



Revival: Essential to God's Eternal Purpose and Plan

POSITION PAPER

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"To Reach a Lost World through a Revived Church." This is the mission of the College of Prayer International. It is the mission of the College of Prayer because it is the mission of God - to revive His Church in order to reach the lost for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

While these are essentially related because they are both the result of the work of God, they are, nevertheless, two distinct works of God. Revival happens in the Church, in the hearts and lives of those who are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have eternal life and will live forever in the fullness of the glorious manifest presence of God. Reaching the lost is bringing God's salvation to those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are on their way to eternal death, being eternally separated from God and all the glorious blessings of His holy, manifest presence.

REVIVAL AND AWAKENING

Historically, these two distinct works of God have come to be designated as "revival" and "awakening." "Revival" is in the church. "Awakening" is of the lost. Both "revival" and "awakening" are dynamic and powerful works of God that can mean the same thing in certain places in the New Testament, (Romans 13:11; Ephesians 5:14). However, in the course of Church history, they have come to mean two different things. Whereas, "revival" is the work of God in the Church, in those who have been made alive "in Christ" (Eph. 2:4), "awakening" is the work of God in saving the lost, those who are outside of Christ and spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). This is because "sleep" is a primary metaphor for death in the Bible. For example, in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John, when Jesus knows that Lazarus, whom He loves, has died, He says to His disciples, "*Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep*" (John 11:11; see also Job 14:12; 1 Cor. 15:18; 1 Thess. 4:13, 15)

This difference is illustrated in a popular movie, *The Princess Bride*, which is a humorous fantasy adventure about "true love." In the movie, the hero, Westley, is tortured in the "Pit of Despair," overcome with pain, and left for dead when his companions find him. Thinking him to be dead, they take him to a healer called "Miracle Max" to raise him from the dead. But after examination, Miracle Max declares that he is not dead. He's "mostly dead." Max then gives Westley's companions a powerful pill to revive him, which, after taking, his strength is gradually restored.

"Dead" and "mostly dead" - that's the difference between spiritual revival and spiritual awakening. Revival is the work of God in the "mostly dead," those in Christ who have been born of God by the life-giving empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Awakening is in "the dead," those outside of Christ who are not true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas the Church must have revival, the lost must have resurrection. This is why the psalmist prayed, "*Will You not Yourself revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?*" (Psalm 85:6).¹

¹ All quotations of Scripture are from the NASB95

WHAT IS REVIVAL?

What is revival? Literally, "revival" means "life-again." It means to bring back, renew, or restore to life, and it can be used about anything that has declined and degenerated and then been renewed and restored. Revival can only take place in something that has previously been made alive. The dead need resurrection. Those who have once been made alive need revival.

Over the course of Church history, there have been many different definitions of revival in the church. Some speak of it as "heaven coming to earth," or a "visitation" of God among His people (Gen. 50:24-25; Ps. 80:14; Luke 7:16). Referring to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:4, some have described it as a "return to first love" for Christ. Others, focusing on the "other end of the bookend" of the seven churches in Revelation and Jesus' words to the lukewarm church in Laodicea, speak of it as "a renewed zeal for the Lord" (Rev. 3:19). Then others speak of revival as "the extraordinary work of God," or "the concentrated work of God," or "the augmented work of God" in the Church. Sadly, as a consequence of a false understanding of the sovereign work of God during what was known as "revival meetings" in the 19th Century United States, the word transitioned to no longer mean the work of God in the Church, but instead scheduled evangelistic meetings that use human methods for the purpose that people outside of Christ will "make a decision" for Christ.

But "revival" is not the work of God in evangelism which is to reach a lost world. It is the work of God in His Church. It is the work of God to renew, restore and bring back the spiritual life of believers in Christ by encountering and experiencing the manifest presence of the Lord Jesus Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

THE ESSENCE OF REVIVAL

While there are many things that happen in and during revival, the essence of revival is God Personally coming in the holy, living, and powerful manifest presence of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the spiritual life of a believer and restore his or her relationship and walk with God. It is the reality of God manifesting His Personal presence - not His omnipresence but manifest presence - as believers encounter Him. This is what we see in every account of revival throughout history.

The archetypal model of every revival is what took place in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost when the spiritual atmosphere and quality of the lives of the 120 gathered in prayer was one thing at 8:59 in the morning and then absolutely different at 9:00 when the Holy Spirit was poured out from heaven upon them. Peter, who had cowardly denied Christ three times just 53 days earlier, boldly stood up and proclaimed to the thousands who had gathered because of what was happening, "*This is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel, 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind'*" (Acts 2:16-17).

1700 years later, during what came to be called "the Great Awakening" in America, the leading theologian and revivalist in America, Jonathan Edwards, pastor of the church in the town of North Hampton, Massachusetts, wrote about this. He said, "There was scarcely a single person in the town, either old or young that was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ. In the year 1735, the town seemed full of the presence of God. Strangers were want to tell that the state of the town could not be conceived by those who had not seen it." The presence of God was so overwhelming, no one could describe.

In 1857, revival broke out in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, during prayer for revival when the pastor felt what seemed like a surge of electricity that struck his head and filled his entire being. Instantly, it spread in the church and then the city. The spiritual atmosphere over Charleston was powerfully altered and a window for revival was opened that led to revival in the entire nation, and then to revival in England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, and across Europe in the years 1858 and 1859. During this revival, the presence of the Holy Spirit overshadowed many parts of the United States. This was especially so along the eastern coast where God's presence spread out to the sea almost 100 miles (160 K) and harden sailors on ships that entered the cloud would come under conviction of sin and begin to cry out to God in repentance.

In 1904, revival came to the churches in Wales, Great Britain. A person who had experienced it said, "A sense of the Lord's presence was everywhere. It pervaded, nay, it created the spiritual atmosphere. It mattered not where one went, the consciousness of the reality and nearness of God followed...in the homes, on the streets, in the mines and factories, in the schools...The cloud of God's presence hung low over much of Wales for months."²

Throughout the course of history, every revival that has taken place, whether it was revivals recorded in the Bible such as the cycles of revivals written about in the Book of Judges, or revivals through the course of church history on every continent of the earth, either in one person or thousands, even millions, every revival has come when God's people encounter and experience the manifest presence of the Lord Jesus Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

REVIVAL IS THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD

Revival is the gracious and sovereign work of all three Persons of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Everything God does is initiated and comes forth from the Father. It is done through the Son, and it is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Creation was the sovereign work of God proceeding from the Father as, in the beginning, He created the heavens and the earth. He did this through the Son, the very Word of God, as God spoke and it came to be. It was done through the power of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God moved over the face of the formless and empty substance of matter to form it so that it could be filled with the glory of God (Gen. 1:1-2, ff.)

