

XIII. Revival in Biblical Perspective
Revive Us Again!
“Revival—The Felt and Sustained Presence of God”
Exodus 33:1–16
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We will be looking at this great revival of God’s covenant people as they are making their way into the wilderness to the Promised Land. Exodus 33:1–16 says [1] *The LORD said to Moses, “Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give it.’ [2] I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [3] Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”*

[4] When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. [5] For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.’” [6] Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

[7] Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. [8] Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. [9] When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. [10] And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. [11] Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

[12] Moses said to the LORD, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’ [13] Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” [14] And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” [15] And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. [16] For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

The grass withers, the flower fades, God Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

We are in a series on revival and we have found that revival is not something that can be scheduled, programmed or worked up but it is something that God sends down. When God’s people humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their wicked ways God sends revival but revival is not the objective. The objective is what revival brings. This is our 13th

study in our revival series and we found the definition for revival when we first began with our theme verse in Psalm 85:6 which says *[6] Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*

So our definition of 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's people are as good as dead, like the bones in the valley but God is doing an extraordinary work to turn these bones into living beings in an army of the Lord to accomplish His purposes. This happens through ordinary people through ordinary means of preaching, prayer, fellowship and worship. He brings revival so that we would begin to worship God in spirit and in truth and that we would bring the Gospel to the world. That is one of the reasons we are looking at revival.

We want the Gospel to go to the nations and to our nation which is in a desperate need. Our nation is at a pivotal point in its history for sure. We are in need of a third Great Awakening but that awakening only comes through His church therefore we are in need of revival in the church as the contemporary church is identified with this Biblical illiteracy, with this spiritual impotency, with its reliance on personalities and programs instead of the presence of God with His power. To do that, we've looked at revivals in the book of Chronicles.

I decided in the last study due to various things going on to stop the study of the five revivals we are looking at in II Chronicles 20 which flesh out and illustrate II Chronicles 7:14 which 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.* This verse gives us the four dynamics of how God brings revival – humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their wicked ways. Then we see the blessings of revival which is how God will hear, forgive and heal their land. We will be looking at two more of the five revivals from Hezekiah and Josiah as each one emphasizes an element of the four dynamics of revival.

So in our last study we took a break from the five in Chronicles and looked at the first revival in the Bible which is the revival of Enosh in Genesis 4:26. In that day is when people began to call upon the name of the Lord. So before we go back to those five in Chronicles I'd like to look at this revival in Exodus as God's covenant people are being taken out of bondage of slavery, out of Egypt and they are being brought into the Promised Land. Some extraordinary things have occurred and an extraordinary exchange between God and Moses takes place in Exodus 33 through which revival comes to God's covenant people.

Before we look at this revival with Moses we learned something else about revival. Revival is not the objective but the corrective. What is it that it corrects? It corrects, renews and recalibrates God's people back to being God-centered, God-exalting and God-dependent. It brings the presence of the Lord. In revival the people of God who have been distracted from the Lord but they at one time knew the fullness of God, are now restored by God to being filled with God to overflowing yet they can't get their fill of God. Now the whole focus is God and not just can I get a little religion to fill God in to my life. Jehoshaphat says 'our eyes are on you, Lord.'

God's people have known the fullness of God and that is why when they need to be restored we need a 're-vival.' Now God refreshes, recalibrates, renews and revives them so that now He becomes their life. The fullness of God is filling them up to overflowing and even though they are walking in the presence and power of God they still can't get enough of it. That is why they love to worship, they go to His Word and go to their knees in prayer. From the inside out I want more of God so where do I meet Him? I meet Him in worship, in His Word, on

my knees in the secret closet of prayer, at His Table and with His people. So they begin to be seen as these who bear the marks of revival and it all comes back to the presences of God, His fullness to overflowing but they can't get enough.

Now let's look at Exodus 33. Why did God bring His people out of slavery in His perfect timing, according to what He had promised Abraham 400 plus years earlier? He did it for a specific reason even though there were a number of consequences to it. He was delivering them from the oppression of the Egyptians in slavery to bring His people out to Himself. I am taking you out now come and meet where I am dwelling, Mount Sinai, and worship Me. I am setting you free not so that you can make much of yourself but so that you can make much of Me and worship Me. They come out and Exodus records for 29 chapters how God set His people free to come to Him and He would be with them. The plan was when they came out, God would descend from Mount Sinai and the Shekinah cloud of glory will descend on a tent of meeting that will be put within a tabernacle. Then God would be in their midst and He would go with them on the journey up to the Promised Land that would be given to them. That will be an everlasting relationship there within that Promised Land. There the temple of God will be built in the holy of holies in the midst of His people with the tent of meeting and the tabernacle gone. That is where we are headed.

