

The Lamp of Prophecy

or

Signs of the Times

by

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CHAPTER TWELVE

MAY WE EXPECT A GREAT REVIVAL BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST?

"O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy" (Habakkuk 3:2)

MAY WE expect a great revival before the coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST? In attempting to answer the question in a Scriptural way, there are some things that need to be defined.

First, what do we mean by revival? I do not know any term that is more misused than this term. A series of meetings may be announced and called "revival meetings," and if it were not so sad, it would be almost ludicrous to see the way the advertisements sometimes read. I have picked up a newspaper and read that on a given Sunday night a "revival" would begin in a certain church. How does anybody know that? Then I have read, a few weeks later, "The revival which has been in progress at such a church during the past few weeks will close on such and such a night." If there had been a revival, what a pathetic thing to have it broken off so suddenly! A revival is not simply a series of well attended meetings where there is good preaching, good singing, and possibly a number of people coming to CHRIST. A revival is something far more than that.

Some years ago, I found myself in a strange town on Sunday morning. I went to the largest Protestant church I could find, and I shall never forget an announcement the pastor made. Outside was a striking placard announcing revival meetings under the leadership of a well-known evangelist, but the evangelist was not there, and the pastor was evidently rather humiliated over it. Coming to the front, he said:

"My dear friends, I was very confident that our revival was to begin today. You remember I announced that it would begin last Sunday, but on the Saturday night previous I received a telegram from the evangelist saying he was in a great meeting in Indiana and could not leave for another week. I wired him giving permission to remain, but said we would expect him for this Sunday. Last night, to my disgust, I received another telegram saying the meetings were going

on with such interest he could not come for another week. My patience is about at an end. I am going to send him a night letter this evening telling him he must be here next Sunday without fail, or there will be no revival in this church this year!"

It was very evident that revival, to that minister, meant just a special series of meetings under the leadership of an evangelist. I have no hope whatever that there will be anything like a great world-wide demonstration under the leadership of some one or more particular preachers in our day or generation.

REVIVALS IN SCRIPTURE

What do we mean, what does Scripture mean when it speaks of revival?

In the Psalms, we hear David saying, "**Though I walk in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me,**" and again he cries out, "**Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee?**"

And here Habakkuk prays, "**O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years.**"

What is meant by revival in these passages of Scripture? The word itself is most suggestive. It means to stir afresh that which is already alive. There is a life in every born again person that needs from time to time to be freshly stirred and roused up, and when this takes place, it results in increased devotion to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, in greater carefulness as to one's own individual walk before GOD, and in deeper exercise in getting the Gospel to those who are out of CHRIST.

We are not to think of meetings for only the unconverted as necessarily revival meetings. It is GOD's people who need to be revived. There never was a time, and there never will be a time until our Lord JESUS CHRIST comes back again, when the people of GOD will not do well to cry, "**O Lord, revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee.**"

It is folly for anyone to say, "We are so near the end of the dispensation; the coming of the Lord has now drawn so near that it is useless to think of revival and of awakening to any great extent."

Why, the very fact that the coming of the Lord has drawn so near, the very fact that we are so near the close of this dispensation of the grace of GOD, is the very reason why people of GOD all over this globe ought to be on their faces crying out, "**Wilt thou not revive us again?**"

We are expecting to meet our Lord very soon; we are expecting to hear His voice, to rise to meet Him in the air, but many of us are far from being in that condition of soul in which we would like to be found when JESUS comes, and therefore we should be praying, "**Wilt Thou not revive us again?**"

It is GOD's will that His people should be duly exercised. I take it as one of the signs of the times, one of the evidences that the Lord is preparing His people for His return, that all over this and other civilized lands, and in every land where missionaries are carrying the Gospel to a heathen people, there seems to be a growing sense of the need of a special arousing, an

awakening, and a revival.

It is unthinkable that when tens of thousands of GOD's beloved people are crying from the depths of earnest hearts, "**Revive thy work in the midst of the years,**" that GOD does not intend to bring revival and blessing.

But people ask, "Where do you find in Scripture any definite prophetic word saying that the Christian dispensation will close with a great revival?" I do not know with what the Christian dispensation will close. I do not find any prophecy that has to do particularly with the Christian dispensation as such. Prophecy has to do largely with GOD's dealings with His earthly people, Israel, and with the great Gentile nations; but the church does not belong to the ages; it does not belong to time; it is a thing of eternity; it is the mystery that was hid in GOD from before the foundation of the world, and that has now been made manifest.

GOD is taking out of Jew and Gentile those, who believe in the Lord JESUS CHRIST and is bringing them into one new Man, the body of CHRIST, and prophecy does not have to do particularly with the experiences of the church of GOD as such. All we know is that the church is taught to be constantly waiting for the coming of the Lord.

