

IX. Revival in Biblical Perspective

Revive Us Again!

“The Rehoboam Revival – Humble Yourself”

II Chronicles 12

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We'll start by looking at II Chronicles 7. II Chronicles 7:11–14 says [11] *Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. [12] Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. [13] When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, [14] if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In our study of revival our theme verse is Psalm 85:6 which says [6] *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* We have examined revival to try to bring a definition of revival. The definition is simple but I believe accurate. Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. In revival God brings life from death but He uses ordinary people, like the son of a pub owner whose name is George Whitfield, like the son of a rural “unsuccessful pastor” whose name is John Wesley, like a missionary on the frontier of America to the Indians whose name is Jonathan Edwards. He uses ordinary places like North Hampton and ordinary means such as preaching, evangelism, prayer, fellowship and worship to do extraordinary things. He takes skeletons, dry bones and raises them up to make them into armies, soldiers of the living God, invincibly and relentlessly moving with the weapons of the Spirit to extend the Kingdom of God. He revives His church.

There are two evidences of revival that we have noticed in our study of revival. There are 28 revival narratives in the Bible and perhaps one could argue more than that but at least there are 28. One is a foundational evidence of a God-sent revival and that is God-centered worship. That is the vertical for when God revives His people they start worshipping Him and it is Trinitarian God-centered worship – praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as we give praise in Spirit and in truth. Not only that, there is a horizontal dynamic which is the second evidence and that is God-sent revivals lead to Gospel harvests secured by God the Father, through God the Son by the power, presence and authority of God the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us to pray to the Lord of the Harvest which is the Holy Spirit for He sends the workers into the harvest. He also gives the fruit of the harvest to the workers.

So when God brings revival His people look up in worship, they look out with the Gospel and a harvest of souls start to come from the nation where God is reviving His church. Our nation needs that awakening and therefore it needs a revived church. This is God's work. We can't work up revival. I was raised in a church where every Spring we had revival week. We scheduled revival. I'm not real negative on that for I actually believe you can schedule the seeking, preaching and praying of revival. I want to be clear on this. When we plan worship we ask God every Lord's Day for revival and that's what we're asking for. The Lord's Supper is

designed for revival. So I don't think there is a problem with that but revival is not worked up for it has to come down. It is the power of the breath of God.

I like the way G. Campbell Morgan said it. He was an excellent preacher who had a heart for revival and he actually followed a pastor the Lord used in a revival in London. He followed a man named Martin Lloyd Jones at Westminster Chapel in London. When he was preaching on revival he made the comment, 'Revive Thy work. Revival is Your work in Your people that they will praise You and reach the lost around them with a Gospel harvest.' So revive Thy work O Lord for we can't work up revival. Revival must be sent from God and come down from God but I do believe as Morgan did that you and I can't send revival but we can hoist the sail. We are not the wind, breath or power of God but we can hoist the sail.

I believe even more than that. I believe God has given us the four corner design of the sail that we hoist. We have already studied it. When we finish our study of revival we will not only have studied varied texts of Scripture but we will have walked through II Chronicles and I Peter but in II Chronicles we have already seen where God gave this design for revival. It's in II Chronicles 7:13–14 which says [13] *When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, [14] if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* So when God's people have walked away from Him and His hand of discipline comes upon them then if by His grace they come to their senses, *humble themselves, pray, turn from their wicked ways and seek My face* then I will hear and forgive their sins. Those are the four things God has designed for revival. When they do that He gives three promises. He will hear, forgive their sin and heal them.

When was the book of Chronicles written? We don't know for sure but we believe it was written not too long after the revival we have studied in Nehemiah. For many the book of Chronicles is a little bit of a downer for you. When people start in January to read through the Bible the reading generally dies out when they get to the book of Numbers but somehow they make it through Numbers and then they get back to adventure in Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges. Then people begin to notice that I and II Samuel are being somewhat repeated in I and II Kings. Then to find out that I and II Chronicles seems to be repeating Samuels and Kings but there is actually a little more to it than repetition.

Chronicles was written after the two southern tribes – Judah and Benjamin – which had been taken into Babylonian captivity had been set free and they have come back. The tower of Babel happens first but when they got back to the land God sent a revival under Nehemiah where they built the wall, the city, the temple, restored the sacrifices and a great revival broke out. We saw the great worship that took place in that revival. Now they are again in disrepair, under the hand of God's judgment and they are in need of revival. So the writer of I and II Chronicles go back in history. He shows how God had established His people under King David. I Chronicles focuses upon God's hand of blessing working in and through the ordinary yet extraordinary work of God through David at various times through his sin, his restoration, His people and then in his son Solomon using him to extend the kingdom to its borders and to establish God's House there. They have built it and the Shekinah glory has come down to fill the Temple and then God says 'When I bring My hand of judgment...' not if because He knew they would walk away from Him. When that happens they need to get back to Him humble themselves, pray, turn from their wicked ways and seek His face and then He will hear, forgive and heal.