When they get to Mount Sinai and Moses goes up to get the Law of God they decided not to wait on God and they decided to get God their way. Aaron is commissioned with all of the gold that had been thrown into their possession on the way out by the Egyptians. He then takes that gold to make a golden calf. We will manipulate God with our imagination and not wait for Divine revelation. Moses comes down from Mount Sinai and sees the people in the orgy of their disastrous idolatry. God begins to bring judgment upon them and now God says 'It's time to go on up to the Promised Land, the land I promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' So He tells Moses to take these people up to the Promised Land. God's presence had moved from Mount Sinai into the tent of meeting but both in judgment and in grace that tent of meeting won't be in the midst of the people. God told Moses to pitch the tent outside the camp. God says 'I'll be there outside the camp but I won't be in their midst lest I consume them.'

The judgment is the people have lost the felt intimacy of the presence of God yet God has not lost them. God graciously does not put Himself where He would consume them in their sin and He is outside the camp. Then God tells Moses 'Take these people to the Promised Land. They will inherit a land that is overflowing with milk and honey. It is unbelievable the sustenance and nourishment they will have. There will be six Canaanite tribes there that will be much greater than you but I will do what I need to do to give you the land which means I'll drive them out. So you will get the land, economic prosperity, military superiority, national security and religious significance because an angel will go with them but you don't get Me. I am not going with you.'

You can even see the change in the relationship. Up until now God had said He would send His angel to them and that is very likely a reference to the Second Person of the Trinity but now He says He'll send an angel, not His angel. In Exodus 33 He no longer calls them His people but these people. He no longer says the people He brought up out of Egypt but He says the people Moses brought up out of Egypt. So here is this clear change of relationship and God's decision to remove His presence not just outside the camp but completely from them as He sends them up into this place. Now, how would Moses and the people see this?

What if God made this deal with you and me? Let me ask you two more questions. What makes heaven, heaven? I think there are many blessings in heaven. I'm convinced we'll

know each other but there is only one thing that makes heaven, heaven. So the second question is what would make your life worth living, a life of vitality, of vigor, joyful and robust? If that is all I have then that's all I need. I actually have a third question. Do you think there is any relationship between those two questions?

Let me tell you what God says makes heaven, heaven. John 14:1–3 says [1] *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that **where I am you may be also**.”* The mansions are glorious. The streets are gold. The gates are pearl etc., but what makes heaven, heaven? It is Jesus. We shall behold Him.

What makes life worth living – in the midst of prosperity it keeps you on track and in the presence of adversity it makes you an overcomer? Hebrews 13:5b says [5b] *“He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* Matthew 28:20b says [20b] *“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* That is all we need. Everything else is a gift from the One who is the Indescribable Gift that we might use them for Him. All those other things can be used but they are not Him. He is not simply the Supreme Desire or the Greatest Desire but He becomes the Singular Desire that defines all other desires and when that is your life you are telling people what you know is the blessing of heaven. Our life does not earn our place in heaven but our life reveals what we know about heaven – the One who brings us there and the One who makes it worth being there. He is the Savior of glory.

So what if God were to say to us ‘I’m going to make you prosperous. I’m going to give you economic affluence. I’m going to keep multiplying the numbers and zeroes in your bank account. I’m going to give you military security and supremacy. I will give you personal and national security. I’ll give you some religion also with a little angel coming in and out all the time. So you will get all of that but you don’t get Me.’ What would you say to that?

This is a pretty good contemporary church set up here in Exodus 33. God is nearby outside the camp. God is in a box if we need Him then we can get to Him but He is not so close as to disturb what we might want to do that day. He is not so close to disturb us and convict us but nearby in case we get into some trouble and we want to go and knock on the door. We have a pastor we can pay to go talk to God for us. Moses you can go out and meet Him and come back and tell us what He says. We’re respectful so we’ll stand at our tent door when you go out there and get back. Moses we’ll also give you an assistant pastor named Joshua so that when you come back he can stay there in case there is another word from God. So with all of this and what God has promised when they go to the Promise Land, what would you do?