The New Creation has been and continues to be the sovereign work of God that comes from the grace of God the Father. It was secured by the work of God the Son Who became a human being in the real, historic person, Jesus of Nazareth, God in human flesh having two natures in one Person, who died on the cross for our sins, rose from the dead, and was enthroned in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. It is applied by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit when a person is born of God the Holy Spirit, comes to saving faith in Christ and is transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And revival is the sovereign work of God. This happens when true believers in Christ encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why the psalmist prayed, "**Will You not Yourself revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?**" (Psalm 85:6).

Revival is the sovereign work of God. The Scriptures reveal, and church history has demonstrated, that everything that is a necessary means for revival to happen, everything that God has shown that is essential for revival to take place, is ultimately the work of God. Just as with the harvest of wheat, it is necessary to break up the fallow ground by plowing the soil, planting the seed, watering and cultivating the plant in order for the grain to come forth at the time of harvest, so there are things that God has ordained as the necessary for revival to come forth. But each and every one of them is ultimately the work of God. This is why God declared through the prophet Zechariah, "*Not by might, or by power, meaning human effort, but by My Spirit,*" says the LORD of Hosts" (Zech. 4:6). And this is why the Apostle Paul wrote, "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth*" (1 Cor. 3:6). While there are things we must do for God's will and work to be done and for revival to come, ultimately that which makes them all effective is the power of God Himself. For this reason it is written, "**Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,** ²¹ **to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**" (Eph. 3:20-21)

PRAYER THAT BRINGS REVIVAL IS THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD

As God has clearly revealed, the first work that we must do for revival to come is prayer. 2 Chronicles 7:14, one of the greatest promises of Scripture concerning revival, says, "*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, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*" Prayer is absolutely essential to bring about revival. The

² Wesley Duewel, *Revival Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), p.183-84

great Bible teacher of the 19th century, R.A. Torrey, wrote, "There have been many revivals without much preaching, but there has never been a mighty revival without much praying."

While prayer is what we must do, ultimately all prayer that brings about revival, as well as every work of God, is the sovereign work of God. This is what we clearly see in Psalm 2:8. This verse is one of the most significant verses in all of Scripture that reveals God's ultimate purpose for all creation, as well as what He has ordained as the necessary means for how He will accomplish it. Quoting the Son of God, God the Father charged Him, saying, "*Ask of Me and I will give you the nations.*" It is God Who initiates all prayer that ultimately fulfills His will and purpose.

Prayer that accomplishes God's purposes is the sovereign work of God in and through the minds and hearts of His people. It begins with God the Father. Then we are to pray to Him in the Name of Jesus, the Son of God, in the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. As Ephesians 6:18 says, "*With all prayer and petition, pray at all times **in the Spirit.***" And again, Jude 20 says we are to be "*praying **in the Spirit.***" Even when we don't know how to pray, or what words to say, Romans 8:26 says "*the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but **the Spirit Himself** intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*" Prayer, and especially prayer for revival that accomplishes God's will and purpose, is ultimately the sovereign work of God. As the gifted Bible commentator Matthew Henry observed, "When God intends great mercy, He first sets His people a-praying."

PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD THAT BRINGS REVIVAL IS THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD

Revival only comes, and can only come through the preaching, teaching and proclamation of the Truth of the Word of God. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), one of the great authorities on revival³, observed that there has never been a revival coming from the Holy Spirit apart from the truth of the word of God. This is because the Holy Spirit, Who is the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), will not work, indeed, cannot work contrary to the truth of the holy words of Scripture that He inspired to be written. Jesus concisely stated the absolute necessity of the truth of the word of God in the work of God in His prayer to the Father, "*Sanctify them in **the truth. Your word is truth***" (John 17:17). To "*sanctify*" means "to make holy," which is what God does in revival. The Apostle Paul also writes of this essential work of God in Ephesians 5:26 when, speaking about the purpose of Christ's sacrificial death for His church, he said, "*that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the **word.***"

For revival to come, the truth of the word of God must be preached, proclaimed and taught. But ultimately, preaching and teaching the word of God that brings revival is the sovereign work of God accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul unambiguously stated this, writing "*the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life***" (2 Cor. 3:6). The "*letter*" is not some kind of legalistic human-made rules and regulations but the holy Scriptures themselves, the very "writings" of God.

While many Christians often speak of the written word as having power in and of itself, this is not what the Scriptures state. The only way the truth of the written word of God can become alive in the heart and mind of anyone is by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. This was tragically exhibited by the Pharisees whose lives were devoted to the Scriptures but rejected and crucified Jesus. Just as God has ordained that the only way there can be a harvest is for the seed to be planted in the soil, yet the seed itself will remain "dormmate" and "dead" until it is germinated by power of water, so also God has ordained that the only way revival can come is through the truth of the word of God that is made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The reality of this was supremely demonstrated in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the very Word of God incarnate. If any "bare" citation of the words of Scripture would have had persuasive power, it would have been those coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Who taught the truth of the Word of God as God the Father revealed and commanded Him (John 14:10, 24). Yet He Himself said that the only way His words had life-giving power is because of the power of the Holy Spirit Who makes them come alive in the hearts and minds of people. Speaking to "*many of His disciples*" who "stumbled" at His words as

³ See, for example, his classic book, *Revival*

they were offended and would not "listen," meaning they would not believe and receive them, He said, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life*" (John 6:63). "The flesh" will produce nothing, even from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The truth of the word of God must be made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit, as Paul wrote, "*the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power*" (1 Cor. 4:20) This is why Jesus had to be "anointed" with the Holy Spirit to empower Him to effectively minister the word of God (Luke 4:18). It is why He told His disciples they had to have "power" from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8)

CONVICTION OF SIN THAT BRINGS REVIVAL IS THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD

The word of God says, "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). The essence of "death" is not non-existence, though with some things this may happen. It is separation, as when a person dies and their spirit separates from the physical body (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46). This is the "wages" or the just payment and consequence of sin. Ultimately, this is what will happen to those who are not saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ when they are eternally separated from God.

