



Revival in the Last Days

*So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the early rain for your vindication.
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before. (Joel 2:23)*

This is a verse I have heard and seen oft quoted to assert that there is still a powerful revival to come, what some people call "The Latter Rain". This is a part of the reason for the enthusiasm crowds of people have exhibited over the past 25 years at the notorious false revivals beginning in Kansas City and which took the show on the road to Brownsville, Pensacola, Toronto, Lakeland, various points abroad and most recently opening for a limited engagement in Alabama. (It will not last and fail just like its predecessors.) People who have it in the back of their mind that there is one, last world-altering revival may not be taking the time to assess if what they are seeing is biblically authentic or not. But the greater question I am posing is if there really *is* one, big, final outpouring of the Spirit ahead of us?

I am in the camp which subscribes to the notion that the last days of Judah (as recorded in Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah in particular) leading to the Babylonian Captivity are a shadow teaching of a greater, ultimate fulfillment of the Last Days leading up to the final tussle with what Revelation identifies as "Babylon". (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) It is true that under Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah there were authentic, major revivals in Judah in the overall time line leading up to the Captivity, but after that last authentic one there is only one remaining revival to come during the final years before the arrival of Babylon, and that is a very *temporary* and *false* revival.

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I find the subject of “revival” a bit fascinating because in order to perfectly understand the context of the person inquiring we must know their geographic location. After all, if you are currently in such places as Brazil, China or Indonesia, you are in the midst of an authentic, large-scale “revival” already, if by that term you mean large numbers of people coming to a personal faith in Christ and living forever changed going forward. Such are not asking “if” a revival is coming—they are presently experiencing one. It is important to note that all but the tiniest fraction of those who promote the “Latter Rain” idea of an unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit yet to come are standing over in Western countries who experienced authentic, large-scale revivals already in their past. In a kind of “spiritual myopia” they seem to think because a revival is not taking presently place in their neck of the woods that there is no revival taking place anywhere.

In particular, those of us living in the USA might need to consider that the authentic, large-scale revival approximately running from 1967-1977 might have been our version of the last true revival in Judah under Josiah. It might not be so crazy to give real thought and prayer as to whether or not we are standing on the **other** side of the “Latter Rain” which has already come and gone, and that we are actually looking back on it at present. If so, what lies before us? It might be what Jeremiah and company were facing in the days of the last four kings of Judah. Jeremiah saw the reign of Josiah at the beginning of his ministry, but what he experienced going forward was not another **true** revival, but a patently **false** one.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem to proclaim release to them: that each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman; so that no one should keep them, a Jew his brother, in bondage. And all the officials and all the people obeyed who had entered into the covenant that each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, so that no one should keep them any longer in bondage; they obeyed, and set them free. But afterward they turned around and took back the male servants and the female

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servants whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection for male servants and for female servants. (Jer. 34:8–11)

The Law given through Moses provided for a way to pay off a debt through personal service. God commanded that His people were not to deal with their fellow countrymen harshly, but to engage in a system wherein the debtor would enter into the debt holder's service. This was not the kind of horrific slavery practiced in the early history of Western nations, but obligated both parties to much more of a kind of business and living arrangement.

'If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, that he may return to the property of his forefathers. For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale. You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God. (Lev. 25:39–43)

The indebted became a member of the household and all of their basic needs were met while they dedicated themselves to paying off their debt through full-time service. Notice that God specifically commanded, "*you shall not subject him to a slave's service*" but "*as a hired man*". And among the instructions for the treatment of such people in this particular arrangement is the provision that it be only temporary, after which time they are not just freed but restored to the property they had to originally forfeit as part of the repayment process. Like clockwork this was supposed to happen every seventh year.

"If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. (Ex. 21:2)

So what was the nature of this last "revival"? Having forsaken obedience to this biblical requirement for who knows how long, they

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finally get around to actually effecting the “permanent” release of their fellow debtors—for a couple of days!

