

X. Revival in Biblical Perspective

Revive Us Again!

“The Asa Revival – Seeking the Face of God”

II Chronicles 14–16

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In this study we will be looking at II Chronicles 14 and 15. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. II Chronicles 15:1–19 says [1] *The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, [2] and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. [3] For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, [4] but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. [5] In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. [6] They were broken in pieces. Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. [7] But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”* (That was the sermon of Azariah.)

[8] *As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD. [9] And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. [10] They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. [11] They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep. [12] And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul, [13] but that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. [14] They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. [15] And **all Judah rejoiced over the oath**, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.*

[16] *Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron. [17] But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days. [18] And he brought into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts, silver, and gold, and vessels. [19] And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.*

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 this series on revival we are looking at the theme verse from Psalm 85:6 which says [6] *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* This verse tells us God’s people are fickle and faithless but God is faithful. When we, not if, we falter and draw away then He draws us back, revive us again! We are looking at this matter of revival because of

what revival is. 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.

Why is it extraordinary work of God's grace? It is because God takes what is dead and brings it to life and only God can do this. Revival does not get worked up with we schedule it. It comes down into the lives of God's people for a very specific purpose. The objective of revival is not revival but it is to get us where we are supposed to be – enjoying and loving the presence and power of the living God. How does He bring revival? He brings it through ordinary people in ordinary places through ordinary means, like preaching, prayer and fellowship and when He does it He does it for extraordinary purposes.

When God raises His people up, which is the objective of revival, He raises them up for two purposes and we call these the evidences of a God-sent revival. The first evidence is the foundation evidence of a God-sent revival and that is God-centered worship. Think of the cross. There is a vertical and a horizontal. When God comes down and revives His people the extraordinary consequence is first of all instead of self-centered living there is now a God-centered living that is epitomized with the pinnacle foundation of God-centered worship. It is not blessing-centered worship or the blessings of worship directly but God-centered. [1] *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!* (Psalm 103:1).

The second evidence is we move from the vertical to the horizontal. It is that 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. In other words, when He enlivens His people they not only praise Him but they reach out and many are drawn to Christ. There is this sweeping movement of the Gospel as men and women are brought into the Kingdom of God and among God's people through what God is doing in their lives.

By the end of this year, there will have been about eleven texts of Scriptures that we will have walked through that give us revivals and there will be two books of the Bible we will have spent time in. Right now we are in II Chronicles to look at five revivals and then by the end of the year will be in I Peter which is the revived church in exile as they live as insiders even though they are considered outsiders. That is how I Peter puts the profile of God's people. Right now we're in the book of Chronicles.

So why are we in the book of Chronicles? The book of Chronicles is very interesting. It was written after the exile of Israel. Israel is delivered from Egypt and has the period of the judges. Then they have a king, King Saul. After Saul they get King David. After David they get Solomon and after Solomon the kingdom is divided where ten tribes go off under the rule of Jeroboam and two tribes remain faithful under the seed of David which is now under Rehoboam. Chronicles gives us the history of Israel and what's unusual about that is we've already had two histories of Israel in I and II Samuel and I and II Kings.

I and II Chronicles is basically recapitulating what is in I and II Samuel and I and II Kings but it's not merely redundancy. There is another purpose and that is this writer is writing to a people who have been freed from a Babylonian exile. They have returned, are dis-spirited, discouraged, feel like they have been abandoned and they have abandoned the Lord. They haven't fully abandoned Him for they have tried to mix in the gods of this age with the Lord which is the same thing as abandoning the Lord. They are in need of revival. Originally this book was just Chronicles but we have divided it up for ease to get around it. In this book was a distinct purpose and that was to show what God had done in the lives of His people. After the division of the kingdom this is what God did under those rulers of David's line among the southern kingdom. God has constantly revived His people and woven into II Chronicles five

revivals but they are there in a very specific way. God loves to use history to inspire us, instruct us and to encourage us. That is what the writer of Chronicles is doing.

The first thing the writer does is to show us that Solomon was allowed to build the temple. Then the glory of God filled the temple. Then Solomon offered up a prayer for the temple. Then God spoke and this is what He said, not if but when My people forsake Me this is what will happen, four things and then He'll do three things. II Chronicles 7:14 says *[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.*** He will bring revival to them. Revival can't be worked up for only God can bring it down but here God lays out His divine design for revival. So we see in this verse that if God's people will do these four things then He will do these three things.

