected to keep it no matter what. Saul was prepared to kill his own son after he made a rash vow (1 Sam. 14).

So, by making this promise these men were binding themselves in no small way. They were expected to stand by what they had said (Lev. 19:12). They agree to send away their foreign wives, the words used here are not describing divorce, but more of a pejorative context.¹⁹ Additionally, the people reinstituted the practice of the Sabbath and observed the feasts and celebrations of the Lord.²⁰

EZRA EMPHASIZED:

- The Need of the Leader to Study, Do, and Teach
- The Humbleness of the People
- The Brokenness of the People
- The Hope of the People
- The Commitment of the People

EZRA’S KEY TO REVIVAL:

Ezra showed how a leader must diligently analyze the Word of God, address the audience within their context, and allow the Holy Spirit to work.

Revival in the New Testament

Revivals in the New Testament reinforce those found in the Old Testament. They are similar in both style and function. The one distinct and key difference being that the revivals of the New Testament focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ. As a return to Yahweh was at the source of Old Testament revivals, a trusting of Jesus as Savior and Lord is vital to the subsequent revivals in the New Testament.

To say that, at the time of Christ, the Jewish people were in desperate need of revival would be an understatement. They were floundering in 400-years of spiritual silence. Religious legalism had taken over the faith of the nation. Race issues were prevalent. The Jews hated the Samaritans. The Samaritans despised the Jews. The Jewish people were also languishing under the oppression of a pagan government. In addition, Gentile people were being excluded from the people of God. There seemed to be no hope on the road ahead (or in the rear-view mirror for that matter).

*WE ARE JUST AS MUCH IN NEED OF A MESSIAH, A SAVIOR,
AS THE PEOPLE OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES WERE.*

And if I didn't know any better, I would say that was a description of modern America. Our issues and problems are no different, thousands of years later. And we are just as much in need of a Messiah, a Savior, as the people of New Testament times were.

Chapter Four: Jesus' Ministry of Revival (Matthew 4:12-17)

To be sure, if God has used revival in the past, then it would certainly be present in the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. After all, if ministers are to follow anyone's example on biblical teaching and preaching should it not be the Son of God himself? Surely, in Him is found the perfect model of how to preach to an erring people, in both attitude and action. He spoke in such a way that the people were forced to make a decision about him. Some said He was the Messiah, the Christ (Jn. 7:40-41). Others could not accept this and tried to make excuses (Jn. 7:41-42). And still others wanted to throw Him in prison for the words he spoke (Jn. 7:44). And preaching today should drive people to the same point of commitment. Either they will accept Him, excuse Him, or try to quiet His message down!

*EITHER THEY WILL ACCEPT HIM, EXCUSE HIM, OR TRY TO
QUIET HIS MESSAGE DOWN!*

As is customary in the life of Christ, the start to His revival did come as one might expect. Perhaps one would think He would burst onto the scene with a fiery sermon, or powerful message. But such was not the case. The Bible has a great deal to say about the early stages of Christ's ministry. And in a rush to jump ahead to what one might mistakenly feel are the more important parts of his ministry, there is the danger of overlooking these simple and foundational principles of revival at the start of His ministry. These values would set the stage for the remainder of his three-year ministry, as they should for Christian ministries today.

First, the Bible says that these things take place "when he heard that John had been arrested..." (Matt. 4:12). John was known for the act of baptizing with water those who were repentant of their sins. This earned him his modernly accepted name, John the Baptist. John's method of ministry contains many

parallels the various prophets and leaders previously mentioned in the Old Testament. And so, this message has remained constant throughout all time.

With this in mind, Jesus begins his own ministry. He does so at *the right time*. He fully understands that the weight of ministry is now squarely upon His capable shoulders. John is no longer able to preach the message, so Jesus picks up right where he left off (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). And so, not only is it necessary that Jesus begin His ministry after John's imprisonment, it is also theologically relevant. He trusts God's perfect timing and knows that his own life is perfectly suspended in God's great plan for this world.

