

Thoughts on Revival

2 Chronicles 34 and 35.

The Word of the Lord in the ascendant

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The revival in the days of Josiah, king of Judah, followed the dreadful lapse during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. These two, Manasseh especially — although he was converted towards the end of his days after being disciplined under the government of God by a Babylonish captivity — had dissipated all the goodly effects of the wonderful revival in the days of Hezekiah. Josiah set out to rid the land of idolatry. By the eighteenth year of his reign he had purged the land and the house. This being accomplished he set about repairing the house of the Lord with a view to full recovery.

During the search of the house for the money needed for the work of restoration, "Hilkiah the priest *found* a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses." This he delivered to Shaphan the scribe saying, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." How sorry a reflection on the preceding condition in Judah — the Word of God had been lost! Now it was recovered!

The book was found, it was brought to the king; it was read before the king, and it was immediately effective. The king heard the words of the law. He rent his garments, thus expressing his heartfelt contrition at the prevailing condition of things. Harkening to God's Word he sent the priest and the scribe to enquire of the LORD. The Word of God and prayer are ever the antecedents of revival. The prophetic word was given — judgment must fall on this intolerable state of affairs amongst the professed people of God. Yet the mercy of God takes account of real repentance. He marks the contrite heart, the self-humbling, the rending of the garments, the weeping of repentance. God hears — God blesses.

National revival for Judah, extending to all that were present in Israel, started with one man. The words of the book which had so affected him he read to all — priests, Levites, and all the people, great and small. He and they stood to the recovered Word. The first result of this obedience was the keeping of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was indicative of their recognising that the judgment of God was met by sacrifice, and of their desire to be in moral accord with His holy requirements. How deep the self-judgment of those days! What a cleansing of their houses and associations would follow!

The Passover was killed; they sprinkled the blood; they roasted the Passover with fire; the singers were in their place; all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day; the burnt offerings were offered. There had been nothing like this since the days of Samuel the prophet, some four hundred years before.

The moral of this great revival was that it flowed from the reading and application of the Word of God. The prerequisite of revival in any day must be a whole-hearted acceptance of that Word manifested in an unqualified obedience to it. May we in our day take heed to the Word of God. We can only affect others in the measure in which we ourselves are recovered to God. The measure of our obedience to the Word of God will be the measure of our moral power with others.

Note also, although seven hundred years had elapsed since the Word of the Law had been given by Moses to Israel, and although serious division existed between the twelve tribes, nevertheless this

remnant movement returned in principle to that which was from the *beginning*. Their national history commenced with the Passover, and now the door is open for the recovery of all the people of God. True revival would affect our souls in regard to *all* the truth of God for *all* the saints of God.

Any who are recovered, in this our day and generation, would seek to gather together to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the acknowledgment of His Headship of the Assembly; in the recognition of the presence of the Holy Spirit as the representative of Christ in the Assembly, and as the sole power for reception and communication of the truth of God. They would embrace the truth of the mystery of Christ and the Assembly, and thus prove the blessedness of deliverance from human organization. They would find this divine revelation very humbling to themselves, producing self-judgment and separation from evil in the power of known good. What a moral adjustment would be brought about in their everyday lives — what a setting of their house in order; what cleansing of associations; what keeping of themselves from idols. But with all this, what communion with God in the enjoyment of the revelation of Himself in the Person of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. How full the response in worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth, and how rich the ministry of the Word amongst them. How empowering this would be to the testimony of the Gospel, for as God is honoured in their giving Christ His place amongst them in the realized power of the indwelling Spirit, there will be a rich outflow in the attractive sweetness of saving grace to the unconverted.

May God grant that we all, writer and reader alike, may lay these few thoughts to heart and be thus enabled to truly pray, "Revive Thy work in the midst of the years" (Habakkuk 3: 2).

"Wilt Thou not revive us again; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Shew us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak*; for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85: 6-8).