But the Bible speaks of a different kind of "separation" that comes between God and those who are His when they sin. Isaiah the prophet declared to the people of God, "*Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear*" (Isa. 59:1-2). Isaiah speaks of this "separation" as God having "hidden His face." The prophet is clearly declaring that this kind of "separation" has come about because their "iniquities" and "sins" have caused God to withdrawn His manifest presence from them. This kind of "separation" is not what happens to unbelievers outside of Christ, but to believers in Christ.

When God's people fall into sin by drifting away from their first love of Christ and become lukewarm in their spiritual life by living according to the flesh and the ways of the world, the Holy Spirit is grieved (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30) and His manifest presence is quenched (1 Thess. 5:19). Their desperate need is to be aware of their sin, what Jesus spoke of as "conviction" of sin (John 16:18). Whether it is, first of all, in the hearts of unbelievers, or the hearts and conscience of those who are believers, when people are living in the darkness of sin, the only way they will be delivered is to be convicted of their sin. This means that the only way for revival to come is for believers in Christ to be convicted of their sin that is grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit and separating them from the manifest presence of Christ. Jesus said this only comes about through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, He said, "*I will send Him to you, and He, when He comes, will convict of sin*" (John 16:7-8).

It is in answer to prayer and through the truth of the word of God that God begins His work of revival by convicting His people of the sin that has hindered and harmed their relationship with God. So intense can this conviction be in the hearts and lives of people, that historic accounts of revival report that individuals and even groups became fearfully distressed, groaning with agony, and even overwhelmed with what seems to be unbearable sorrow at having offended God. One of the greatest examples of this in the Bible is the prophet Isaiah himself. In his personal testimony, recorded in chapter 6 of his prophecy, he describes his experience of coming into the holy, manifest presence of God where he saw the LORD high and lifted up with the angels calling out "*Holy, Holy, Holy.*" When he encounters God's holy, manifest presence, he cries out in desperate awareness and conviction of sin, saying, "*Woe unto me for I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips*" (Isa. 6:1-5). This led to his own personal revival, and then to some of the greatest and most majestic "revival preaching" in all of Scripture, as the book of Isaiah records. All of this was the result of the sovereign work of God in convicting him of his sin when he personally encountered and experience the manifest presence of Christ (See John 12:41).

REPENTANCE THAT BRINGS REVIVAL IS THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD

There cannot be revival without repentance. This is stated in 2 Chronicles 7:14 as being essential to revival, when God says, "*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, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." This is why the foremost feature of the ministry of John the Baptist, who literally "prepared the way for the Lord," was repentance (Matt. 3:2). It is also why the first words of "the good news" that Jesus preached was "repent" (Matt. 4:17).

The most common Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is translated "repent" is "shub," which literally means "turn." Characteristic of the Hebrew culture of the Old Testament, it focuses on the outward actions of the whole person who "turns" from his or her "*wicked way*." "Way" describes the pattern and habits resulting from life-decisions that have become like a characteristic "path" or "road" on which a person travels through life. The Bible says there are ultimately only two ways, one that is righteous, living in obedience to God, and the other "*wicked*," or literally "evil," because one is living in "*sin*." Repentance describes a person who makes a "U-turn" in the way they are living as they "turn" from sin to walk in God's ways.

While the Hebrew culture emphasizes the outer man, the Greek culture focuses on the mind, the "inner man," or as contemporary English translations say, "the inner self" (Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16). This is seen in the Greek word translated "repentance" in the New Testament, "metanoia," which literally means a "change of mind."

Combining these, the Bible defines repentance as a change of mind and heart that results in the change of the whole direction of a person's life - their decisions, habits, and pattern of life - from living in sinful and evil ways to obey God. This is an essential aspect of revival, for while a person may be convicted by God of their sinful ways, they may not repent. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*" When Christians have lost their first love for Christ and become lukewarm, they can be, and often have "*sorrow*" and "*regret*," being sorry for their sins. They can even confess them to God and ask people to pray for them. But sadly, many don't repent. There isn't a real change of lifestyle that comes from turning from ungodly habits and "*ways*" of life. There isn't a breaking of the power and addiction to sin in their lives. Because of this, there is not revival because without real repentance there cannot be real revival.

Repentance is something we do, and because of this many believe that revival will not, indeed, cannot come unless people repent. Often, Christians identify various sins, or simply one particular sin that a person, church, or people must repent of or God either will not, or cannot work to bring revival. They believe it is a necessary prerequisite, a prior condition and requirement that must be fulfilled or revival cannot come. This is frequently expressed in terms of "God has done everything, but now He is waiting for us to act." This understanding is, first, repentance, which is the work of humans, and then, and only then, can God work to bring revival. It is the view that the work of God and the life-giving power of God to bring revival are ultimately dependent on human beings and not on God Who "*gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist*" (Romans 4:17).⁴

But far from repentance ultimately being prerequisite for revival, to the contrary, it is the first evidence of revival. Like the rays of the sunlight breaking through the darkness of clouds. It is the beginning of revival because *it is revival*. Revival takes place when, and as God renews, restores and brings back to spiritual life believers in Christ when they encounter and experience the manifest presence of the Lord Jesus Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. This is God giving revival because repentance is, ultimately, the gracious and sovereign work of God.

⁴ It is this view of revival, that it is completely conditioned and dependent on humans (human choice and human decision) or God cannot work, that originated in the 18th Century, and predominant the popular meaning of "revival." It was the transition from "revival" ultimately being the sovereign work of the life-giving empowering presence of God to that of being, first and ultimately, the work of humans. It is expressed simply as "we plant the seed, and water the crop, and revival will happen." This view is demonstrated in such things as so-called "revival meetings" that are humanly scheduled on human calendar with the emphasis on human methods and means to bring about and cause revival. This is not to say that humans are not to act, that we do not need to choose to repent. But repentance is the result of a person first encountering the manifest presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Humans cannot bring about revival any more than we can cause the sun to shine, the wind to blow, the rain to fall, or the dead to rise. As a farmer must use the God-given means to bring a harvest, plant the seed, and cultivate the ground, yet he is totally dependent on the life-giving power of the sun to shine and the rain to fall on his field or it will be nothing but desolate, barren ground, so revival is ultimately dependent on the gracious and sovereign work of God.