So that we get this lesson, the writer of Chronicles records five revivals and all five include these four elements of the divine design of how God brings revival, but each one emphasizes one of them. In the last study we looked at the first revival which took place under King Rehoboam who is the grandson of David. Rehoboam leads God's people in revival and 29 times in the book of Chronicles this phrase 'humble yourself' is used and over half of them are mentioned in the revival of Rehoboam. He humbled himself.

In the last study we learned we learned that revival comes down to lift God's people up when they bow down (humble themselves) to lift Him up. Then God comes down to lift them up in His reviving presence in what He is doing in and through our lives. The next step is to pray and we'll get to that in our next study but in the next revival that is recorded in the days of Asa which is what I just read at the beginning of this study, a second dynamic of revival that will be emphasized in this revival is when God's people seek His face. The two words used for seek is seeking or searching for God and almost a third of the times this word is used in the Bible is used in the revival under Asa. Nine times it affirms that Asa and Judah sought the Lord and what He did. So clearly he is highlighting the seeking of the Lord.

So after Rehoboam comes Abijah who was a good king but we're going to skip him and go to Asa who comes after Abijah. So Asa is the great great grandson of David and another revival is coming. They will humble themselves, pray and turn from their wicked ways but the emphasis is on the fact that they seek the Lord. What is it that we begin to learn about the way they sought the Lord? So what does it mean to seek the Lord? I want to answer this by giving you a couple of things from the text.

Number one, when you seek the Lord you seek Him with all your heart, soul and desires. To seek the Lord is not a half-hearted endeavor. He is not part of a list of the things we seek. We seek Him first and foremost. It said three times in the text that the Lord is to be sought with all the heart, soul and desires. The Lord does not respond to half-hearted seeking. The Lord is found when we seek Him. We don't pick and choose the day we seek Him either. No, we're to seek Him with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our desires. Half-hearted seeking is as blasphemous as ignoring Him.

Two, when you seek Him you destroy all man-made rivals, idols, and places. You destroy everything that would be in front of Him, above Him or beside Him. Let's see how Asa does this. II Chronicles 14:1-4 says *[1] Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land had rest for ten years. [2] And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. [3] He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim [4] and*

commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment.

In order to seek the Lord, Asa personally cut down anything that would call for our adoration, applause or our affection. So how did all those idols and high places get there? You can thank his grandfather Solomon for that. Solomon did well, served the Lord, built the temple for the Lord, followed the Lord, had great wisdom but he didn't finish too well. At the end of his life he sought political power and possession so he started into all these marriage alliances with many wives. As you know when mother isn't happy no one is happy so he allowed them to have their gods and he even allowed Molech, the god of child sacrifice. Then he let them put their gods on the high places so that they would be seen and people would come to worship them. In the text it says one of the high places was opposite the temple. The Mount of Olives is the hill opposite the temple in the days of Solomon and became the mount of idols in those days. Every time I visit that place and stand on that rock formation where Jesus prayed I think about that. Where Jesus prayed and sweat blood before He went to the cross is on a hill that one day was covered with idols under Solomon. He was in the line of David, the Savior of sinners who would go there and set us free from those idols and sins.

Asa not only cut them down but he went into the cities of Judah. He was so intent on this that he took his own mother's idols away. She was the queen mother and that's a very powerful place. He took her position of queen mother away from her and took her gods and ground them up to dust and threw them in a trash heap. He not only went to all the gods in Jerusalem but all the towns in Judah and took down all the gods and high places and even into his own family. He said that nothing will be before the Lord in my own family for we will seek the Lord with all of our heart, soul and desires and will destroy any and all man-made rivals that would be lifted up before our God.

Three, when you seek the Lord you obey His Word. II Chronicles 14:4-5 says *[4] Asa commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. [5] He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him.* When you want to seek the Lord you go to the Word of God. You can't know the God of the Word without the Word of God and when you come to the Word of God you want to hear it and obey it. A preacher named Azariah shows up in II Chronicles 15:8 and tells Asa to destroy all the idols, tell the people to seek the Lord and even all of Judah and if they seek the Lord they will find Him. Azariah is never mentioned anywhere else in the Bible but here. Azariah also told Asa that if they forsake God and don't seek His face then God would forsake them.

In II Chronicles 15:8 it says *[8] As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.* Asa sought the Lord with all of his heart after hearing those words from Azariah and he is telling the people of God what to do as well. God brings revival leaders and a revival preacher to speak to the revival leaders so that God's people might be led in revival.

