



PERHAPS LIKE YOU, I WAS RAISED WITH the notion that the purpose of a church “revival” was to restock the pews—as if the purpose of the meetings was to revitalize the *physical church house* with fresh warm bodies. Even into adult life this was the prevailing notion: In one Baptist church we attended, the church fathers became irritated when the visiting preacher, who had been called to revive us, spent the week preaching quietly and earnestly through the first few verses of Romans 5, rather than holding hour-long altar calls incited by holy bombast and arm-twisting.

But reading through Second Chronicles recently I was reminded of the true, Biblical definition of revival.

During the period of the divided kingdoms, the spiritual state of both Judah and Israel was a sorry mess. King followed king and, with nauseating consistency and rare exception, the two nations sank ever deeper into rebellion against God.

Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Athaliah,

the granddaughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly. He did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab, for they were his counselors after the death of his father, to his destruction.

2 Chronicles 22:1-4

Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother’s name was Zibiah from Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest... But after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king, and the king listened to them. They abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; so wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt.

2 Chronicles 24:1-2,17-18

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do right in the sight of the Lord as David his father *had done*. But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals. Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel.

2 Chronicles 28:1-3

But then Hezekiah became king of Judah after the death of his father Ahaz, and for the first time in a very long time Jerusalem had a king that was wholly devoted to Jehovah.

He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his [fore]father David had done.

2 Chronicles 29:2

King Hezekiah made extensive repairs to the temple. He brought back the Levitical priesthood, and systematically restored their duties and regimen. The priests completely cleansed the house of the Lord of all unclean things and re-consecrated it to His service. The idols and pagan altars were destroyed throughout the land. The people of Judah gathered at the temple and holy sacrifices were offered.

And there was revival.

Now at the completion of the burnt offerings, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshiped. Moreover, King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed down and worshiped.

2 Chronicles 29:29-30

And everyone present knew that it was of the Lord.

Thus the service of the house of the Lord was established *again*. Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had prepared for the people, because the thing came about suddenly.

2 Chronicles 29:35b-36



True revival is of the Lord. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the number of people filling the pews, but it has everything to do with the condition of their hearts. True revival means restoration, a return to good health and, in the context of God's people, a renewal of our spirits by the Spirit of God. Look

at what happened when Ezra returned to Jerusalem to restore God's written law to exiles that had been without it for so long. Once the rebuilding of the city wall was completed under the governorship of Nehemiah, they held a revival meeting like few other.

And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel... Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with *their* faces to the ground.

Nehemiah 8:1,5-6

Stuck on this corrupted and corrupting soil of earth, children of God need revival from time to time. Whether held in an amphitheatre with thousands or in the solitary believer's prayer closet, it should be a time of reconnection and recommitment to the Lord—not a time to boast over the number of poor lost souls one has drug through the church door.

Over time our once-bright spirit becomes discolored by the corrupting vapors that hover over this fallen world. It weakens under the onslaught of the winsome Father of Lies, it staggers against the relentless doctrine of depravity that comes at us from all sides.

Bloodied and bowed we fall before our God and Savior, crying upward with King David,

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

Psalms 51:10-13

First comes revival—holy, blessed, renewal.
Then comes evangelism.