We see this in Acts chapter 11 which recounts the objections of Jewish Christians to the Apostle Peter violating "kosher" regulations by entering the home and eating with an "unclean" Gentile (See Acts 10:9-16; 11:1-3). Testifying to the astonishing experience of God giving *"the same gift"* of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit to these Gentiles as He did with them *"at the beginning"* in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, Peter humbly concluded, *"who was I that I could stand in the way of God"* (Acts 11:15, 17). With this undeniable fact, the Scripture says, *"When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life'"* (Acts 11:18). Repentance is ultimately the gracious work of God.

Then also, Paul says the same thing concerning people who are spiritually dull, or even dead, having been *"ensnared"* by *"the devil"* and become *"captive by him to do his will"* (2 Timothy 2:26). Clearly the only way such people can *"escape"* and be delivered is by the power of God. So, Paul gives instructions to *"the Lord's servant"* about the manner and means for this to happen. The manner is *"kindness, patience, and gentleness,"* which are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23). The means is through speaking the *"truth"* of the word of God (2 Timothy 2:24-25). Yet, even though the Lord's servant may be in the Spirit speaking the truth of the word of God, Paul makes clear that repentance is ultimately the gracious work of God, stating, *"if perhaps God may grant them repentance"* (2 Timothy 2:25). As there cannot be revival without repentance, so also there will ultimately be no repentance apart from the power of God. Repentance is, in fact, the first fruit, the first evidence that God is working to give revival.

REVIVAL IS THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD BECAUSE ONLY GOD GIVES LIFE

While evangelism is the work of God to make "alive" and by resurrecting people who are spiritually *"dead in their trespasses and sins"* (Eph. 2:1-5), revival is the renewal and restoration of spiritual life of those who are in the Church. Both of these, the creating of spiritual life through evangelism and the restoration of spiritual life in revival, are the ultimately the work of God. They are the work of God to build the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. As He said, *"I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18) He is building His Church through His power that is greater than all the power of Hades, the domain of those who have died, as well as the power of Satan. This is ultimately the sovereign work of God, as Jesus makes clear after Peter confessed that Jesus is the *"Messiah, the Son of God,"* saying, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17). This takes place when a person encounters and experiences the manifest presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

Revival is ultimately the sovereign work of God because only God gives life. One of the greatest places in Scripture that we see this reality is Romans 9:9, where, in quoting the words of God to Abraham in Genesis 18:10, Paul writes, *"For this is the word of promise, 'At this time, I will come, and Sarah will have a son.'"* These words were spoken to Abraham who, as Paul writes earlier in Romans, *"contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb"* (Romans 4:19). But according to His sovereign purpose, God gave the "word of promise" to Abraham that He would give life by His sovereign power, which is declared in three assertions.

The first is *"At this time."* The Greek word translated "time" is "kairos," which means "appointed time." This is the word Jesus used in answering the question of His disciples after His resurrection regarding the timing of their "prophecy chart" as to when the kingdom rule of God was going to be manifested. They inquired, *"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"* He said to them, *"It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority"* (Acts 1:6-7). While the Greek word translated "times" is "chronos," meaning the linear, sequence of time going on through the course of history, "epochs" is "kairos," which means the "opportune," or more precisely "appointed time." Jesus said these are "fixed" or "set" on the unchanging calendar of God the Father by His authority alone because He has sovereign authority over all creation.

Throughout the course of the history of God's people, God has given revivals, and everyone has come at "the appointed time" of God. This was declared by Peter when He spoke to the people of Israel in Jerusalem, saying, *"Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"* (Acts 3:19). It was demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit

was poured out on the 120 in the Upper Room at 9:00 in the morning (Acts 2:15). Revival is the sovereign life-giving work of God that happens at God's appointed time

The second assertion of God in Romans 9:9 is "***I will come.***" This is, in a word, what revival is - God comes. He comes when people encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ by the life-power of the Holy Spirit. Revival is not merely the "negative" work of God cleansing and taking away the sin of His people. It is the absolutely positive work of God when He comes to fill His people with His holy, manifest presence.

Then, the third assertion is "***and Sarah will have a son.***" These words of God, as much as any, declare that life comes from God. And because revival is the renewal and restoration of the spiritual life of God's people, God makes it clear that revival is ultimately the sovereign work of God because God alone gives life.

REVIVAL IS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE AND PLAN

Throughout the course of the history of His people, God has brought revival. In comparison to what may be called the "ordinary" times of God working, revivals are times of extraordinary increase of the manifestation of God's presence and power. While they are times of the amplification of the degree of the manifest presence of God, they are not strange or peculiar times to His purpose and plan through the ages of history. Revivals are times "appointed" by God. They are the "waves" of His manifest presence and power breaking on the shore of history, with each wave rushing forth to take new ground, and then receding, yet the tide continues to rise toward the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and plan.

More often than not, people and historians who study revivals focus on the individual characteristics of revivals. They will identify common characteristics of what happened, for example, in the cycles of revival recorded in the Book of Judges, or historic revivals in Church history such as the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the Great Awakening in the 18th century, or the Welsh and Azusa Street Revivals in the early 20th century. And, of course, it is vitally important to do this to learn God's ways in how He brings revival and what happens in revivals. But if we only look at the characteristics of revivals, we may, as the proverb says, "not see the forest for the trees." We may end up only seeing various features of God's working in history, such as pouring out the Holy Spirit, conviction of sin, and repentance, and not understand the big picture of God's eternal purpose and plan. We may not see and understand the most important thing about revivals and why God brings revivals, which is that revivals are an essential aspect of God's eternal purpose and plan. Just as the season of spring is essential in the cycles of the seasons of every year for life to come forth, with the earth reviving in spring, harvest coming in summer, waning in fall, and virtual death in winter, so revivals are appointed times essential to God's eternal purpose and plan.

The practical application of this is the hope and expectation that God's people can have for revival and revivals. When we only look at the particular characteristics of a revival to gain an understanding of how God works in revival, we may claim His promises to encourage us to have a hope for revival. Yet this may only be an elusive hope, one in which we may doubt that revival will actually come. As with the weather, we may hope the sun will shine on the day we plan to take a vacation, or the rain to fall during a time of drought. But we have no power to make the sun shine or to make the rain fall. And while we hope this will happen, we don't have the confident expectation that they will. This is the way people can have a hope for revival. They claim promises for revival, use every human method and power they can to make it happen, yet doubt it may come because they know that ultimately revival only comes when God comes.