But next, not only did Jesus start his ministry at the right time, He also started it in *the right way*. The Bible says, "he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea..." (Matt. 4:12-13). It is likely that He went down to Capernaum with only a few of his disciples and close family members (Jn 2:12). Notice, Jesus does not take this opportunity to go out, but he first withdraws from outside world. This was done by the directing of the Spirit of God. Luke sums up the start to Christ's ministry this way: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all" (Luke 4:14-15). It is likely that Jesus started His ministry in this area to reconcile the Jewish and Gentiles communities of the region.²¹ Additionally, a constant theme throughout Jesus' ministry is His withdrawal to desolate places to pray, especially after speaking to great crowds of people (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). And this habit had been firmly established in the beginning of His revival ministry.

Verse 14 gives us the purpose for His journey up to Capernaum: "so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled..." Here it is clear that

Jesus acted in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. Matthew is quick to mark the many crucial moments of Jesus' ministry by stating that they were done in order to fulfill the Jewish prophecies (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9). And so, put simply, the model of Jesus' ministry was to fulfill the Old Testament's predictions concerning Him. Being well-versed in the Torah from an early age, Christ knew precisely what to do in his ministry and when to do it.

What does this mean for modern Christian ministers today? Obviously, we are to be as familiar with the Scriptures as possible, in order to make our ministries as effective as possible. This will undoubtedly make the spark of revival closer to igniting in the hearts of the people.

WE ARE TO BE AS FAMILIAR WITH THE SCRIPTURES AS POSSIBLE, IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR MINISTRIES AS EFFECTIVE AS POSSIBLE.

Notice, that the Bible describes the first people to witness the ministry of Jesus as a "people dwelling in darkness" and "those dwelling in the region of the shadow of death." He first met with the hurting and broken. To Him, these were *the right people* to start his ministry with. The outcasts and the rejected. That is not to say, He ministered exclusively to such people, but they did play a critical role in His earthly ministry.

Christian leaders are too often convinced that in order for their burgeoning ministries to succeed they need the backing of the powerful and prosperous. But such is not the case according to the Scriptural evidence. Look at Jesus' word to the seventy-two sent out to expand his ministry:

Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

(Luke 10:3-11)

Jesus instructs his followers to go new towns and cities and to preach a simple message: “The Kingdom of God has come near to you.” And the people who respond to this message are not judged on their merit or social status. Instead, they are marked by their reaction to Christ’s messengers. Were they welcoming? Or did they reject?

The truth is Christian ministers will come across both in any area of ministry. Whenever and wherever the message of the Lord is shared there will be those who accept and those who deny. But they are not to be prejudice with whom they share this all-important gospel. In fact, Christ indicates that when they minister to the least of these, then they are in fact making the most impact for his kingdom.

JESUS EMPHASIZED:

- Revival Starts at The Right Time

- Revival Starts in The Right Way
- Revival Starts to The Right People
- The Need for Personal Prayer
- The Need for Biblical Knowledge

JESUS' KEY TO REVIVAL:

Jesus was completely in step with the perfect plan of God. All we can do is humbly follow His example and ask for His help.

Chapter Five: The Apostle's Ministry of Revival (Acts 2:14-41)

Like Jesus the Apostle's modeled the correct way of ministering to a lost and hurting people. Having learned from their Master the most important truths ever acquired in this sin-cursed world they were prepared to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. The Apostles carried the message of Jesus on after His ascension, preaching about Him and sharing His teaching (Acts 17:18; 20:35). As such, the manner and methods of their teaching and religious meetings were closely related to those of Christ himself. Both Paul and Peter would travel into the synagogues in order to teach the people, as did Jesus (see Luke 4:16 and Acts 17:2). Thus, we see that the apostles had a pattern, a prototype, that they implemented into their ministry.

Central to the message of the Apostles, as has been seen in the Old Testament prophets, is an emphasis on the need for the people of Israel to *repent* in order to accept the message of God. But, one of the key themes in Acts is that repentance is offered to all people, not just Israelites. Boda remarks that the theme of repentance in the New Testament is flowing out of the prominence that was placed on it in the Old Testament. He states, "Repentance is thus the key response required of the community, one associated with confession of sin, behavioural change and baptism. Repentance signals the inbreaking of the kingdom, which results in forgiveness of sin and an approaching baptism with the Holy Spirit."²² It is this that prompts Peter to tell his audience on the day of Pentecost to "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) Boda goes on to say, "The New Testament continues the same emphasis on repentance that runs like a scarlet thread through the entire Old Testament. The climactic redemptive-historical events of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension did not bring an end to the message of repentance but highlighted its necessity."²³

In a similar way Nave observes that “In Luke-Acts the universal saving purpose of God is the plan of God, repentance must also be understood as part of that plan. Repentance is commanded of all people because repentance is that which secures the salvation of God in the lives of all people.”²⁴ With this understanding of repentance it is clearly seen why the Apostles highlighted it in preaching.

