

1st Quarter 2021
January-February-March
INTRODUCTION

America is at a crossroad, but we have a remnant that is walking with the Lord. Our problems of insurmountable national debt, corruption in our government, natural disasters like hurricanes, forest fires and moral and spiritual decline cannot be solved by human wisdom. We need God to intervene, *we need revival*. This moral decay is like a spiritual drought.

Spiritual drought, though a persistent and unwelcome visitor, is not something with which we must constantly live. There are biblical means by which we can, by grace, put ourselves in the way of refreshment; we can be restored to, once again feel the joy of our salvation. But this can only happen if we are able to discern why God's people might be experiencing spiritual dryness so we can take the appropriate action.

With this in mind, we invite you to take lessons in this quarter seriously and passionately, and personally; as they each reveal the solution to America's spiritual drought.

14 If My (your name), which is called by My name, shall humble (her/himself), and pray, and seek my face, and turn from (his/her) wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive (his/her) sin, and will heal (his/her) land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

~~Abiding Faith Family, make it personal.

Our prayer: *Father, pour out Your Spirit on **me**. Change **my** life. Give **me** Your love for others. Empower **me** to impact people with the Gospel. Use **me** for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen!*

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Lesson 1 – Revival: Our Great Need

January 3, 2021

Background Passage: 2 Chronicles 28, 29

Lesson Passage: 2 Chronicles 29:1-3, 10, 15-16, 20, 24, 31, 34-36 (KJV)

Background: The story of King Josiah (2 Chronicles 34) is probably the best illustration of revival in the Old Testament. Judah had fallen away from God, almost exclusively serving the idols of surrounding peoples. When the Pentateuch is suddenly rediscovered, Josiah immediately calls the people back to covenant with God, and institutes sweeping reforms throughout every institution in Israel. Revival was possible because the lines were so clear-cut. They rebuilt what had decayed. The reign of Hezekiah begins with a father of unparalleled wickedness. Ahaz never makes any effort to put God first in his life or in the administration of the kingdom. He boldly serves foreign gods, to the extent of calling for the manufacturing of Baal idols and the execution of child sacrifice. The ensuing chaos in the land leads Ahaz to make a treaty with Assyria - an aggressive nation that is quickly becoming a regional empire. Instead of turning to Yahweh, he sacrifices to the various gods of Damascus in Syria. He incorporates the Temple's furnishings into these pagan rituals of worship. He closed the Temple completely, and he built "high places" which had been dedicated to the worship of Yahweh. As a result of his betrayal of the God of his fathers, Ahaz's burial is a disgrace. Though laid to rest in Jerusalem, he did not receive the honor of a burial with previous kings. Hezekiah is the perfect ruler to help them to move forward with God. Through Hezekiah's devout commitment to God, a legacy of devotion was passed on.

Introduction: "*Revival Nightly This Week, 7 p.m.*". What is wrong with this picture? What is wrong with this picture is that true revival is not a matter of hanging a banner in front of the church with this announcement. True revival is not a superficial, emotional response that results in a temporary experience, but no long-term fruit of righteousness. True revival is when the living God sovereignly and powerfully breaks into human history with the good news of His salvation. It invariably begins with individuals, redeemed and unredeemed, coming under deep conviction of sin and turning from that sin in genuine repentance. The renewed sense of God's presence, power, holiness, and truth then inevitably spills out of the church and into the world, resulting in many genuine conversions. If our nation is to be spared God's judgment for our many sins, we desperately need true revival. Therefore, our lesson deserves our careful attention.

Scripture Reference: 2 Chronicles 29:1-3, 10, 15-16, 20, 24, 31, 34-36 (KJV)

1 Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. *2* And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. *3* He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. *10* Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. *15* And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord. *16* And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. *20* Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. *24* And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. *31* Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated

yourselves unto the Lord, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the Lord. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings. 34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. 35 And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. 36 And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

Memory Verse: “*And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord*” (2 Chronicles 29:15). KJV

Topic Explored: “*Revival: Our Great Need*” God is sovereign concerning when and where He sends revival. We cannot plan and orchestrate such a powerful moving of Almighty God. Yet, at the same time, there are certain conditions that are common to most revivals. While God is sovereign in bringing revival, we must be prepared to receive His sovereign grace. The word derives from the Latin *revivere*, “to live again,” and was typically used to describe an old play that was brought back to a new generation of theater audiences. The concept is closest to the Old Testament idea of renewal or restoration found especially in the work of leaders such as Hezekiah and Josiah.

Lesson Focus: 2 Chronicles 28:1-2; 19, 27 (KJV)

Verses 1-3 ~ Hezekiah has reached adulthood and his father is long forgotten. In verse 2 Hezekiah is identified with David - the greatest spiritual and political leader to ever emerge from the hills of Judah. Other kings accomplished righteousness before the Lord in part, or for a historical segment of their reign. Hezekiah, however, achieves righteousness in full. Everything good about David is found in Hezekiah.