However, if we understand and believe the "big picture" that God has revealed about revival in His word and demonstrated through the ages, we will have a certain hope and confident expectation that God will give revival, and that it will come in His "appointed time." This is because revivals are essential for the accomplishing and ultimate fulfillment of His eternal purpose and plan. Every promise God has given for revival, and everything that is essential for revival is based on God's eternal purpose and plan. Simply stated, why are we to believe God's promises for revival? It is because revival is God's will. It is because revival is an essential aspect of God's eternal purpose and plan.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE AND PLAN

While virtually every book of the Bible reveals, in one way or another, God's sovereign rule over history, one of the most prominent is Ephesians that especially gives us understanding of God's eternal purpose and plan. Everything in the book is written from the perspective that God Almighty, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has an eternal purpose and plan that He ordained before He created the universe (Eph.1:4) and that He is sovereignly unfolding through the course of history for all eternity. For ages, it was a mystery, hidden in the mind and heart of God. It was completely unknown to the greatest human minds on earth, many who simply despaired that there is no purpose to life. It was kept from every spiritual being in the heavenly realms, all His holy angels and every Satanic power. While God revealed parts of it to His people through the ongoing ages, His ultimate purpose was a mystery. But then, with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, His life, death, resurrection, and enthronement in heaven at the right hand of God, the ultimate purpose of God's eternal plan was made known.

Describing these things in Ephesians 1:9-10, the Apostle Paul wrote that God "*made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him*"¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." These words speak of God as the administrator, steward, or manager over the "house of history"⁵ in which He is working according to His sovereign "intention" in each of the appointed "times" toward the inevitable "fullness" or culmination of His eternal purpose. The heart of His purpose and plan is in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, because everything is ultimately for the Son of God. It is that everything in the universe, "*things in the heavens and things on the earth,*" will be "*summed up*" in Christ. All the broken pieces of the universe that have been torn apart and destroyed by sin will be united together as one under the sovereign kingdom rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. As was gloriously put to song in Handel's Messiah quoting the book of Revelation, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and He shall reign forever and ever."

Then again, in Ephesians chapter 3, Paul writes about God's eternal plan, saying it "*was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*" And further in verses 9-11, he speaks of God's "*administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;*"¹⁰ so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord." In these few verses, Paul writes about God's "*eternal purpose,*" meaning His purpose that was determined in eternity past and will happen forever through all the ages of unending time. While it was not known in ages past, being "*hidden in God,*" with the coming of Christ "*it has now been revealed by the Spirit*" so that all of God's people can know what it is and live their lives in the knowledge of what is God's sovereign will. It was devised with the purpose to make known "*the manifold wisdom of God*" to every being that will ever be created, including God's enemies, the highest level of the Satanic spiritual beings who are the "*rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*" While the heart of God's eternal purpose and plan is being "*carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,*" it focuses on "*the church*" and what God is doing in and through His people. It is for this reason that not only evangelism, which is giving of life to the spiritually dead and incorporating them into the Church, but revival, which is the restoration and renewal of the spiritual life of those who are in the Church, are essential to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and plan.

⁵ The Greek word translated "*administration*" is "oikonomia" from which the English word "economy" is derived. It literally means "household law," (oiko = household; nomia = law) having the basic idea of administration or management of the household. As with some words in Greek, the full meaning and connotation of the word cannot be translated into one English word. For this reason, there are various translations in English versions such as "*administration*" (NASB), "*plan*" (ESV), "*put into effect*" (NIV), and "*dispensation*" (NKJV/KJV). All of these, in one way or another, bring out aspects of the responsible oversight of a manager or steward of a household. Here it speaks of God's "*administration*" as sovereign ruler over the "house of history." He has a "*plan*" that He determined before the creation of the cosmos that He has "*put into effect.*" This is taking place through the ages, each period of history or "*dispensation.*" This plan will culminate in the "*fullness*" of God's appointed "*times*" to fulfill His ultimate "*purpose*" which is that "*all things*" in the cosmos, "*things in the heavens and things on the earth*" will come under the kingdom rule of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

While God's ultimate purpose is to bring all things together under the sovereign rule of His Son, in the administration of His plan throughout the course of history He has revealed various features of it that are recorded in the Bible. They are like different rooms of the one house God is building. Like different colors of a rainbow that illuminate when the "white" light of the sun shines through the water of the rain, there are many hues of God's one ultimate and eternal plan and purpose. I have attempted to bring together the various parts of God's eternal purpose in one overall statement (though, of course, others may be able to state it better). It is that God will glorify Himself by making Himself known as He fills the earth with His Holy, Manifest Presence in and through His people, composed of individuals from every nation, who are made alive and transformed into the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the whole earth will be living under and according to His sovereign kingdom rule, and the whole earth, and ultimately the whole universe, will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.⁶ Every feature cited is an essential aspect of the overall and ultimate purpose of God, and revival is an essential aspect of all of them. In all these things, He will be glorified because everything God does is for His glory. This is declared in Romans 11:36 in the doxology at the conclusion of the exposition of God's sovereign work in the salvation of the nations, "*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*"

REVIVAL IS THE REVELATION OF GOD MAKING KNOWN WHO HE IS

The first way, and in many ways the most critical thing God does to glorify Himself, is to reveal Who He is. All of creation is a revelation of Who God is. Romans 1:19-20 states God's eternal power and divine nature have been manifested in creation. Beyond this, Jesus said the essence of eternal life is knowing God. In His prayer in the Upper Room the night before He suffered and died, He said to the Father, "*This is eternal life, that they may know You the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent*" (John 17:3). Because revival is the restoration and renewal of spiritual life, revival is an essential aspect of God's eternal purpose and plan which is to make known Who He is. In fact, the work of God in revival is itself God making Himself known for Who He is.

Throughout the history of the Bible in the unfolding of God's eternal purpose and plan, God is quoted as expressly declaring that what He is doing and will do is to make known Who He is. We can see this by highlighting some of these occasions. When God reveals Himself Personally to Jacob in a dream at Bethel to confirm His covenant with the Patriarchs, He introduces Himself saying, "***I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac***" *the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants* (Gen. 28:13). Centuries later, when He is about to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt with the Exodus, He says, "***I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians***" (Ex. 6:7). In many respects, this was archetypal model of revival in the Old Testament, for the Exodus was His work in and for His people.

Then with the outpouring of God's judgments against His enemies,⁷ Pharaoh, the Egyptian people, and the gods of Egypt (Ex.12:12), there is the refrain that they "*shall know that I am the LORD.*" Exodus 7:17,

⁶ This is actually the meaning of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, which has been traditionally translated in English as "Hallowed Be Your Name." The Greek shows it is not a declaration, such as "Praise to Your Name," but an urgent prayer request to the Father that is, literally, "Cause Your Name to be made holy." This is the prayer for the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose, which includes all the various features in the summary statement, and why it is the first petition of the Lord's Prayer.