*THE OBTAINABILITY OF REPENTANCE WAS OPENED TO ALL
BY THE GRACIOUS LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER.*

The requirement for Holy-Spirit filled repentance was not just for Jewish people, as some scholars and theologians argue. The obtainability of repentance was opened to all by the gracious love of God the Father. To relegate repentance to a singular people group is a grave mistake. As is, saying that repentance finds its root in the actions of man. Repentance is a gift of God given to all people. The Book of Acts records the Church at Jerusalem’s response when they heard Peter’s report of his work among the Gentile people:

When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” (Acts 11:18)

This comes, not from the disciple’s interpretation of Jesus’ words, but from the words of Christ Himself (Luke 24:46-47). Similarly, Paul summarizes his ministry as preaching repentance—not just to the Jews—but to the Gentiles also (Acts 26:20). This was the basis for the revival recorded in the Book of Acts, and was the foundation of the early Church movement.

It is worth noting that the Apostles carried on their ministry despite extreme opposition and *persecution*. In fact, the opposition they faced seemed only to

strengthen their resolve and further the effectiveness of their message. The Jewish leaders continued their persecution of the early Christians, with the Roman Empire only compounding the pressure. And so, it clear that the Enemy sees revival just as much as God does. Ravenhill observes in his classic text *Why Revival Tarries* that Paul was known in hell, just as he was known by God.²⁵ The revival work of the Apostle Paul reverberated in the pit of Hell and the Devil was starkly opposed to this ministry of revival. Why? Well, revival draws people away from sinful lifestyles, and points them towards a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. It takes those who are dead in sin and makes them alive in Christ. And so, in Acts, the author, Luke, traces the ministry of a few key leaders, namely Peter, Philip and Paul, to show how revival takes place, first in Jerusalem then to the ends of the earth.

*AND SO, IT CLEAR THAT THE ENEMY SEES REVIVAL JUST
AS MUCH AS GOD DOES.*

The church growth in Acts occurs in distinct stages. First, with the eleven personal disciples of Jesus in the Upper Room, then after Peter's Pentecost Revival in Acts 2 the Church swells to over 3,000 believers. This message perhaps set the foundation for revival in the church for years to come. Swindoll comments on what made this early revival message effective: "Peter's sermon appears very well organized; it was uncomplicated, direct, scriptural, and Christ-centered..."²⁶ The same is needed in the revivals of today. Many sermons and evangelistic campaigns are complicated and complex. Oh, how the Church would benefit if it were to go back to the simple, gospel message.

Then, in Acts 4 the church growth continues with others 5,000 men making decisions for Christ, bringing the total number to over 8,120. Eventually, Luke

begins to lose count and simply records that “multitudes” are brought to Christ after the initial Jerusalem revival.

THE APOSTLES EMPHASIZED:

- Following the Example of Christ
- Repentance is a Gift of God
- Repentance is for All People
- Repentance Brings Persecution.
- The Need for Biblical Knowledge

THE APOSTLES' KEY TO REVIVAL:

The Apostle's saw their revival as the natural continuation of the revival initiated by Jesus and sought to draw all people to faith in Him.

Part Two: Revival In The American Church

Following these biblical examples, the American church has experienced a number of religious revivals throughout its history. From the time of its original founding, until as late as 50 years ago, Christian revival has been a hallmark of this nation. Though these revivals are well-known in Christian circles, a reminder of biblical principles is essential. And so, the following revivals will be explored, and their biblical foundations analyzed.

A Chronological Overview of Revival in American History

In order to better comprehend the depth of American revival it is necessary to summarize the major events that have marked Christian influence in this nation. These revivals are undeniable in their impact and influence on American culture. Each occurred at a significant point in American history and had a defining impression on the social and spiritual behavior of Americans across the country. The most prominent of these revivals will be analyzed and discussed to better appreciate their mark on American culture.