It is important to note that this action was carried out under a stricter set of spiritual circumstances than normal. Jeremiah begins with the fact that this was all done as a separate, additional covenant: “*King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem to proclaim release*”. We have seen this making of a covenant with the people to obey God used before such as Josiah, who in the course of that revival, led the people to enter into a covenant to “*walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments*”. (2 Ki. 23:3) Zedekiah did not merely make a suggestion which everyone followed through on, but led the people in a personal re-commitment to obey God in this specific matter. Every time in Scripture we see the making of a covenant it is no small or marginal matter but elevates the seriousness of what is taking place to the highest level. It expresses a “revival” taking place, an event where there is a personal commitment to God and His Word.

One might ask why Zedekiah only “*made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem*”? Why not the whole of Judah? Jerusalem is really all that is left to him at this point. Just as we are experiencing at present as we approach the last hour, spiritual darkness encroaches on God’s people and the faithful become fewer and fewer. Desperate backslidden believers had enough recognition to realize the overwhelming state of the situation and the need to do something spiritually to deal with it. They **knew** that obedience to the Word was the solution, but they still chose **not** to fully carry it out—something for which a case could be made that the same thing is being replayed at this very moment.

The final “revival” was a **false** revival. The majority of those claiming the heritage of being God’s people feigned temporary obedience to God’s Word and ways, but were so conditioned to a lifestyle of disobedience they could not truly follow through. And I do not think it

an eschatological coincidence that it was not a struggle between the saved and the unsaved; this was an issue of God's **people's** treatment of God's **people**. It was a time of apostasy, of God's people falling away from what they once knew and practiced.

Earlier in Jeremiah's ministry God specified that one of the things He was very unhappy about was their abandonment of observing the Sabbath. Jeremiah 17:19-27 records God's warning about their treatment of the Sabbath, which was intended as a sign of the Mosaic covenant to **outwardly** prove their **inward** spiritual obedience and faithfulness.

*"But it will come about, **if you listen** attentively to Me," declares the LORD, "to bring no load in through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but **to keep the sabbath day holy** by doing no work on it...But **if you do not listen** to Me **to keep the sabbath day holy** by not carrying a load and coming in through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched."'" (Jer. 17:24, 27)*

Their inability to be faithful where the Sabbath was concerned was a symptom—an indicator—of their lack of faithfulness toward the **entire** Law. And since they had such difficulty keeping the simple requirement of the Sabbath, it is no surprise that they did not keep the sabbath cycle of rest for the land mandated by the Law. Every seventh year the land was supposed to be given a sabbath rest, (Lev. 25:1-7) so God's calculation of how long they would be in the Captivity equaled a year for each sabbath cycle missed. For 490 years they failed to observe this seven year sabbath interval, so for each of those 70 misses they would have to serve a 70 year sentence in the Captivity.

Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete. (2 Chr. 36:20–21)

Their unfaithfulness to the requirements of the basic observance of the weekly Sabbath expanded to their unfaithfulness to the requirements to let the land rest every seven year sabbath cycle.

So they disobeyed God personally on the daily level in their lives where the *weekly* Sabbath was concerned, they disobeyed God where the sabbath cycle for *the land* as a whole was concerned, and now in the final days leading up to the end they disobey God where the sabbath cycle for the treatment of *each other* is concerned. They have taken the very thing which is supposed to be a public testimony of their spiritual faithfulness and provided indisputable proof of their *unfaithfulness* by not just making the sign of their covenant relationship with God personally worthless, but allowing it to pollute the land and corrupt their relationships. They are unfaithful in their personal relationship with God, in their relationship to the things God entrusted to them, and finally in their personal relationships. The very thing that is supposed to separate them from the world and identify them with the One True God is willfully broken on every conceivable level. As it was then, so it is now, that those who go to church are by-and-large indistinguishable from the worldly who do not.

It should be noted that this false revival in Jeremiah 34 is followed up with the example of a very small but faithful remnant in Jeremiah 35 in the account of the Rechabites' obedience in the midst of Israel's dismal spiritual failure, and then followed in Jeremiah 36-37 with the account of what the so-called people of God do when they find they cannot keep His Word anyway: the complete rejection of God's Word as depicted in the account of the cutting and burning of Jeremiah's scroll. The false revival of temporal obedience to the Word is followed not just by an abandonment of the Word, but becoming actual *enemies* of the Word.