So these are not four things we do to bring revival down but these are the four things that God works in the lives of His people when He is sending revival down. What is my responsibility? It is to hoist the sail – humble myself, pray, turn from my wicked ways and seek His face. So we learned that and then the Chronicler then says I will show you how God fulfilled that promise in the history of His people. The revival He brings in the descendants of David is in Chronicles and there are five revivals listed in II Chronicles. Each revival incorporates those four design elements of revival but each revival clearly emphasizes one of them. Since there are only four design elements and five revivals one of those elements is repeated twice. The one He repeats twice is the first element – humble yourself.

The first revival under Rehoboam is focused on humbling yourself. The last revival under Josiah also emphasizes humbling yourself. The other three revivals in between the first and last revival focus on prayer, seeking His face and turning from wicked ways. Why would God when He emphasizes these four elements of revival, emphasize humility twice? It is for the same reason that He lists it first out of those four elements. Humility is crucial and absolutely essential. You can't pray until you humble yourself. You won't pray until you humble yourself. You will not seek Him until you humble yourself. You won't turn from your wicked ways or even call them wicked until you humble yourself. Each one of these build and you start with humility. The Chronicler wants us to think of revival as a sandwich with pray, seek My face and turn from your wicked ways and then He puts two great slices of bread, double fiber on both sides, called humble yourself.

So why does God put it first and then last with the other three in between? Here's why. What is the opposite of humility? It is pride/arrogance. What is pride? It is the mother sin. They all flow from it. Satan knows it. What is Satan's scheme? It is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. It worked in the Garden and it's worked in every son or daughter of Adam since then. The lust of the flesh came out when Eve saw that the tree in the Garden was good for food. The lust of the eyes came out as Scripture says 'it was a delight' to Eve's eyes. The boastful pride of life came out when it became desirable to make her wise for she could be like God. Do you see how pride and arrogance makes you think with pure stupidity and without accuracy? Satan basically says to Eve 'God is lying to you about this fruit because He knows the day you eat it you'll be like God' and yet all she had to say was 'so what, I already am like Him. In fact, I've been made in His image. You're really trying to sell me the lie to be God not like Him and that everything begins and ends and revolves around me and that's the mother of every sin.' Pride keeps us from boasting in the Lord because we're too busy boasting in ourselves.

Here is another reason we're dealing with humility because of pride is it is also confronted in the Bible with very clear language. God is opposed to the proud but in contrast gives grace to the humble. We see this in Proverbs 3, James 4:6, I Peter 5 and James and Peter will repeat it. James 4:1–6 says *[1] What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? [2] You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. [4] You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? [6] But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

I Peter 5:6 says [6] *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* Don't exalt yourself and pray for humility. Humble yourself and then trust Him for He'll exalt you at the right time. Peter also says in I Peter 5:2–4 [2] *shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.* He basically repeats James where God gives grace to the humble.

What is God's posture to the proud? It is opposition. I love the verse that says 'if God be for us then who can be against us' but if God is against me then this is no match. I am not interested in God being opposed to me. I want God to be for me but I know God is opposed to the proud. I'm not talking about what you do to be saved, I am talking about a life before God. A life before God is one that does not pet, embrace or allow pride to stand because God is opposed to pride. God's people need to humble themselves because they have been proud. When they were proud God sent the pestilence and withheld the rain so even when God's people were proud He was not going to leave them there. He was going to deal with them. So if we want the full movement of God's presence then we have to have a commitment to humble ourselves.

In the Old Testament the phrase 'humble yourself' is listed 36 times and almost half of them are in the Chronicles. Most of those are found in the revivals we see in the Chronicles, including this first one. So let's now look at II Chronicles 12 in three categories – God is opposed to the proud, God gives grace to the humble and God's grace is greater than our sin. Before we read let me give you some context. Solomon is dead and his son Rehoboam, the grandson of David, is now king. Things are going well. The ten northern tribes are in rebellion against the line of David under a man by the name of Jeroboam. Rehoboam is going to try and stop this rebellion by talking with the ten tribes. They blame Solomon for putting them under a heavy hand of military rule, oppression and taxation. They tell Rehoboam if he lifts that heavy hand they will serve him as king. Then he goes to his elders for counsel and they agree with the ten tribes.