Table 2. – *Critically Labeled “Revivals” in America’s History.*²⁷

| Name | Date | Origin |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| The Great Awakening | 1734-1743 | Northampton, Massachusetts |
| The Second Great Awakening | 1800-1840 | Logan County, Kentucky |
| The Businessmen’s Revival | 1857-1858 | New York City, New York |
| The Civil War Revival | 1861-1865 | Richmond, Virginia |
| The Urban Revivals | 1875-1885 | Chicago, Illinois |
| Welsh Revival | 1905-1906 | Western Pennsylvania |
| The Azusa Street Revival | 1906-1909 | Los Angeles, California |
| Post-World War II Revival | 1947-1950 | Los Angeles, California |
| The Jesus Movement | 1968-1972 | Costa Mesa, California |
| The Promise Keepers Revival | 1991-1997 | Boulder, Colorado |

Chapter Six: The Great Awakening (1734-1743)

Known as the first of America's religious resurgences, the Great Awakening took place in the mid-part of the 18th century. After the ministry of John and George Wesley spread to America in the late 1730's America was ready for a religious emergence. In his preaching Wesley emphasized the need for the individual to place his or her faith in Christ, to share that faith with others, and ultimately with the world.²⁸ Initiated by the fervent preaching of Jonathan Edwards, religious meetings were held with emphasis placed on reaching the lost and convicting the strayed. Edwards and other like-minded preachers of his time focused the responsibility of revival on the act and character of God.²⁹ They saw God as the main Designer and Initiator of revival and change in people's lives, and thus encouraged their hearers to seek him in earnest prayer and supplication.

*THEY SAW GOD AS THE MAIN DESIGNER AND INITIATOR OF
REVIVAL AND CHANGE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES, AND THUS
ENCOURAGED THEIR HEARERS TO SEEK HIM IN EARNEST
PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION.*

Meanwhile preachers such as George Whitefield were also causing significant spiritual shifts. Whitefield was eager to preach in America when given the opportunity and traveled all across the new nation preaching fiery and convincing sermons. He left his own personal agenda out of his preaching and instead focused on the personal difficulties and dilemmas of his listeners. He recalls in one of his journals the endearment with which he and his congregants had: "The poor people were much concerned at my bidding them farewell; and, after I had taken my leave, many came to my lodgings, sorrowing that they were to see my face no more for a

long season.”³⁰ This is reminiscent of Paul’s departure with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:37-28).

*WHITFIELD LEFT HIS OWN PERSONAL AGENDA OUT OF HIS
PREACHING AND INSTEAD FOCUSED ON THE PERSONAL
DIFFICULTIES AND DILEMMAS OF HIS LISTENERS.*

Robert Caldwell asserts that Whitefield and his associates shifted the focus of spiritual renewal onto a fresh view of the gospel and seeing the things of God in a new and unique way. He continues in saying that they emphasized repentance based on a love for God and faith in Christ, as given by God the Father. This would then logically be followed by a life of commitment as the believer experienced the blessings of redemption according to the theological understanding of Whitfield and some of his contemporaries.³¹

Chapter Seven: The Second Great Awakening (1800-1840)

Much like its predecessor, the Second Great Awakening occurred at a time of spiritual apathy and indifference. With church membership and attendance dwindling, revival was sparked in the backwoods of the frontier. John Boles describes how at the turn of the 19th century there appeared another great revival on the horizon. Ignited by fiery sermons in Kentucky, revival spread quickly across the previously luke-warm southern states.³² In similar fashions college campuses began to feel the need for a return to biblical values. The student-led revival at Hampden-Sydney College in central Virginia were the initial sparks of what would become the Second Great Awakening.³³ This would trigger a fundamental reliance upon the Word of God that would last for decades to come. Coupled with the fervent evangelistic teaching of James McGready and Charles Finney church attendance and membership swelled, going from 350,000 to 3,000,000 members.³⁴ This movement would have continual effects on American religious activity, even after the official revival died out. Timothy Smith observes that despite common belief that the religious fervor of this time passed with Finney and his cohorts, the reality was that revivalism was intact leading up to the civil war.³⁵

Chapter Eight: The Urban Revivals (1875-1885)

Coming out of the Civil War and with the religious reappearance of the last 25 years, now quelled and turned to spiritual indifference, another of America's great revival was on its way. America was now infiltrated with poisonous ideologies of evolution and the authority of the Bible was being challenged in scholarly circles.³⁶ Into such a scene, came the effective preaching of Dwight L. Moody. He would remain committed to the truths of God's Word despite growing opposition and mockery.