⁷ In numerous places in Scripture, the Bible reveals that one the motivations of God in His works is in regard to His enemies. Included in His covenant with Abraham is the promise "*your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies* (Gen.22:17). When the ark of the covenant set out, Moses's prayer was, "*Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you*" (Num. 10:35). This is repeated in the prayers for revival of David (Ps. 68:1-2) and Isaiah who wrote, "*Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—² as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil - to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!³ When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence"* (Isa. 64:1-3). (See also Num. 14:13-17; Deut. 32:27). The enemies of God are specifically cited in God's purpose in Christ as stated in Psalm 110:1-2, "*The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."*" ² *The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!*" Christ speaks of this in His purpose for His church, "*I will build my church, and the gates of Hades*

"Thus says the Lord, **"By this you shall know that I am the LORD:** behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood." Exodus 8:10, **"that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God."** Again, Exodus 9:14, **"For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth."** (See also Ex. 8:22; 9:29; 10:2). These judgments climaxed when God was about to destroy the Egyptian armies in the sea, saying, **"I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD"** (Ex. 14:4)

To know God was the foremost desire and prayer of Moses, for himself and for God's people. We see this recorded in Exodus 33:13 when he pleads, **"Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You. Consider, too that this nation is Your people."**

The purpose of God to know Him runs through the Old Testament, with the foremost being in the book of Ezekiel where God states **"you will know"** or **"they will know"** at least 78 times. While in these declarations God speaks of the various works He will do to make Himself known, the culmination of this in Ezekiel is the revival His people, a God says, **"Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore."**²⁹ **"And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God"** (Ezekiel 39:28-29). This is the manifest presence of God, no longer **"hiding His face,"** coming in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will bring revival and restoration to **"the house of Israel"** and fulfill God's purpose that they will **"know that I am the LORD their God."**

When we come to the New Testament, we see that this is a key aspect of the purpose of God in revival. One of the foremost places we find this is the book of Ephesians. To understand this, we must recognize that this book is not written to those outside the church, but to **"saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus"** (Eph.1:2). They have already been born of and **"sealed"** in Christ by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). Nevertheless, Paul's prayers for them recorded in this book are for the work of God in revival in their hearts so that they would know Him. His prayer in Ephesians 1:17-18 is **"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened so that you will know..."** Then in Ephesians 3:19, his prayer is that they would **"know the love of Christ."** It is the knowledge of God in and through the Lord Jesus that is God's purpose for His Church, which is that **"we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."** This is not simply the initial coming to personally know Christ through evangelism. It is the work of God in His people in revival, for in revival God makes Himself known as His people encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

REVIVAL COMES AS GOD FILLS THE EARTH WITH HIS HOLY, MANIFEST PRESENCE

One of the foremost features of God's eternal purpose and plan revealed in the Old Testament is that He will **"fill"** the earth with the knowledge of His glory. Perhaps the most significant things about this is that God made these declarations at critical times in the history of His people, when they were failing to fulfill His purpose. After Israel's climactic rebellion against God of refusing to go into the Promised Land, He pronounced His judgment upon that generation that they would die in the wilderness. Yet God countered this seeming failure with the declaration that His ultimate purpose and plan will prevail, saying, **"Indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD"** (Num. 11:24). Then in Isaiah 11, in the midst of prophecies of God's judgment because of the sins of the kings and His people, God declared, **"For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"** (Isa. 11:9). And further, in the book of Habakkuk, God told the prophet that He would do something no one would have believed (Hab. 1:5). Because of His people's sin, He would bring the evil empire of Babylon to take them into exile. Then, in the midst of the catalogue of

shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This is also one of the reasons and motivations of God for His purpose and plan in the church, which is **"that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places"** (Eph. 3:10)

different sins, God declares, "*For the earth will be **filled** with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*" (Hab. 2:14). What is most important about the historical context in which God makes these declarations is that they are during times of utter decline in the life of His people and they reveal that God will work through revival in His people so that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of His glory.

While the expression "fill" may seem abstract, it simply means filling something that is empty with some other substance, as when an empty glass is filled with water. When the Scriptures speak of the whole earth being "*filled*" with the knowledge of the glory of God, they don't mean that the earth will become like a vast library filled with information, intellectual facts, and theological truths so that people will merely know about God. It means the earth will be filled with the substance of the glory of the manifest presence of God so that the reality of Who He is will be realized through actual personal relationship with Him, being made known through the Lord Jesus Christ by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

This is and has always been God's eternal purpose and plan from the very beginning of His creation of the heavens and the earth. It is first revealed in the second verse of Scripture in Genesis 1:2 which states that "*the earth was formless and void, and the Spirit of God was moving over the waters.*" This describes the time when the "stuff" of the creation was like clay that had not been formed by the Potter, and, because of this, was void or empty. It was then that the creative purpose of God began to take shape as the Spirit of God moved in the days of creation to bring forth all creation according to the "blueprint" of God's architectural design in order that the whole earth might be filled with the glory His manifest presence.⁸

In God's plan, this would supremely take place in and through "*man*" who is created "*male and female*" in "*the image and likeness of God*" (Gen. 1:26-27). This is clearly made known in God's blessing in which He commanded them, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and **fill** the earth*" (Gen. 1:28). God's purpose and plan was for human beings created in His image and likeness to be His supreme dwelling place, being filled with His manifest presence. They would then, both individually and corporately, increase "the ends of the earth" so that in and through them the whole earth would be "filled" with His glory. However, Adam and Eve failed, with the consequence that over time human nature was continually corrupted by sin and His glory withdrew from the earth.