Would you say that most Christians today are visible testimonies of the working of God's Word in their life or less so? Are those claiming the label "Christian" more apt to be living a committed, crucified life or

more likely to have lapsed back into their old life in the world? Is the church as a whole today committed to the Word or ridding itself of the Word? If the last days of Judah prefigure in shadow the ultimate fulfillment of the Last Days before Christ's return, do we still have a "Latter Rain" Josiah-type of revival to look forward to, or is that behind us and the false revival of Zedekiah unfolding or on just the horizon before us?

For more than 20 years in America, at least, we have been promised one big revival after another which have all turned out to be false revivals. This is why I do not simply think that there may not be an authentic revival waiting ahead of us, but that as in Jeremiah's day we have seen the false revival and are in those wretched, final days just before the end. Instead of there being some kind of reaction or backlash to each of the aforementioned false revivals in America where people realize their mistake and large-scale repentance is witnessed, we simply get yet another false revival bigger than the last. My heart still clings to the hope of a "Latter Rain" yet to come, but my mind is just not buying it because of what I continue to see and hear.

Today as in Jeremiah's day, we see that each true prophet is outnumbered by thousands of false prophets, we see the kind of apostasy which defined those waning days and after a large authentic revival the final one that comes is temporary and false. And what came next in those days which we are also seeing now? Not just the **abandonment** but the **destruction** of the Word.

We have translations of the Bible so heretical today (e.g., *The Message*, *The Voice*, etc.) that just a generation ago it would not have been feasible to publish them amid the outcry that would have arose against their publishers by the then-majority of Bible-believing Evangelicals.

We not only have with us the usual suspects who distort and misrepresent God's Word, we have something new and more shocking in a Rick Warren who has cut and pasted different parts of Scripture to

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present something never intended in God's Word. Not even leaders of cults or false religions have done such a thing, but it has now happened by the hand of the one many consider to be "America's Pastor"!

We have Tony Campolo's "red letter/black letter" heresy which claims only the words of Jesus highlighted in red are immutable, that everything else is negotiable which man can therefore re-write, ignore or reinterpret to his own satisfaction.

We have Bibles which would rather be inclusivist, gender-neutral, sensitive to animal rights and mother earth, or politically correct for the gay community's sake. None hold to the literal meaning of the original languages by which God presented His Word in the first place much less embrace God's Word as propositional truth.

We are **already** living at a time when the scroll of God's Word is being sliced, diced and burned! Every authentic revival recorded in Scripture and documented in history is characterized as not just a return to the blood but the Word. How will a revival come to those who are not just abandoning but destroying the Word? Are we really in a time where the last authentic revival of Josiah is yet to come or are we already on the other side of it looking back?

Yes, there is always a faithful remnant. But just as it was in Jeremiah's time it appears to be getting much, much smaller, and the number of church-goers who are breaking their new covenant relationship with God on every conceivable level in the character of their Old Testament counterparts is actually becoming normative. This is what apostasy looked like then, and this is what it looks like on an even greater scale at present.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'I made a covenant with your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, saying, "At the end of seven years each of you shall set free his Hebrew brother who has been sold to you and has served you six years, you

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shall send him out free from you; but your forefathers did not obey Me or incline their ear to Me. Although recently you had turned and done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor, and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. Yet you turned and profaned My name, and each man took back his male servant and each man his female servant whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your male servants and female servants.”

“Therefore thus says the LORD, ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming release each man to his brother and each man to his neighbor. Behold, I am proclaiming a release to you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine; and I will make you a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. (Jer. 34:12-17)

If Old Testament believers were held accountable in this manner, how much more so will the church in the age of grace be held **even more** responsible? The apostasy might be much greater and further along than is generally acknowledged, but to the faithful I would also offer that it may be even **later** and **closer** to His return than we think.

In Him,

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