However, at this time a distinction between man-made and God-sent revival was forming. Less emphasis was placed on the outpouring of the Spirit in bringing about revival, and more attention was placed on the people's response to the message of God, as it was expressed through the biblical narrative.³⁷ Additionally, American Christianity was becoming increasingly controlled by the American economic system. Cooper argues that by the time of American evangelist Billy Sunday in the early 1900s, revival had lost much of its original meaning and was now seen as full-blown entertainment and nothing more.³⁸ However, it is worthy to note that these revivals were not completely void of biblical teaching. At this time a significant emphasis was placed on the imminent return of Christ and the need of the believer live a holy and worthy life. This would be a continuing theme in revivals throughout the mid-to-late 1800s.³⁹ Thus, they did reflect many biblical principles, though they did seem to be starting to adapt to America's market-driven lifestyle.

Table 3. – *Prominent Evangelists in American Revivals.*

| Name | Main Revival |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) | First Great Awakening |

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| George Whitfield (1714-1770) | First Great Awakening |
| Charles Finney (1792-1875) | Second Great Awakening |
| Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) | Great Chicago Revival |
| Billy Sunday (1862-1935) | Boston Crusade |
| Billy Graham (1918-2018) | Los Angeles Crusade |
| Jerry Falwell (1933-2007) | Moral Majority |

Chapter Nine: Revival in the 1900s

Revival in the 20th century imitated its preceding counterparts in many ways. The theatrical preaching of Billy Sunday drew abundant crowds with more than 100,000,000 people hearing his sermons and approximate 1,000,000 or more conversions.⁴⁰ Various religious organizations, such as Youth for Christ and Campus Crusade were initiated with an emphasis placed intentional evangelism and personal recommitment. Billy Graham began his distinguished and extensive ministry in the early part of 1949 at the Los Angeles Crusade. Each of these religious emergences caused significant impact on the lives of individuals inside and outside of the American Church. Additionally, each of these newly found Christian organizations remained truly committed to biblical guidance. They sought to change the hearts and minds of the American populace by informing them of the gospel message found in God's Word and called the people to live a life of personal commitment to Him.

Sociological Components to American Revival

After reviewing the chronological order of revival, it becomes clear that there were various social and political occurrences that are inseparable from religious revival in America. From the onset of its creation America has been committed to religious freedom and practice. Despite facing numerous times of war and social turbulence, Americans have consistently returned to Christian values. These movements are often sparked in direct opposition to the social and civil issues of the day, and they have encouraged a return to biblical teaching and authority.

Chapter Ten: America's Founding and Religious Freedom

The religious heritage of America's founding is undeniable. In an attempt to seek liberty from the oppressive and oftentimes demanding England religious system, many pilgrims fled to the New World in order to faithfully practice Christianity. These pilgrims saw their escape from the Church of England as a sort of Exodus experience. David Gelernter remarks on the theology of the Pilgrim father William Bradford saying, "Bradford's comparison between Puritans and ancient Israel is central to the American revolution and the emergence of the new nation. Americans saw themselves as Israelites throwing off a tyrant's yoke."⁴¹ This idea of America following the biblical example of a godly nation would play a key role in the developmental stages of its government's creation.

Though some have sought to undermine America's religious beginning, it is historically evident that it was established in Judeo-Christian values that would affect the trajectory of the nation's existence. Mike Lee comments on this in his book *Our Lost Constitution*. He observes that far from detaching God in social and political gatherings, the Founding Fathers placed paramount importance on religious activity. Lee remarks that national leaders often would call the nation to times of prayer, modeling this emphasis by praying at the onset of many of the meetings. God was placed on the center of currency and federal buildings. Additionally, the Founding Fathers saw it as the purpose and design of every nation to submit to the will of God and seek him in prayer.⁴²

And so, even from the founding documents it is clear that the early American's favored religious liberty and protection. Article III of the *Articles of Confederation* reads:

