

A Call To Revival!

*God's Church needs revival!
But what IS it—and how do we GET it?*



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Many are familiar with the old hymn, “Revive Us Again.” But what does this mean? Revived to what? How and when are we revived? We hear much talk, often negatively, about “revival”—about “getting right” with God—but through misuse and overuse, this term has become blurred in the minds of most hearers today. To many, a “revival” means an enigmatic, highly emotional religious meeting. Often, the word “revival” conjures up visions of an old-fashioned tent meeting featuring a charismatic, white-jacketed, sweaty-faced, hoarse-throated, foam-flecked evangelist shouting such “filler-words” as “Hallelujah!” “Praise the Lord!” “We’re gonna twist the old devil’s tail tonight!” “Let me hear you say, ‘Amen!’” “Won’t you give your heart to the Lord just now?” And, oh, yes, “Let the ushers with the offering baskets please come forward. Amen and Hallelujah!”

True revival, however, is a biblical concept. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15). In Psalm 85:6-7, the psalmist asks God an interesting question: “Wilt Thou not revive us again; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Show us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation.” To be revived again implies that there had been a revival previously. More about that later.

What Is Revival?

The word “revival” is from the Hebrew word *chayah* and means “to bring back to life,” to “restore to consciousness,” or to “restore to a previous condition.” We might say, “The drowning victim was miraculously revived.” As used in the Bible, it means a restoration, rejuvenation, or renewal of interest after spiritual neglect, oblivion, or obscurity.

What revival is not: Revival, as used in the Bible, is not evangelism, even though many may be revived as a result of it. It is not emotionalism, although there may be emotional manifestations connected to it. What it is: It is the personal renewal to spiritual life in an individual, or among a group of people. It is an “at-one-ment,” a heartfelt return to God and His commandments.

When Is Revival Needed?

Revival is needed whenever the love of God’s people has grown cold. We read in Revelation 3:15-17, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing’; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Consider the symptoms of the need of revival: just as a sick person manifests physical

symptoms, so the need for personal spiritual revival has spiritual symptoms. A few of them are...

- Complacency: self-satisfaction or satisfaction with the status quo. “Seat-warmers” who have a “don’t rock the boat” attitude may well need a spiritual revival.
- Lack of concern for the lost and the suffering in the world (1 Corinthians 10:23). How can we see or read the world news, considering all the suffering in the world, and not be moved by it? If we are not, we definitely need spiritual renewal or revival.
- Hiding or covering secret sins (Numbers 32:23). If we find ourselves covering or excusing our sins, or rationalize, “I will have to change that...*someday*,” we may well need spiritual revival.
- Having an unforgiving spirit (Matthew 6:14-15). Some parrot, “I can forgive, but I can’t forget.” An unforgiving spirit is a strong indication that we need spiritual revival. We are to put on the mind, the views, and the feelings of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). God forgives and forgets sins once we’ve repented of them. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). We need to forgive and then forget what we have forgiven. we-are like beasts when we kill. We are like men when we judge. We are like God when we forgive.
- Being filled with pride (Proverbs 29:23). We are reminded in Proverbs 16: 18 that “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Pride and vanity were the cause of Lucifer’s fall (Ezekiel 28:17). We must beware, lest his attitude is reflected in us. If we find ourselves feeling superior or puffed up, we need the humility of revival.
- Animosity toward other Christians. It is said that we can pick our friends, but we cannot pick our brethren. One sage rightly quipped, “We must also overcome the brethren.” Read and heed Matthew 18:15 to revive that friendship.
- Any condition of spiritual standing where we are *less* than we were before: a “backslidden condition.” We all know the way back to Babylon—it is only two half-steps back to our old ways and habits of life. If you feel yourself slipping, YOU need spiritual revival!

All of these symptoms are strong indications that we need to draw closer to God and His Word.