What would Moses do? God is basically telling Moses he’ll be a military genius for he will drive out nations bigger than Israel. He will lead the nation of Israel to economic prosperity and national security with some supernatural religion thrown in there with an angel. Moses will go down in the history books.

There are three encouraging things that happen in this text from Exodus 33. The first one is that when this deal comes to the people of God they didn’t hear it with applause. They heard it as a disastrous word. It’s not milk and honey that make us or military victories or reputation or the security in this world but You, God make us who we are. We are Your people. In fact, those ornaments that God keeps talking about that we keep fixating on, strip them, take them away. We don’t want anything to get between us and the presence of God.

The second encouraging thing is Moses’ response. Moses would get to be a great commander, a prime minister, a great leader and one who goes down as one of the most

successful in history as he turns nomads into a powerful nation as he displaces six powerful nations in the meantime but Moses says ‘God, that is not what I want. I want You. I want You so much that not only would I strip off ornaments like them but I want to talk to You about this.’ Then you see this unbelievably bold prayer that is not arrogant but it’s just based upon what God has already said. He says ‘God this isn’t what the world needs to see in Your people for they need to see You in Your people. We don’t need an angel. We need the angel of the Lord. We don’t simply want what You can give us but what we want is for You to give us Yourself. That’s what we want. What is it that makes us distinctive? Is it our prosperity? Our security? The applause of this world? No! What makes Your people different is their God is with them. If You are with us then people will know the majesty of our God. They won’t look at us but they will look at You in us.’ That’s exactly where Moses goes to.

The third encouraging thing is a glorious, unbelievable blessing is revealed. Our sin drives God away as we make idols out of this world and what it offers, even though every one of them are doomed to despair and we are doomed to despair if we think they are going to make our lives. If you go read the celebrity page in the newspaper who have all these toys and play things you will soon find out that all their money goes to therapists. Look at the suicide rate. Why is it we keep moving there if that is our life when God says I made you, saved you and sustained you then I will be your life? He will bring the joy of the Lord so that in prosperity He is praised and in adversity He makes us more than conquerors.

In the midst of it God is outside the camp and there is a man who loves the presence of God who goes to the presence of God to intercede that God’s presence would yet be with His people and his name was Moses. Moses is only a preview of coming attractions. There will be another Man who will intercede for us. God Himself will come to us and for us to be one of us that we might be one with Him. That is Jesus. Unlike Moses He is not just a friend to God but He is God Himself who becomes the friend, not of sin but of sinners. He comes among us to indwell us that we might be brought to Him.

There is another coming attraction. That tent of meeting is going to become a tabernacle and that tabernacle is going to become a temple and it will now be fulfilled in Jesus. The glory unmeasured will fall upon Him. John 1:14 says *[14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Then this Jesus who saves us then makes you His tent of meeting as the glory of the Lord is poured out upon you. He dwells within you. I want to give you a takeaway so that then we can make our way into this world to serve this Jesus with this Jesus who works within us.

The takeaway is simple but I think is life changing. It is the felt and sustained presence of God is more important than any success in life – even life itself. It is more important than life itself because this is our life, Christ. He says, ‘Now I will be with you, then I’m making a place where you will be with Me. I know you have the same frailties I have in dealing with sin and the weaknesses of the flesh and own inward man but when I wake up in the morning increasingly I say ‘this day Jesus I want You. I want to be with You. I want to be for You. I know I have You positionally but I want the felt and sustained presence of God and that is more important than what people say about me, what I get hold of, what I earn, gather or accumulate or any success in life, even life itself because everything else is toys of dust unless Jesus is all and in all. Lord, I want my eyes on You.’