The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their

*liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.*⁴³

Thus, the Founding Fathers of America felt they had an obligation to uphold God's ordained plan for political entities. They saw America's creation as an important and necessary response to ungodly and unbiblical leadership. The *Federalist Papers* state:

*The first question is answered at once by recurring to the absolute necessity of the case; to the great principle of self-preservation; to the transcendent law of nature and of nature's God, which declares that the safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim, and to which all such institutions must be sacrificed.*⁴⁴

Therefore, from America's first and fundamental documents the adherence to biblical principles is evident. This testifies to the larger historical narrative that because of its Christian tradition and heritage, America was primed for revival from its founding.

Chapter Eleven: War and Civil Unrest as a Catalyst for Revival

Another crucial factor in the expansion of religious revival in America involved various times global and domestic conflict. Particularly, at the onset of the Civil War the call for religious devotion remained blatant. Timothy Smith references this time saying, “the cutting edge of American Christianity after 1850 was the revival, adopted and promoted in one form or another by major segments of all denominations. One writer declared on the eve of the Civil War that the most characteristic feature of the religious history of the century was the increasing recognition, cultivation, and expectations of revivals.”⁴⁵ This would have important implications as the Civil War grew into a national divergence that swept the nation. Gelenter concludes that both Union and Confederate armies felt a great degree of religious obedience. He states that in an attempt to lead the nation through such a political and religious crisis president Abraham Lincoln relied on the Bible for guidance: “Lincoln turned to the Bible more and more frequently and fervently as the war progressed. His heterodox but profound Christianity showed him how to understand the war as a fight to redeem America’s promise to mankind.”⁴⁶

In a similar way, both of the World Wars sparked a return to Christian values and beliefs. This occurred particularly in those witnessing the horrors of war firsthand and forced to deal with the reality of death and the life after. Such atrocities caused Americans across the country to consider their eternal fate and current obedience to God’s Word. Jack Brymer comments on this time of American history:

In the aftermath of World War II, America seemed to be searching for spiritual restoration and reclamation. At the same time, the nation was putting its young people in the spotlight, perhaps out of a sense of gratitude to those who had fought and died in the war. The eagerness

of youth for religious fulfillment and pervading spirit of public interest in young people led to what was called the youth revival movement.⁴⁷

This movement would continue to have national repercussions and will be discussed more in detail later.

Another irrefutable contributor to the resurgence of American revival were the significant social movements of history. The Civil Rights Movement of 1954, led by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the nation to countrywide repentance and obedience. This movement was unquestionably religious in its origin. Fredrick Sunnemark quotes a close friend and associate of Dr. King as saying, “[t]he basis of Martin Luther King’s ministry and mission was the ethics and morality of the Crucified Carpenter from Galilee...[F]irst and foremost he was an unapologetic proclaimer of the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁴⁸ Like Dr. King’s ministry, the Women’s Suffrage Movement (1848-1920) and America’s Industrial Revolutions (1876-1900) were both preceded and followed by noteworthy religious revival.⁴⁹ In a similar way, the well-known YMCA (1851) was initially started to share the Christian faith with young men, by relating Christian ideals to their everyday lives.⁵⁰

Chapter Twelve: Youth Movements Leading to Widespread Revival

As previously mentioned the influence of youth on American religious behavior is clearly distinct. Most current research suggests that 85 percent conversions take place before age 30, and the majority of those before the age 25.⁵¹ In the First Great Awakening George Whitefield began his public ministry at the very young age of 21 and would spur the youth of the New England area to religious interest.⁵² Prior to the Second Great Awakening, students met at Yale College in order to pray and study Scripture. This group would continually grow with over half of the student body becoming members. This would have a substantial impact on the revivals of the next few years and create an atmosphere within the American culture that was suitable for revival.⁵³ In addition, the birth of Sunday School in 1780 due to the work of Robert Raikes was a considerable contributor to the emergence of revival in youth of the era.⁵⁴ As of 1835 an estimated 1,500 students made public professions of faith in Christ from 36 colleges across the United States.⁵⁵