Hidden Dangers in Our Need for Revival

We are reminded in 2 Corinthians 4:16 that “though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is *renewed* [revived] *day by day*.” We are warned in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Quench not the Spirit.” There are basically *two* ways to quench God’s Spirit: 1) We can deliberately rebel and say, in effect, “God, I do not want what you have to offer. I am going to do things my way; or, 2) We can allow God’s Spirit to dwindle and “starve” to death by lack of renewal or replenishment. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee,” Paul warned, “which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Timothy 4:14). Often, spiritual deterioration comes slowly and insidiously, without our awareness. Because there are seldom any physical symptoms, we grow weaker and weaker inside—spiritually—and an unsuspected trial or circumstance can easily “take us out.” Samson, for

example, had the Spirit of God upon him (Judges 14:6,19), but he played around with sin—and was found wanting. At one point the disciples had received power from Jesus Christ to heal and cast out demons (Matthew 10:5-8). Yet later, they seem to have lost their ability to cast out a certain demon and did not understand why. Jesus told them that it was because of their unbelief (Matthew 17:19-20)—their lack of spiritual renewal. Peter *thought* he was strong until times got tough, and with cursings he denied the Lord three times (John 13:38). Often the condition of our hearts is such that we are not *aware* of our need at the very time it is most needed. We often cover up our inadequacies with a self-deceptive shroud of self-righteousness.

Know this: Human nature—the flesh—will fight *against* revival. For proof, all we need to do is ask ourselves, “Do I study and pray in ALL my spare time? Or do comfort and cares of the world crowd out that time I could otherwise be spending with God?” It is said that the road to *Gehenna* is paved with good intentions. To have true spiritual revival we must *admit* that we have a need—and take *action*.

What Kind of Revival Do We Need?

We need a renewal or recommitment that will resurrect God’s church collectively to spiritual life. Remember, revival means a renewal, a “return to life,” or spiritual consciousness.

Let us look into God’s Word to see what Jesus Christ says to the churches. Blow the dust off your Bible and turn to the second and third chapters of Revelation, where we see His messages to the seven churches. Elements of all the seven churches of Asia are present with us today! The letters were written to “the churches,” plural, i.e., the people in them. Seven times we are cautioned, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,” collectively.

This is important. Read this TWICE: Read over the messages to the seven churches and, in each case, ask yourself, “Is this a word picture of ME?”

What Kind of “Revival” Was Recommended for the Seven Churches in Asia?

As we read over these seven messages, notice that nothing is said or even suggested about “eras,” “ages,” or “dispensations.” It is speculated by some that the seven letters to the seven churches of Revelation are an outline of seven dispensations or “ages” or phases of church history. This concept, however, is not taught in Scripture, but is a belief that is read *into* the Bible. Much confusion and many false teachings have resulted due to this theory. The danger of looking for esoteric, mystical, or hidden meanings is that this approach obscures the plain correction to all Christians in all churches all through time. Carried to the extreme, if we were to apply this “church for an era” theory throughout the Bible, we could conceivably make twenty-one additional “church periods” out of all the other New Testament epistles or letters mentioned, as some do these seven letters. We should look into God’s Word for personal correction, not shift the messages off to some other “church era.” Again, we need to ask ourselves, “Are any of these warnings applicable to ME, personally?”

What was Christ’s intention in addressing the seven churches in Revelation 2-3?

Plainly, He strove to wake up, or “revive,” the churches. It is the same message He inspired Jude to write in Jude 3: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

- Jesus rebuked the church at Ephesus for having left its first love (Revelation 2:4).
- He rebuked the church at Smyrna because some of its members tolerated apostate believers among them who were really instruments of Satan (Revelation 2:9).
- He rebuked the church at Pergamos because some of its members held to the doctrine of Balaam, who hired himself out to do religious work for personal gain, and held the false doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:14-15).
- He rebuked the church at Thyatira because some there had listened to and tolerated false preaching, committing spiritual and even physical adultery (Revelation 2:20-21).
- Jesus declared to the church at Sardis, “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Revelation 3:1-3). They were devoid of spiritual life and power. He said, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain” (Revelation 3:1).
- Christ commended members of the church at Philadelphia for their love, but warned them to beware and hold fast that no man take their crown (Revelation 3:11). This strongly implies there would be those who would attempt to overthrow their faith by whatever means.
- Christ called upon members of the church at Laodicea to repent; they thought they had need of nothing (Revelation 3:17). They had a lukewarm, neutral, compromising, or accommodating attitude.