Fourthly, when you seek the Lord you will be targeted by the Evil One. Let me say it this way, if you simply want to nod your head to Jesus and work Him in when it fits in your schedule, then Satan will leave you alone, but if worship fills your soul, you want to seek the Lord and His presence giving Him praise and His face being all you seek, then you'll go right in the crosshairs of Satan. If you just want to be an add-on believer then he is more than happy to leave you alone

for he has you right where he wants you. This believer just tells others Jesus is a great add-on but He's not worthy of our life. When Jesus is not just first in your life but He is your life then you will go into the crosshairs and that's exactly what Asa and Judah are doing when they now begin to seek the Lord with all their heart. Here is what Asa does.

II Chronicles 14:6–15 says [6] *He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace. [7] And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. **We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side.**" So they built and prospered. [8] And Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, armed with large shields and spears, and 280,000 men from Benjamin that carried shields and drew bows. All these were mighty men of valor.*

[9] Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. [10] And Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. [11] And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." [12] So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. [13] Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians fell until none remained alive, for they were broken before the LORD and his army. The men of Judah carried away very much spoil. [14] And they attacked all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was upon them. They plundered all the cities, for there was much plunder in them. [15] And they struck down the tents of those who had livestock and carried away sheep in abundance and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem. God gives them the victory. Asa seeks Him with all his heart, soul and desires. They set out to destroy man-made idols. They obey His Word. They are then targeted and now that brings us to the fifth one.

Five, when you seek the Lord you enjoy the Providential blessings of the Lord. Asa rules for 41 years and 35 of them are at full peace with no war. Everything he had he kept bringing to the temple to praise God. God blessed him. The people rejoiced. They were able to rest and they were at peace. They experienced these Providential blessings because the Lord was their greatest desire. This is no prosperity gospel for they are not measuring blessing by the things of the world. Their blessing is that they sought the Lord and they found Him. I believe there is joy in the journey of grace. I am extraordinarily blessed to serve Christ alongside of people like you. I have seen God's sustaining hand in my life and your life and that brings me joy, but the joy of the believer while incrementally embraced in the journey of grace is only satisfied in the destination, not the journey and the destination is the Lord Himself. There is our joy – when we are with Him and He is with us. Come unto Me and I will give rest to your soul. There is the ultimate joy. The Providential blessings are magnificent but the joy we ultimately embrace that alone will satisfy us is the Lord Himself.

Six, when you seek the Lord you hear and respond to His Word when it is proclaimed and then seven, you begin to experience the evidences of revival. As God blessed them they kept flocking to the temple, blowing the horn, shouting, giving praise to God with loud voices and they lifted Him up. Evidence number one of God-sent revival is God-centered worship. It absolutely dominated their existence. They sought Him and then did the one thing He seeks from His people and that is the Father seeks true worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and truth. So when this praise is done there is the vertical of a harvest and then what happened?

When the ten tribes of the North saw that the Lord was with the two southern tribes they wanted to join in on that. They all started immigrating after that where the Lord was blessing and I'm not making a political statement here. When God's people start to walk in and with the Lord in the joy of the Lord it begins to attract those who are not His people to Him as His people.

In the next chapter when King Baasha saw all of his ten tribes immigrating down there he built a wall. Again, I'm not making a political statement. He didn't want to let them go. Then he tried to attack them because he could see everybody responding to where the Lord was in the midst of His people. So now we see the horizontal of outreach in revival. So that brings us to the takeaway for our study. This is very important that you get this for we need to do a little theological work here.

The takeaway is our revival relationship with God as His people is a real relationship and that means it's a reciprocal relationship. Azariah was the preacher in this revival with Asa and he said 'If you seek Him you will find Him and if you forsake Him He will forsake you.' One might have a couple of problems with this theologically. Theological problem number one there is none who seek Him, no not one taken from Romans 3. God also tells us He will never leave us nor forsake us and that is exactly right. In as His people He sought us which is why we sought Him. He loved us which is why we love Him. In fact if God is moving in your heart right now you didn't come seeking for He came seeking for you to give you a heart to seek Him. Left on our own we will not seek Him.

When you are converted He seals you by the Holy Spirit and He will never leave you nor forsake you. This is not referring to our saving relationship as His people but this is referring to our daily relationship with Him as His people. This is referring to our walk with Him and not our salvation status. If we as His people deal with Him half-heartedly He doesn't let us live there. If you don't want Me then I'll give you some time without Me. As a church you think you can handle this on yourself ok then I'll let you handle it on your own for a while. If His people who He has sought, saved and indwelt by His Spirit, will seek Me – this is referring to our walk with the Lord. When you seek Him it's not a half-hearted seeking or an intuition seeking. You seek Him with His Spirit by His Word and there is a real reciprocal relationship.