Then Rehoboam goes to his young men and asks them what they think. They don't think Rehoboam should give in to their demands and should tell them that if they thought Solomon's hand was heavy then Rehoboam's little finger is as big as Solomon's thigh. So that became Rehoboam's dictate and ten tribes walked away in rebellion. So not only did a civil war start with this rebellion but then the king of Egypt named Shishak shows up with about 160,000 men and 1,200 chariots. So let's see how this happens and what we learn from this.

So the first thing we see is that God is opposed to the proud in II Chronicles 12:1–5 which says [1] *When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. [2] In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem [3] with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people were without number who came with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians. [4] And he took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. [5] Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, "Thus says the LORD, 'You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.'"*

So here's what has happened here. In arrogance Rehoboam has said to the ten tribes 'my finger is thicker than Solomon's thigh' and they walked away. In II Chronicles 10 and 11

Rehoboam raised up a big army from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. He secured those two tribes and Jerusalem and then he got all the priests to sign his promotion celebrity brochure to support him. They went out to all the land to tell people to support King Rehoboam and then he marries his cousin, another relative of David's to secure everything. Rehoboam became strong, secured himself and walked away from the Lord. Rehoboam thinks 'why does he need the Lord' because he has secured himself. So he has this rebellion and now Shishak shows up with all these horsemen and chariots.

I kind of moonlight as a historian and I love to read what the secular historians say about Shishak. They give the reason why Shishak came to Jerusalem and then they give the reasons why he didn't take Jerusalem but God tells you the story behind the story. Everyone will tell you Shishak showed up because of power, to extend the territory, to get the money and control the two crossroads of the world but he's really there because God sent him up there to bring judgment upon His people. Shishak is here because you have abandoned Me, and that's what the text says. They have abandoned God because they are strong and have secured themselves so they walked away from God, His Word and His worship and so Shishak has been brought to them.

Rehoboam is now proud for he has secured himself. Because he is proud he doesn't need the Lord. He has walked away from God, His word and His worship. God is opposed to the proud and now were seeing the opposition God is bringing inside from the outside. When are you and I on the verge of putting ourselves in the position of opposition by God because of our pride? We are most likely to pride when we are successful in life. Look who I have as my wife or look at my army or look at my priests or I'm actually believing what everybody is saying about me or I have the whole thing secured. It is when you paint that picture and everyone 'ooohs and aahhhhs' over it or when you close that deal or when you see the bottom line is tripling at business or you got the good grades or won the award. That is a dangerous moment.

Each one is born with a sin nature and when you get saved you still have that old man. The default is 'it's all about me, it comes from me, it's for me for I am the center of everything.' We are all born with that. When you turn on that computer what appears on that screen is that it is all about you. You can solve, you can do it and you can secure yourself. You can save yourself. So I don't need a message of grace. I can handle it.

Those children you and I have come with a blessing for God says 'I'll be a God to you and to your children after you' but these covenant children are covenant vipers in diapers and they are born with that default system 'it's all about me.' Many of us as parents for our own ego feed it so they become bumper sticker material for us. It's really all about us. We are feeding that self-oriented, self-confidence, self-absorption in the life of our children. We may do it in the name of self-esteem when we ought to be teaching self-respect which comes in a right relationship with God. We revolve the whole family around them and everything that happens around them and then while we exalt our children we ask God to come and humble them a little bit, enough to get them saved. When in reality we ought to help them see the blessing of hoisting the sail and humble yourself.

Have you noticed that humility is not a prayer request in the Bible? We can pray for humility and when you do pray for it be prepared to duck for it's amazing what comes next. The Bible actually gives it as an action step. It says I will put My Spirit within you and enable you to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. My power will give you the ability to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. One of the successes where you and I are most vulnerable is our spiritual successes. 'I have my quiet time every day. I tithe. I share the

Gospel. I am praying for revival. I never miss worship.’ For everything I just said I could say ‘Praise God!’ but actually we turn it into ‘praise me.’

Wherever you are in any success in life, God’s grace, when it’s there, allows you to see that you wouldn’t be where you are in life or doing what you do in life without the grace of God. I am what I am by the grace of God and that’s true in everything in life. It’s doubly true if God is giving you spiritual victories in life. I love the way my friend Sandy Wilson talks about this. He says when you walk through a field if there is a fence post with a turtle on it you know that you’re not the first one in that field. You and I are turtles on a fence post. Wherever we are in our relationship with God and in our spiritual life, we are on that fence post because God put us there. If we’re on that fence post praise God but the tendency is to praise ourselves, put our confidence in ourselves and compare ourselves to other people instead of praising God for what He has done in our life.