These Christian youth movements would continue to be a part of the major revivals of the 20th century. Brymer states that in “the mid-to late 1940s, Christian youth emphases sprang to the fore around the country, particularly among evangelicals. In Chicago, Billy Graham, Torrey Johnson, Mel Larson and others led Youth For Christ, a national program.”⁵⁶ Adams describes the Youth for Christ Movement: “a grassroots movement with a youth rally as the rudder. Initially, there was no structure, no headquarters, just powerful personalities who rallied thousands of teenagers.”⁵⁷ This outreach program would lay the preliminary foundation for Reverend Graham’s worldwide ministry. In addition, this transformational youth movement of the 1940s would have sweeping effects on many Christian organizations today. Many ministries are the direct result of these

youth movements: summer missions, camp programs, and college campus ministries.⁵⁸

Table 4. – Revivals in Youth Culture.⁵⁹

| Movement | Influential Leaders | Effect |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| The Great Awakening | George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards | Whitefield began his ministry at age 21, while Edwards crowds primarily consisted of young people. |
| The 1857 Revival | Dwight Moody, C.T. Studd | In 1858 Moody started an outreach for young people, Studd was one of his students. |
| College Revival | Yale College | Students at Yale College began prayer meetings and Bible studies. |
| Youth Revival Movement | Youth For Christ | The Youth For Christ movement started revival among America's youth |

Chapter Thirteen: Biblical Availability and Authority

The obtainability of the Scriptures has recurrently affected the willingness of God's people to partake in revival. Robert Aiken was instrumental in making the Bible readily available through print to the people of the Colonial Period. His Bible produced in 1782 was the only Bible ever officially authorized by the United States government.⁶⁰ Jeffcoat comments on Aitken's desire to see the Bible placed in the hands of the American people: "He was commended by President George Washington for providing Americans with Bibles during the embargo of imported English goods due to the Revolutionary War."⁶¹ By providing Bibles to the average American, Aitken influenced the course of American religious thought for years to come.

Additionally, the various biblical translations that were produced throughout American history carried crucial weight in revival history. The American Standard Version, the first American translation after the King James Version, was published in 1901.⁶² This narrowly preceded the revivals of 1905-1905 and the effective revival ministry of Billy Sunday. The Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s initiated the N.I.V. translation.⁶³ Similarly, the E.S.V was produced in 2002 to create a more accessible translation that remained true to a word-for-word version. This took place at a time of national crisis in the hopes that the American people would return to the teaching of the Lord.

To go alongside with the availability of the Bible, the authority of the Bible has also been a vital factor in revival history. Perhaps the greatest example of this was the Moral Majority founded by pastor and evangelist Dr. Jerry Falwell. The Moral Majority originated in 1979 in response to the cultural regression of the time.⁶⁴ The defining marker of the Moral Majority was a return to biblical principles and conservative values. This call to dependance upon the Bible as the source of

truth and authority in the lives of people caused nationwide modifications with an almost instantaneous effect on the American political landscape, causing the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.⁶⁵

Part Three: A Modern Application for Revival Today

With the biblical and historical basis of revival established, this thesis will briefly construct a suggested response for the American church today. The fundamental question is: should revival today be any different? Generally speaking, many within the modern church have adopted the belief that mass-evangelism events are going extinct. Therefore, any attempt to create a modern application is purposeless.

Still others might suggest that there is no need to produce an outline for revival? Afterall, if the Holy Spirit wishes to send revival, he will work it out. And it is certainly true that no revival will take place without the Spirit of God, however, just as He worked through the earthly plans of Paul and the other early ministries, so it should be the hope ministers today that He can use our plans for his purposes.

Chapter Fourteen: Pray

Genuine revival will never get far apart from the prayers of the people. In fact, no revival will even get off the ground unless it is based firmly in prayer. Frank Damazio sees prayer as the essential starting point to a plentiful harvest in revival: “Revival means understanding that now is the time to seek God and that we are the people. Only God can send rain, and we should seek God until He rains upon us. We can prepare for the rain—plow the ground and ask—but only God can revive his people.”⁶⁶ Therefore, the first, and most important, step in the revival process is prayer. Of all the great revivals of history, prayer played a central role. Individuals, churches, and communities should be in constant prayer for revival. Local churches can be encouraged to gather together in order to mutually pray for revival. Additionally, it would be helpful to develop dedicated prayer teams that will lift up the lost family and friends of those in the church in prayer.