Christianity is not a religion but a relationship that gives us a true religion. In that true religion we have a reciprocal relationship with the Lord. How are we in this relationship? When we were dead He brought us to life. When we weren't seeking Him He sought us. When we didn't love Him He loved us. Because He sought us we sought Him. Because He loved us we love Him. Then you get into the Christian life and it all becomes a little bit of business as usual and then maybe Jesus but the Lord says when those days come He starts giving you what you are doing and wanting in order to deal with you. So when you forsake Him He pulls His felt presence from us, His power from us. We become impotent, illiterate and instead of influencing we influenced by the world. That is what begins to happen but if My people humble themselves and seek Me with all of their heart then they will find Me and I will give them rest.

This is relationship language – seek Me and you'll find Me, knock and I will open, ask and I will answer. As James says in James 4:8, [8] ***Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*** This isn't how we get saved but this is how saved people stay vital and alive. They seek the Lord. They will tear down the high places and they'll even tear down the high places of their mother, father and children. They will tear down high places in their church. They will tear down all the idols and grind them into dust and throw them in the trash heap. Right now the world is reaching out trying to tell you that a little sexual promiscuity, perversion or anarchy is fun and will make your

life but no it will bring nothing but death and disappointment. The world says just a little bit of power, prestige or fame at any cost where all you have to do is make it all about you as you exalt yourself and that's okay. No, that is the idolatry of self and we want to kill it, grind it to pieces and throw it in the trash heap for the Lord's face is all I seek with all my heart, soul and desires. There is a walk for the saved people in and through Jesus Christ but it's not a half-hearted walk or a God add-in walk. The Lord becomes our life.

When I was a kid we would have Wednesday Night Alliance Youth Fellowship and we would play two games – king of the hill and hide and seek. The object of king of the hill was to stay at the top of the hill by knocking everyone off the top of the hill. While we were out there playing king of the hill our parents were in praying to the One who went to the hill, not to throw you off but to bring you to Himself. The object of the other game was to not be found by the seeker but today our God doesn't play hide and seek. He says to seek Me for here I am and we behold His glory, the glory from the only begotten full of grace and truth. John says we beheld Him, touched Him and handled Him. Jesus said 'I didn't do these things in a corner for I did them before your very eyes.' God has revealed Himself in all of His glory. From the prophet Jeremiah He says in Jeremiah 29:13, *[13] You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.* From the prophet Isaiah He says in Isaiah 55:6, *[6] "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near."*

There is coming a day when you won't be able to see Him but today is the day of salvation. He is near, draw near to Him. He draws near to you. O Lord, Your face is all that I seek! In the 1700s promiscuity was everywhere and every fourth house was a pub where people were drunken in all of Europe and 13 young students sought the Lord five times every day. Some were at Christ's Church College at Oxford University, one was at Pembroke whose name was George Whitfield and they sought the Lord. They found Him and there came the Great Awakening that swept Europe, America and ignited a missionary movement that swept Africa and Asia. This is the day that you seek Him. Are there 13 such today? O Lord, Your face is all that I seek. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit come and speak to our hearts. I think of those covenant children who were baptized and which ones will You raise up to seek You and make You known? I think of the college students, young couples and all who are reading this now. Some of us who are older thank You that we still have the day and the breath to know that You're near and that we would seek You. May we seek You with all our heart, soul and desires. May we tear down all the high places and all the idols, grind them to dust and throw them in the trash heap. Father, we will not say our father, mother, or spouse are upset if I seek the Lord and therefore make idols out of them. We want to tear down all the idols to make You beautiful and You are near and we would draw near. Come unto Me all of you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest for your souls, 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.

THE EVIDENCES OF A GOD-SENT REVIVAL

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 Spirit “The Lord of the Harvest.”

GOD'S DESIGN FOR REVIVAL-II Chronicles 7:14 (The Temple Prayer)

1. Humble themselves—Revival comes down to lift God’s people up when they bow down to lift Him up.
2. Pray
3. Seek My face
4. Turn from their wicked ways

FROM REHOBOAM TO ABIJAH TO ASA

THE ASA REVIVAL

Those who seek the Lord...

1. seek Him with all their heart and desire
2. destroy all man-made rivals-idols/places
3. obey His Word
4. will be targeted by the Evil One
5. enjoy Providential blessings of the Lord
6. hear and respond to His Word
7. experience the evidences of Revival.

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Our revival relationship with God as His people is a real relationship—a reciprocal relationship.

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.

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.