Hezekiah breaks with his father by reopening the doors to God's temple in Jerusalem - the same doors his father had closed. God would be the national priority again. In the spirit of David, they were to put their trust in Yahweh. Hezekiah leads the restoration himself. It has been a long time, however, since the house of the Lord has been open for business. Given that Ahaz reigned sixteen years, many of the Levites have never served in the Temple. Hezekiah, then, leads the charge to get the Levites and the Temple consecrated. He takes pains to ensure that everything is done according to God's law. To Hezekiah, Judah's history clearly shows that dedication to Yahweh is demanded from Judah. Therefore, he plans to call the nation back to the covenant (v. 10). So, what is needed is not a new covenant, but a *renewed* covenant. God's offer to bless Judah still stands. It is still based on covenant. And this covenant still costs Judah something. It costs unabashed and singular devotion to Yahweh, The One True God.

Verses 10-16 ~ Hezekiah realizes that he cannot affect spiritual renewal in Judah on his own. It will be a national effort, led by those who care most for Yahweh and His temple. It starts with the ruler's/leader's heart and extends outward to his followers. The pace of the work was amazing. He has carefully apportioned the various ethnic groups descended from Levi to accomplish their respective work on the Temple. But first, they ritually consecrate themselves in accordance with God's law (Leviticus 21-22). Once they have consecrated themselves and their garments, the consecration of the Temple itself begins. They work from the inside out for sixteen days: washing, praying, singing, and cleaning. After the work is done, they joyfully report each

facet of the cleansing with him, ensuring that everything has been done properly and in order. This purification even included the utensils for sacrifice - forks, bowls, bread plates, and the like. They have undone all that Ahaz did, providing a new day for Hezekiah and the kingdom of Judah.

Verses 20, 24 ~ The festival of Yom Kippur represents the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, which the nation has failed to celebrate during the reign of Ahaz. The holiday means "Day of Atonement," and it refers to a single sacrifice which God accepts to atone for the sins of the entire nation. It is of a corporate nature, meant to enact God's peace upon the entire kingdom. He takes the lead in reinstating this important holiday into Judah's national and spiritual life. However, it will be a slightly different kind of Yom Kippur, in that Hezekiah brings seven of each of the sacrifices before the Lord. The number seven represents the number of God's completion (v. 21). Through this act of atonement, Hezekiah proclaims that God is completely restoring Judah to her covenant with Him. Israel has been separated from and in conflict with Judah for thirteen Judean kings now. Hezekiah boldly makes the sacrifice for the *united* kingdom.

Verses 31, 34-36 ~ After the sacrifices are completed, the celebration begins (vv. 25-30). Hezekiah has stationed skilled musicians in the places appointed by King David himself. Obeying the prophets of old, the psalms of David are reintroduced to the nation. The people once again learn the story of Israel through David's psalms. They learn about the character and attributes of God. As well, they learn the heart of David, which is a template for God-honoring service. In a final burnt offering, Hezekiah gives the nod, and the choir erupts into rapturous praise. In response, the *nation* gathered there fall on their faces before God. This continues for the entire sacrifice – overwhelming jubilation before the Lord. Verse 31 gives us a glimpse into the communal nature of sacrifices. Through eating the animal together, a group remembered the goodness of Yahweh who had nourished them. They also remembered the covenant they had with God and with one another as the people of God. Verse 35 provides a key insight into spiritual renewal and emphasizes the “priestly” order in God's house tends to flow from the top down. Hezekiah chooses to become a righteous king, so righteousness filters downward to the priests through the king's faithfulness. The last verse (v. 36) in the chapter marvels that Hezekiah is able to get so much done so fast, and clearly attributes this success to God. It is the urgency of Hezekiah that God uses for His glory.

Life Application/Let's Talk:

If we want to pray to God to send revival, what is required from us? (*Possible Answer: God's people must humble themselves, confess their wretchedness, and seek to obey God and serve one another in love*).

Closing Prayer:

“Father, we live in a day in which Your Name is mocked. Many times this happens because of the shortcomings and sins of those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ. We confess our sins and the way we have lived our lives as Christians apart from complete dependence upon You. We repent of this shameful self-sufficiency and throw ourselves upon Your mercy. Gracious God, our lifestyle has often led unbelievers to insult and attack Your very nature and character. We ask You, Lord, to awaken Your people to the reality of Your presence in our midst and in so doing transform our lives into the character of Christ that You desire to see in us. May our lives be lived out in Your Church demonstrate to the world Your love, grace, mercy, and overwhelming power on behalf of Your saints. We ask You to revive Your people so that we may rejoice in You and demonstrate in our lives the awesome, transforming power of Jesus Christ in His Church. Amen”.