Chapter Fifteen: Prepare

Secondly, there is undoubtedly preparation that needs to be made for any revival. A natural part of holding any large event in a public place is to prepare those individuals who will be working. This involves practical training for everyone involved. The logistical organization of things such as building, staff, and advertising should be discussed. Ravenhill observes that it is at this stage that many churches lose focus. He attributes the lack of revival to several causes including the diluting of the gospel message and lack of prayer. But he also indicates that selfish behavior on the part of the members and church body can delay revival.⁶⁷ In order to combat this self-centered focus, it would be beneficial for churches to hold evangelism and outreach classes that will practically train their members in engaging with the community. Moreover, church leaders and staff should be adequately prepared with those people who might come to an evangelism event, but not a church service. Finally, volunteers should be recruited to assist in the practical aspects of a coming revival.

Chapter Sixteen: Persuade

In this step the congregants of a particular church begin to actively invite people to the revival. This means encouraging them to “come and see” Jesus. Obviously, this is no small task in a post-modern world. But biblically minded Christians are the best prepared to take the message of God to a dying world and initiate revival. Kenneth Berding states that “God never intended that you merely read the Bible on your own, hold it in your heart, and develop a personal relationship with God through it...God intends that his message be communicated from one person to another— yes, until it overtakes the world!”⁶⁸ This involves being apologetically aware of the current issues facing the secular world. In their book, *The Last Christian Generation* Josh McDowell and David Bellis discuss how to engage with a culture that has lost its grip on absolute truth. They encourage the reader to stand on the legitimacy and sufficiency of Christianity:

But Christianity isn't a mere religion, and it's not simple based upon various teaching. Christianity is based on the life, character, and identity, of a person—Jesus Christ. Christ did not come to earth to teach Christianity—Christ is Christianity. That is what makes Christianity unique. It is a personal relationship with the personal creator God. Most religions of the world are based on philosophical propositions or theological ideologies. Remove its founding prophet or guru and that religion remains essentially intact. That is because these religions are based on teachings, not upon the founding teacher.⁶⁹

McDowell and Dellis go on to observe that the outside world is not committed to Christ as the only way to Heaven: “We have an entire generation that believes that the power of faith is in faith alone. They think the sincerity and intensity of the one

believing is what counts. When in fact, the power of our belief rests not in us but in the power of the One in whom we place our trust.”⁷⁰ And so, with the appropriate worldview in place Christians across America can become better prepared to interact with a lost world.

Chapter Seventeen: Preach

Of course, at some point in the revival comes the actual preaching. It is worth noting that there is a wide variety of methods and means in Christian preaching. There is however comfort to be found in that not all of the leaders of past revivals preached exactly the same way, neither did the biblical prophets and apostles. The most important aspect of the preaching is Holy Spirit commitment on the part of the preacher. Johannes Wessels observes that “[a]lthough there have been big differences in hermeneutics and the interpretation of the Scripture...the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation and preaching has always remained very prominent in reformed, evangelical and Pentecostal circles.”⁷¹ And as such, the preacher’s main purpose should be to not stifle the Spirit. Obviously, messages should focus on aspects such as converting the lost, convicting those who have strayed and encouraging them to renew their commitment to Christ, and also celebrating with those who have been walking in faith.

Chapter Eighteen: Pursue

A revival that lasts a week or a weekend is pointless unless it changes individual lives. Coming to the altar really does nothing unless one gets up and lives each day for Christ. With this in mind, God-sent revivals will not fan-out when the lights are off and the show is over. Those who come forward during the revival in an act of commitment should be instructed to tell someone about their decision, begin to read the Bible (and be given one if necessary), pray every day, and attend one of the churches in the area of their residence. This is where the process of personal discipleship takes precedence. Michael Brodeur states that “We want to see a generation awaken, and I believe the only way this dream will be realized is through life-on-life discipleship.”⁷² This discipleship can start by giving new-Christians follow-up materials that might include a small, practical book on how to live for Christ.

It is important to receive the contact information of any new attenders so that they are not overlooked. Over the following weeks they should receive an email thanking them for their attendance and congratulating them if they made a decision for Christ. Additionally, a follow-up call or email will greatly increase their chances of attending a local church. They can also be directed to a number of online ministries that provide content for new believers.

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