But, according to His purpose and plan through the ages, He would begin to fill the earth with the glory of His manifest presence. This began to take place when He filled the Tabernacle built under the direction of Moses with His glory. Exodus 40:34 records, "*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord **filled** the tabernacle.*" Centuries later, He filled the temple built under the administration of King Solomon with His manifest presence. 1 Kings 8:10-11 says, "*It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord,¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord **filled** the house of the LORD.*" Then in the "*fullness of time, God sent His Son*" (Gal. 4:4), the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom "*the **fullness***" of the glory of God dwelt (John 1:14; Col. 1:19). After His death, resurrection and enthronement at the right hand of God in heaven, He poured out the Holy Spirit so that the manifest presence of God could then "fill" all His people (Acts 2:24) who would then fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Once again, one of the most important books in the New Testament that reveals this is the book of Ephesian. In a number places it states that filling the earth with the glory of His manifest presence in and through His people in Christ is a fundamental feature of God's eternal purpose and plan. Ephesians 1:23 speaks of the Church as "*his body, the **fullness** of him who **fills** all in all.*" Each and every member of the Church is to encounter and experience the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit so that "*Christ may dwell*" in them and they personally come "*to know the love of Christ*" to "*be **filled up to all the **fullness**,***" meaning manifest presence, "*of God*" (Ephesians 3:16-19). Going on, Ephesians 4:10 makes known that the reason Christ "*descended*" from heaven to suffer and die, and then rose from the dead and "*ascended far above all the heavens*" was that He would "*fill all things*" with the glory of His manifest presence. Further, Ephesians 4:13 states the God's purpose and plan for the Church is that "*all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness** of Christ.*" And how will

⁸ This is, in fact, what the holy angels in heaven see as they worship God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3).

this happen? It will take place as each and every one is "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18). Because the book of Ephesians is written to true believers in Christ, it is evident that, in one way or another, this will take place through revival. As the Church encounters and experiences the on-going and greater manifestation of the presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

REVIVAL COMES IN AND THROUGH HIS PEOPLE COMPOSED OF INDIVIDUALS FROM EVERY NATION

God's eternal purpose and plan through the ages has always been to bring His salvation to people from "*every nation, and all tribes and peoples and tongues*" (Rev. 7:9). This was an essential aspect of God's initial call and then His covenant with Abraham. In his initial call by God, he was told, "*In you all families of the earth will be blessed*" (Gen. 12:3). This was again stated as being key to the Lord's own deliberations when He said, "*Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?*" (Gen. 18:17-18). Then a third time, after Abraham offered up Isaac, God said, "*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice*" (Gen. 22:18). This was then reaffirmed in the covenant promises to the Patriarchs Isaac (Gen. 26:4) and Jacob (Gen. 35:11). These covenantal promises reveal God's heart desire to "reach a lost world."

While every promise of God is based on what God desires to do, these covenantal promises to the Patriarchs are based on His unchanging eternal plan to fulfill His eternal purpose. This is revealed in one of the most important verses in all of Scripture concerning God's eternal purpose, Psalm 2:8. This verse quotes the "*decree*" of God the Father in regard to His eternal purpose that comes from His love for His Son (2:7), stating, "*Ask of Me and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.*" In this decree, which took place before the creation of the world (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Tit. 1:2; Rev. 13:8), God declares that He will "give" to His Son individuals from "*all families and nations of the earth*" (John 6:37, 39; 17:2, 24).

While there were indications of this during the period of the Old Covenant as Gentiles joined the nation of Israel, according to the plan of God unfolding through the ages, this began to be completely fulfilled after the Son of God became a human being in Jesus of Nazareth, died "*for the sin of the world*" (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2), and rose from the dead. It was then that the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His Church, "*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations*" (Matt. 28:19). Because this could only be accomplished by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised that, just as He Himself had been anointed with the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:18), His Church would "*receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth,*" or "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Then, after ascending and being enthroned in heaven, on the Day of Pentecost, which was the Feast of "Harvest" in the Hebrew calendar appointed by God, He poured out the manifest empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. This brought revival to all those believers in Christ in order that they, then, would be empowered in evangelism and mission to reach the lost world.

This is the pattern of God's work in Church history, as every historic revival moved, motivated and empowered believers to reach the nations in fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, plan, and promise to His Son. This is God's agenda for this age between the ascension of Christ into heaven until His Second Coming. It is revealed in many places in Scripture, one of the greatest being stated by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His answer to the question of His disciples about the signs that will take place before His "*coming and the end of the age*" (Matt. 24:3). While Jesus spoke of many things that will take place, the one unambiguous sign that would demonstrate that the purpose and plan of God was fulfilled before the end of the age was, "*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come*" (Matt. 24:14).

As the word of God records and Church history demonstrates, the times when the Church moved forward in mission came as the effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival. This, in fact, was the Biblical understanding that led to what Church historians called the "Great Century of Mission Expansion" in

the 18th Century. What many don't know is that the Scripture that persuaded Christians that revivals in the Church must take place for God to fulfill His purpose was Romans 11:25-26.⁹ This passage is the culmination of the Apostle Paul's exposition of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of the nations and His relationship to His covenant people, Israel. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote, "*For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery - so that you will not be wise in your own estimation - that a partial hardening has happened to Israel **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**; ²⁶ and so **all Israel will be saved**; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."* These words are based on God's covenant purpose and promise to His covenant people Israel. They reveal that before the end of the age "*all Israel will be saved*," and, in order for this to take place, there must first come "*the fullness of the Gentiles*," meaning the final "harvest" and completion of the work of missions to every nation. On the basis of this, Bible scholars, pastors, and teachers understood that revival and, in fact, seasons of revival must first come to the Church in order to empower the Church in missions before God's eternal plan culminating in the salvation of His people, Israel, could be fulfilled. This is because revival comes first *in* God's people, and then *through* the revived Church, God can and will reach the lost world so that individuals from every nation will be saved and fulfill His eternal purpose, plan, and promise to His Son, "*I will surely give you **the nations***" (Ps. 2:8)

REVIVAL MAKES ALIVE AND TRANSFORMS GOD'S PEOPLE INTO THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF HIS SON, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

According to God's eternal purpose and plan, the culmination of all His works of creation was to make human beings in His image and likeness. God's desire was that humans would have actual personal relationship with Him, being filled with the glory of His manifest presence, knowing and loving Him. This was expressly stated in the divine counsel of the Trinity at the beginning at the creation, "*Let Us make man in **Our image**, according to **Our likeness***" (Gen. 1:26). So, "*God created man in **His own image**, in **the image of God He created him**; male and female He created them*" (Gen.1:27).

But as the Scripture reveals, the first man, Adam, sinned when he rebelled against God. The consequence was that he was separated from God and spiritually died, along with all of his descendants who are subjected to the curse of death. As the Scripture says, "*In Adam, all die*" (1 Cor. 15:22) and every single person born "of Adam" is "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph.2:1). The power of sin, the deadliest disease there is, infected human nature with the continuing deterioration, corruption and loss of the image and likeness of God in human nature. In a word, people are lost. They must, first, be made alive and, then, continually transformed into the image and likeness of God.