I don’t anyone by name who would disagree with me on that. Many times our confessional faith I agree does not match our operational faith so when He comes to the midst of His people in worship and it’s just optional then I have an operational life that reveals the reality

of my true confessional life. It is that operational life that I am asking God to come and do His work in me. You will not find rest in your weary soul until you come to Him. That is why He made you. He made You for Him and your joy will never be full until He is your life. He saved you that your life might be hid in Christ and your life might be Christ. He sustained you every single day and any substitute that you erect or I erect in that day is doomed to failure and despair. It may give a momentary exhilaration in its possession but it doesn't last but when this Savior becomes our delight and our desire then His presence and power come into His life so that when blessings come we praise Him and when adversity comes we trust Him. We trust and put our confidence in Him. That changes our life.

Sometimes the hardest thing in the world is to stay focused on the preeminence of Christ and His presence when things that are coming are blessings and sometimes it's in the midst of adversity. Here is what we do this day. I want to strip away everything. Put off the ornaments of this world. I know He'll give them to me to use for Him but I don't wear them, I want to wear Him. I don't want to be consumed with the acclaim that may come to me but I want to be like Moses and say 'God, that's not what makes me for what makes me is Your presence that You are with me and if You don't go with me then we just soon die here.' In other words, Moses didn't see Exodus 33 as a bump in the road but he saw it as the end of the road. If You don't go with us then just leave us here. Forget the Promised Land or the milk and honey or all of that.

If you want Jesus as your life then I invite you to Him. If you need to pray with someone then contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for there will be someone willing to pray with you. If Jesus is your life then in prosperity you will praise Him and in adversity you'll trust Him and follow Him.

I shared this in the last study but recently my sister lost her life as she was coming to attend my daughter's wedding in which she was so invested in. This has been a hard providence for me for several reasons and that was just one of them. I am working my way through them. One of the things that has helped me is something one of my friends pointed out to me. My sister coming to that wedding feast is very much a parable of the Christian life. All who are believers are all on our way to wedding feast and the trip will be interrupted by death but that doesn't interrupt the objective for that actually accomplishes the objective which is to be with Him.

There was another thing that struck me. The first President of the University of South Carolina who was a Presbyterian minister who also was an unbelievable professor at Columbia Seminary was also the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia. He married into the John Witherspoon family and his name was James Henley Thornwell. He had this wonderful daughter whom he delighted in. He had gone to the General Assembly and he was on his way back so joyful because while he was gone invitations were sent out everywhere for his daughter's wedding who was marrying this wonderful Godly man. He was going to officiate this wedding of his dear daughter who he loved so much.

As he was coming back he had found out his daughter had just contracted typhoid fever and all who received invitations were on their way to this wedding. When he got home she was in the last moments of her life. He was overwhelmed with grief and this hard providence. He was kneeling beside her bed just clinging to her hands praying for God to raise her up. She could hear the despair in her father's voice and the daughter became the teacher of the preacher and the theologian. She said 'Father, don't weep for me.' He said 'My dear daughter your whole life was stretching in front of you, a Godly man as your husband with all of these people coming to your wedding and they are going to end up at your funeral. I cannot bear it for you.' She said

again 'Father, do not weep. I longed for my wedding but in the kind providence of God I now go to a greater wedding. I now go to a greater Bridegroom. I am His and He is mine.' As Thornwell writes, the majesty of God emanates from His presence with his daughter from that bed.

So I can take you where I've been many times, the funeral to the graveside of this young lady. They buried her in her wedding dress and Revelation 20 is written on the tombstone – 'Like a bride prepared for her husband' and I tell you that to tell you this. When the presence of God is the delight of your life then all of life can be lived for His glory and heaven becomes the fulfillment of life now that Christ is our life. He says 'I prepare a place for you, come to Me for I will never leave you nor forsake you.' Let's pray.

Prayer:

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart now. Bless the Lord O my soul. Bless the Lord with all that is within me. Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. Surely the presence of the Lord is in His people. We thank You for Moses but we thank You for the One greater than Moses who has come for us to be with us that we might be with Him. We thank You for the tent of meeting but we thank You more that we are Your tent of meeting. Father if there is anyone reading this that has not yet come to this Savior liberate them from the things that would take hold of their life that brings simply despair when lived and embraced apart from Christ. Father, for those of us who know Christ may the joy of His presence be the delight and the supremacy of our life, not only the awareness of His presence positionally but the intimacy of His presence daily for all eternity, 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.

REVIVAL

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LIFE TAKEWAY

The felt and sustained presence of God is more important than any success in life—even life itself.