Again, we need to ask ourselves, “Are any of these warnings applicable to ME, personally?”

Notice that the common admonition given to the churches was to overcome, surmount, or triumph over their sins and shortcomings. The same warnings apply to Christians today.

Some folks are members of the church in name only; they are not interested in changing, overcoming, or growing. Others are satisfied with the way things are and see no reason for any change. Still others are too concerned about their own agendas to see that we need to spiritually analyze ourselves. First Corinthians 11:28 is not just for Passover time; it is for all the time. “But let a man examine himself...” “For if we would judge ourselves,” we are reminded in verse 3:1, “we should not be judged.”

In a parable, Christ warned there would be tares, or false grain, among the good wheat. “Let both grow together until the harvest,” Christ said in Matthew 13:30, “and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.’” “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). This common figure is wonderfully expressive. Notice, fruit, not leaves, appearance, or professions are the proper tests of the life that is in the tree. We are to test all men—including ourselves—and every institution by every Word of God (Matthew 4:4). We are further cautioned in Matthew 7:22, “Many [Greek, *polus*, meaning “most”] will

say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).

We need a revival that will rekindle the old fires, the “first love” we had at conversion.

- Do you remember “better days”?
- Days of *dedication* to the Lord and to His work?
- Days when you came to church expecting great things from God—inspiring sermons, warm fellowship, spiritual satisfaction?
- Days when you wouldn’t think of missing church to go to a ball game or some other secular activity?
- When you didn’t look for some excuse for why you couldn’t serve the Lord? What is *your* best excuse? Will Christ accept it?

We need to cry out to God, “Wilt thou revive us again?” “Revive us *again*” means that there have been revivals *before*. God will always forgive as long as we return to Him. The Christian life is made up of “many beginnings.” We fall down—or sin—but keep getting up, striving not to fall in this way again. With this resolve in mind, we should be growing daily stronger and wiser in our Christian walk.

To illustrate, the life of a believer is not like hooking onto a hot air balloon and just drifting up to higher and higher plateaus forevermore. Yes, Christianity is a journey that involves mountaintop experiences, but plateaus and valleys as well. We are reminded in Psalm 23:4, “Yea, though I walk through the *valley* of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.”

While it is true that God is not calling many wise, mighty, or noble at this time (1 Corinthians 1:26), He does not expect us to *stay* in a weakened or foolish condition. “But *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever” (2 Peter 3:18).

We need a revival that will restore joy and victory—a sense of *overcoming* (Revelation 21:7)—to the child of God. There are...

- Too many defeated Christians today. They will not rise up again.
- Too many discouraged Christians. They wallow in self-pity.
- Too many backslidden Christians. They fall back into their old ways and habits of life.
- Too many depressed Christians who will not let the past remain in the past. We cannot change the past; we can only go with the present and the future. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, *forgetting* those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are *before*, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

We need heart—a pure, dedicated, willing heart. Knowing full well the rewards ahead of us (1 Corinthians 13:12), we should wake up every morning feeling as if we had just won the lottery, and more! Our reward will be so much greater than any lottery has ever been! There is no need to feel defeated or discouraged. There is no room for tired, old, worn-out

Christians. The joy—the exaltation—of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10); we need a revival where God will give us a song—happiness—in our hearts because we know who and what we are and where we are going. Habakkuk prayed, “LORD, *revive* thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy,” and went on to say, “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation (Habakkuk 3:2,18).