There never was a century since apostolic days when the church could be absolutely certain that prevails reviving the Lord JESUS CHRIST would not return in that day; and while we have no absolute assurance that He will return in our day or in the day of our children, yet we are taught to look for His coming, so that whether He return at midnight or at cock crowing or at noon, we shall be ready.

In the meantime, He says, "**Occupy till I come.**"

We are set here to glorify Him, and it is only as a revived, quickened people that we can glorify Him .as we should.

HOW A REVIVAL BEGINS

What would be the evidences of revival?

If GOD were working in some large way, one of the first evidences would be great humiliation before Him because of our past sins and failures, because of our unbelief, because of our slowness to send out the Gospel to the heathen world, because of the way we have hoarded our money and made ourselves comfortable and forgotten the needs of those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

In other words, the first evidences would be deep and sincere repentance on the part of the people of GOD. Often we hear people singing the chorus:

O Lord, send a revival,
Lord, send a revival;
O Lord, send a revival,
And let it begin in me.

When I hear them singing that, I say to myself, "I wonder now what they really mean!" When one and another says, "Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in me," do they mean, "Lord, strike me down in some strange sort of way; give me some very vivid emotional experience in order that I may feel wonderfully exalted and wrought up, and I shall consider I am being revived"?

I think that is why wild-fire emotionalism of the most unscriptural character in many places today, and people call it the work of the Spirit of GOD.

If revival is going to begin in me, if it is going to begin in you, it is going to lead us to self-judgment in the presence of GOD; it is going to lead us back over our lives, to examine conditions, to ask ourselves and honestly to answer the questions in the presence of GOD, "Have I really been living a yielded life? Have I truly been holding all that I possess as that which belongs to the One who has redeemed me? And have I been so speaking and so acting from day to day that my words and my life have been a testimony for CHRIST?"

And wherein conscience convicts me of failure, wherein the Spirit of GOD shows me that I have not been manifesting the Spirit of CHRIST as I should, it will lead to contrition, to repentance, to confession, and to humiliation.

As long as the people of GOD can sit calmly and sing, "O Lord, send a revival," and nobody gets down before the Lord to confess his failure and put things right that have been wrong, revival will never begin in them.

Singing hymns is not going to bring revival, but doing faithfully that which the Spirit of GOD puts before one will bring it.

THE KOREAN REVIVAL

How did the great revival in Korea begin?

Years ago, I listened to Dr. Underwood, who has since gone to glory, as he told something of the beginning of the work of GOD in that land. Many hundred Koreans had gathered together to pray for revival and blessing upon the people of GOD and upon the people of Korea, and as the prayer-meeting went on, an elder of the church got to his feet and said with a broken voice, "My friends, let me interrupt the prayer-meeting. I have something I must say. GOD has been speaking to me. I did something the other day that is troubling me, and I feel if I do not confess it, I am going to hinder this work. I feel like Achan in the camp. I have the unclean thing hidden away, and the people of GOD can never triumph over their foes until this is made right. I have to confess that I am a thief."

They looked in amazement, and then he said, "On a certain occasion, I was passing the home of such and such a brother; I saw lying out in front of his home an ax. I wanted one very badly. I knew this one wasn't mine; but it was his. As nobody was around, I slipped over and carried it home. It is back in my woodshed, and it is like Achan's wedge of gold; I am here to confess and apologize to my brother, and I will return the ax."

Dr. Underwood said another and another stood up, with burdened hearts and tears streaming down their faces, and confessed their sins. That thing went on for hours, and by and by the heathen outside heard what was going on among the Christians, and then a great work of grace began that brought hundreds and thousands into the flock of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

THE BACKWARD LOOK

If there is going to be a revival now or at any time, we must judge ourselves in His presence. I am afraid that our consciences are terribly dull; we have become used to so many things that we take for granted they are all right and never stop to think how they look in the sight of our blessed Lord.

Glance back over one week of your life, you who are Christians. Just imagine as you do so that at any hour of that week the Lord had suddenly come upon you, had beheld what you were engaged in, had heard what you were saying, and had given you to know that He was taking note of all that you were doing. Are you quite sure you would have been well satisfied with yourself and with your life, even for one week?

Then let me ask another question.