I have really been convicted where I am. Here I stand on a raised platform, a pulpit with hundreds of people looking at me, spotlights shining on me, with four cameras following me, boy you must be something. We are always on the edge at the moments of God’s greatest blessings of turning them into cursings because we think it’s about us, for us, from us and because of us. We have to ask God to give us the grace to humble ourselves. God, You are opposed to the proud and I’m never more dangerously close to pride than in my successes in life in any and every area. Let’s now go to the second section of this passage.

God not only is opposed to the proud but He gives grace to the humble. II Chronicles 12:6–8 says [6] *Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is righteous.”* [7] *When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: “They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them **some deliverance**, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.* [8] *Nevertheless, they shall be servants to him, that they may know my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.”*

Now they humble themselves and God gives them some deliverance. Why didn’t He give them complete deliverance? It is the same thing with you. Have you been set free from sin’s guilt, shame and its practice? Yes, but you’re not yet there. Why doesn’t God go ahead and deliver the whole package to us right now? He has given us title right to everything in Christ but I’m not experiencing everything right now in Christ because He is perfecting us. If He gave them the whole deliverance they would be back at pride again. God is going to keep some deliverance and keep Shishak right outside the door. God is going to stop Shishak because they humbled themselves and yet the historians say Shishak stopped because he was running out of water. No he stopped because God stopped him. God brought him and God stopped him and that’s the story behind the story. God sent him because of their pride and stopped him when they humbled themselves. God gives them some reprieve but keeps Shishak there in order to maintain their attention and their reliance on Him and not reliance on their deliverance and success. So let’s continue.

II Chronicles 12:9–12 says [9] *So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made, [10] and King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. [11] And as often as the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard came and carried them and brought them back to the guardroom.*

[12] And when he humbled himself the wrath of the LORD turned from him, so as not to make a complete destruction. Moreover, conditions were good in Judah.

Praise the Lord, revival comes. He gives them some deliverance but allows Shishak to take those gold shields and Rehoboam has bronze shields. Every day Rehoboam has to ask ‘how come we don’t have gold shields?’ Shishak took them and why? He took them because he came up here because of the hand of God and because of our pride but we humbled ourselves so at least we have bronze shields right? So let’s take care of these bronze shields for the Lord and let’s put our trust in the Lord. God gives a greater grace and that is when He delivers us He continues to grow us in our relationship with Him so that the root of pride doesn’t get another grip.

Here is the takeaway. Revival comes down to lift God’s people up when they bow down to lift Him up. It is fair for us to pray for humility and brokenness but the objective is not brokenness. Brokenness is a corrective. The objective is to humble ourselves, exalt the Lord and lift Him up. Then He will lift us up at the right time. The reason that is true, can depend on it and be assured of it, is because of what it says in Philippians 2:5–11; *[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

We need to humble ourselves and He’ll exalt us at the right time. God has done much to save us, to sustain us and to bless us but He hasn’t done much to save us, sustain us and bless us to make much of us. He has done much to save us so that we could be set free to make much of Him. Let’s bow down for our God has bowed down from the heavens to save us. Let’s bow down and exalt Him. Let’s humble ourselves and hoist the sail. May the Wind of God fill the sail and the church would rise up having bowed down before the Lord. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. God, thank You so much for the time to be with Your people. Lord, would You come to each of us that we would bow down and lift You up, knowing that when You were exalted You will exalt us at the right time. Father, thank You for the grace that allows us to humble ourselves. Thank You for the many victories in life. Thank You for our children. Thank You for the blessings for there is so much there but we can so easily turn those blessings into cursings when we think they came from us, for us or because of us. May the blessings become one more reason to humble ourselves and say to the world ‘Jesus reigns for He is exalted!’ in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

Revival is an extraordinary work of God’s grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God’s glory.

GOD-SENT REVIVAL EVIDENCES

1. The foundational evidence of a God-sent revival is God-centered worship.
2. God-sent Revivals lead to Gospel Harvests secured by God the Father, through God the Son by the power, presence and authority of God the Holy Spirit.

God is Opposed to the Proud

God Gives Grace to the Humble

God's Grace is greater than our Sin

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Revival comes down to lift God's people up when they bow down to lift Him up.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR REVIVAL—II CHRONICLES 7:14 (THE TEMPLE PRAYER)

1. Humble themselves
2. Pray
3. Seek my face
4. Turn from their wicked ways

GOD'S DEFINITION OF REVIVAL – EZEKIEL 37 (THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES)

1. Revival is God's work and only God can bring/send it.
2. When God brings/sends Revival He first sends Revival leaders.
3. God brings/sends Revivals through His Word and by His Spirit.
4. God brings/sends Revival not for Revival experiences but for a Revival purpose.
5. Only God brings/sends Revival because only God brings life from death.