How Can We Have Revival?

Only God can send revival. He alone is the Source: “Wilt *Thou*...revive us again” (Psalm 85:6)? No man, no organization, can “schedule” or plan spiritual revival. It is not something men do; it is what God will do if we are repentant and imbibe of His Word and remain constant in prayer.

Remember, God’s Spirit, which gives revival, is renewed in us daily, but conditionally! What *are* those conditions?

- We must face up to spiritual realities. “*Examine* yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Corinthians 13:5)?
- We need to see ourselves as *we* are—as *God* sees us; we must be honest. We must be repentant. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). (Send for our free booklet, *Ten Facts You Should Know About Repentance*.)
- We need to acknowledge God for Who He *is* and stop playing church. “Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that *fear* Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that *trust* in Thee before the sons of men” (Psalm 31:19).
- We must see sin for what *it* is—confess it, repent of it, and forsake it. FOREVER! “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).
- We must cultivate an earnest *desire* to be revived. If we *believe* strongly enough in a cause, how can we *not* get involved? Read the entire fifty-first Psalm for a beautiful example of David’s attitude.

Often we don’t *want* revival badly enough to make any difference or change in our lives. Change is what Christianity is all about. We must change from what we are—our “old man,” or nature—to become more and more like Jesus Christ is in every way. Godly character is knowing right from wrong and choosing to go *God’s* way no matter what—even if it seems uncomfortable or awkward or brings persecution. Isaiah 55:6-7 encourages us to “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found.” This implies that a time is coming when God may *not* be easily found. No one knows how much time he or she may have left. God *wants* to send revival upon those who genuinely seek it.

We need:

- Personal revival: that means *individuals* getting right with God.
- Home revival: that means *families* getting back to the place they need to be.
- Church revival: that means to be *doing the work* Christ ordained (Mathew 28:19-20).

Revival—a returning to God—is not turned on and off like a water fountain, but if

we meet God's conditions He will bestow it upon us. He *wants* us to be renewed!

There are people—millions, no, *billions*, of them—who need to be taught what *you* know! Yet do we—God's called-out ones—sometimes grow complacent and self-satisfied? How can we revive others to God's Truth when we, ourselves, need reviving? Can we expect God to add members to a sick, lukewarm, non-functional body? "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to *awake* out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we [first] believed" (Romans 13:11). We are reminded in Matthew 25:5 that *all ten* of the virgins in the parable slumbered and slept, but fortunately, some woke up in time.

Is it not without *cause* that Christ asks in Luke 18:8, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?" Will He find *spiritual revival*?

Let us all hear and heed God's regular "call to revival" by attending Sabbath services each and every week (Hebrews 10:25), as well as attending all His annual holy days (Leviticus 23). These are God's divinely appointed *special* holy days that He commands us to attend so we might be spiritually revived. When He comes again will Christ find us so doing (Matthew 24:46)?

Let us cry out with all our hearts and beseech God Almighty, "Wilt Thou not revive *us* again: [why?] that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Shew us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation" (Psalm 85:6-7)!

About the Church of God International

This literature is published by the Church of God International, based in Tyler, Texas. Incorporated in 1978, the CGI has ministers and congregations scattered throughout the United States and Canada. We also have churches in Jamaica, the Philippines, and Australia.

The CGI's mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world (Matthew 28:19). We are blessed with four basic tools to accomplish this:

- 1. Personal and local church evangelism.*
- 2. Television and radio broadcasting.*
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- 4. The Internet.*

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On a regular basis, prayerful friends and members of the Church of God International voluntarily support us with tithes and offerings to further the advancement of the gospel to the world. No financial obligation is ever demanded, but if you are moved to support this work of God, donations are gratefully accepted at the addresses listed. (Contributions in the United States and Canada are tax deductible.) Giving to and through us is an effective way for people like you to help spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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