Have you been definitely to GOD during this past week and have you been facing these things from day to day? You say, "Well, I kneel in prayer at night." What do you pray for? To ask the Lord to take care of you in the dark? Before you ask Him to take care of you in the dark, do you talk to Him about what you did in the light? Do you go over your life in His presence? Do you bring out everything before Him? Do you let the full clear light of the sanctuary shine upon your words and your behavior? And then as He shows you things that are so opposed to His own infinite holiness, to His tenderness, to His compassion for men; as He shows you things that are so contrary to the Spirit of an unworldly CHRIST, do you make your frank, honest confession before Him and seek His grace to turn from these things once and forever, henceforth to be devoted alone to Him?

If you do, you are on the way to revival, for that is how GOD works.

HABAKKUK'S PRAYER

As a rule, when people use this word "*revival*," they mean "*awakening*." They are not really thinking so much of revival among the people of GOD as an awakening of the unsaved, and it is very good that we should be thinking of that. It is right in that connection that we have the prayer of Habakkuk, "**O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid.**"

If there ever was a man who might well have asked, "Is there any use praying for revival in days such as mine?" it was this man.

He lived just a short time before the Babylonian captivity of the people of Judah, and he knew that, in a very little while, GOD was going to give the people over to the Gentile avenger. Judgment would shortly be meted out to the people of Judah; and therefore Habakkuk might have been excused if he had shaken his head and said, "It is no use trying to do anything now.

We are just at the end of one of GOD's dispensations with us; the enemy is coming, and GOD will not defend this city anymore. There is no use expecting revival or blessing."

But, no, he said to himself, "The very fact that we are down to the end of one of GOD's dealings with us is the reason we need Him more than ever; it is the very reason why intercessors should be before Him to cry out, '**In wrath remember mercy.**' "

If you and I and the people of GOD throughout the world come to Him with earnest purpose of heart to cry like this, we can be assured that He will be delighted to answer. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but if there is world-wide brokenness of spirit on the part of the people of GOD, if there is repentance and crying to Him, GOD will delight to do some mighty work before the coming again of His blessed Son.

And when the people of GOD are thus stirred, there will be an awakening outside.

REVIVAL AND AWAKENING IN INDIA

I read of a little group of missionaries in India, associated with a company of believers with whom I happened to be intimately in Christian fellowship.

They were what we might call *hyper-Calvinistic*.

They not only believed in the sovereignty of the Lord, but their belief was almost akin to the Mohammedan doctrine of fatalism. They had been in one district for sixteen years and had not found one convert. They tried to comfort themselves with Judson's answer to the Baptist Board when they asked him, after he had labored in his field for twenty years, "What are the prospects?" His answer was, "The prospects are as bright as the promises of GOD." That was real faith on Judson's part, and it was not long until GOD rewarded his faith. And so with this they tried to comfort themselves. But they were put to shame by the fact that, not very far from them, another mission started work, manned by a people who did not have anything like the same knowledge of the Bible that these people had. They were overgiven to emotionalism and yet simple earnest Christians who believed GOD and sought to walk before Him in simple faith. These people soon had one and another and even whole families come to them in brokenness of spirit, confessing their sins and trusting the Lord JESUS CHRIST as Saviour.

The hyper-Calvinistic missionaries went over to visit the newcomers, for they felt it could not be a real work. But to their amazement they got into a testimony meeting, and one after another the heathen got up and, oh, the stories of redeeming grace they told!

These brethren went back humbled before GOD and said, "The fault cannot be with GOD; it cannot be with the Gospel we preach; it must be in ourselves."

So they put up a placard outside which read, "No public services for the present; the missionaries will gather for prayer and humiliation before GOD."

They began with a day of prayer and went on, eating as little as they could, till six days had gone by, and then on the seventh day there came a knock at the door. During these days, there had

been great confessions, much self-judgment, many idols torn down, getting right with GOD themselves, and they were amazed to find how much there could be in the life of a missionary that needed to be made right.

When one of them answered the knock, he found a native standing there who said, "I want to get into the meeting."

"But," said the missionary, "this is just a meeting for the missionaries."

"Oh, but I must get in," the man said. "I have lain awake for two nights, I am so miserable. You must let me in and show me the way of life."

And of course they all gathered around him and pointed him to CHRIST. The dear fellow was hardly saved when someone else came to the door.

He said, "When I found the chapel closed, I wondered if GOD had given us up. The missionaries have been here for sixteen years, and I have heard the message and have never received it; but I never thought the chapel door would be closed in my face; so I wondered whether GOD was through with us, whether He had given us up."

Of course the door was thrown open. Just after that, I read an article in a certain periodical and it said, "Six weeks have gone by since we began our time of prayer, and already we have baptized sixty converts. There are scores more inquiring the way of life."

Awakening follows revival, that is, revival among the people of GOD comes first, and then an awakening among the Christless. You do not have to hold special meetings to bring this about.

All that is needed is integrity of purpose and honesty of spirit before GOD.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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