The only way this will take place is for people to encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Just as with the original creation, so now in the new creation, through the word of God empowered by the Holy Spirit in evangelism and mission, the lost are made alive in Christ. Then, just as with the original creation when the Spirit of God moved upon the substance of creation to form it so that it could be filled with the glory of God's manifest presence, so now in the new creation, God moves in the hearts and minds of those in Christ to transform them by the power of the Holy Spirit so that they can be filled with the glory of God's manifest presence.

Into whose image and likeness, then, is every believer in Christ to be transformed? It is the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the "*last Adam, the second man*" into whose image and likeness those in Christ will be transformed. As the Scripture says, "*The first man, Adam, became a living soul.*" *The last Adam became a life-giving spirit...The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.*⁴⁸ *As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.*⁴⁹ *Just as we have borne the **image** of the earthy, we will also bear the **image** of the heavenly*" (1 Cor. 15:45, 47-49).

The Scriptures reveal that the making alive and transformation of every believer into the image and Christ is God's eternal plan and purpose that He determined before the creation of the world. As the Scripture says, "*Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the **image of His Son***" (Romans

⁹ See, for example, Ian Murray, Ian, *The Puritan Hope*. (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971)

8:29). And further, "*just as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him,*" meaning in His holy manifest presence, "*having predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ*" (Eph. 1:4-5). This work of God can only take place as people encounter the manifest presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. As it is written, "*We all, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit*" (2 Cor 3:18). While this working of God is a continuing process, the Scriptures show and church history demonstrates that it is through revival that the progress of this happens in individual lives and churches. This is indicated by the words "*from glory to glory.*"

The word of God shows that, throughout the history of God's people, their spiritual life declines, dulls, and practically becomes "dead." Perhaps the greatest place this is made known is the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoken to seven churches as recorded in the second and third chapters of the book Revelation. Only two of the churches are completely commended by Christ, while the other five are in need of revival. One has lost its first love (Rev.2:4). Another is corrupted by false teaching and sexual sin (Rev. 2:14). Another has fallen further into sin with Satanic occult practices (Rev. 2:24). The worst is one that Jesus says is spiritually "dead" (Rev. 3:10), while the last is "lukewarm" (Rev. 3:16). Far from being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ, these believers were in these churches are in desperate need of revival.

It is for this very reason that God brings revival. It is so that His people can and will repent (Rev. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3, 19). It is then that they will personally fulfill God's will for their lives to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). This happens when they encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ and are filled with life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. This is why God sovereignly works in revival according to His eternal purpose and plan. It is that His people will be transformed into the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

REVIVAL RESULTS IN THE CONTINUAL INCREASE OF THE KINGDOM RULE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

The Bible reveals that, according to His eternal plan and purpose of God, all things in the universe will come together and be united under the kingdom rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart motivation for this is God the Father's love for His only begotten Son. As the Scripture says, "*The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand*" (John 3:35). Jesus Himself said, "*All things have been handed over to Me by My Father*" (Matthew 11:27). And the Gospel of John says that Jesus knew "*the Father had given all things into His hands*" (John 13:3). Ultimately, everything is for the Son.

Through the ages, God has been sovereignly working toward the fulfillment of His heart's desire for His Son. Ephesians 1:9-10 says, God "*made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him*"¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." The key word is "summing up," which various English versions translate as "unite," "bring together," and "gather together."¹⁰ The Greek word is the verb "anakephalaioimai" It is a word that is unique to the Bible, not used in any Greek literature except the Bible, and used only one other time in the Bible.¹¹ The root of the word is "kephale," which means "head." The meaning of the word is more precisely means "headship," literally "to bring under the headship," coming from the metaphor of the head ruling over a body. In other words, this speaks of God's will being first and foremost that "*all things, things in the heavens and things on the earth*" come under the "headship" or kingdom rule and lordship of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be in this way that God will fulfill His decree before the creation of the world to give the nations to His Son (Ps. 2:8) and His covenantal promises to the Patriarch that all nations will be blessed. It will be then, when "*all things*" come under the kingdom rule of Christ, that all that is broken and separated in the creation because of sin and rebellion against God will be united and brought together. God's eternal purpose and plan is first and foremost to bring about the kingdom

¹⁰ The various translations are NASB95, "summing up," ESV, "unite, NIV, "bring together," and NKJV, "gather together."

¹¹ Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010), p.88. The other verse is Romans 13:9

rule of His Son, the man, Jesus Christ, to Whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given (Matt. 28:18). Then, under and according to His kingdom rule all things will be "summed up" and "untied."

The eternal purpose and plan of God that "*man*" would rule over His creation began to be realized on the sixth day of creation, when God created man for this purpose. Genesis reveals, "*Then God said, "Let Us make **man** in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"*" (Gen. 1:26). Then after creating Adam and Eve, "*God blessed them, God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue it**; and **rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth"*" (Gen.1:28).¹² But when Eve was deceived and Adam sinned,¹³ spiritual rule over mankind and the kingdoms of the earth was acquired by Satan (Luke 4:6; John 12:31; 14:30; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19). Now Satan has access to and works within the hearts of all people to exercise his evil kingdom rule that is opposed to the will of God (Matt.13:19; Eph.2:2)

Yet, immediately after this, God foretold that His eternal purpose and plan would one day be realized when the rule of Satan would come to an end and the kingdom rule over the earth would be given to another. In the words of His curse of the serpent, God said, "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall **bruise you on the head**, and you shall bruise him on the heel"*" (Gen. 3:15). These words are the Biblical background to what is written in Ephesians concerning the headship of Christ. While through the treasonous sin of Adam, kingdom rule of the earth was transferred to the headship of Satan, Satan's headship would come to an end with the "*seed of the woman.*" The "death blow" to his spiritual rule took place when the Lord Jesus Christ crushed his "head" by His own death on the cross for the sins of the world. Then, being raised from the dead, He was enthroned at the right hand of God "*until all His enemies are made a footstool under His feet*" (Psalm 110:1), meaning come under His sovereign authority and power.

How then is the kingdom rule of the Lord Jesus Christ to be realized and manifested in the hearts and minds of people who are dead in sin and under the rule of Satan? It begins, first of all, when a person is made alive in Christ and becomes a "*new creation*" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). Being born of God by the Spirit of God, people "*enter the kingdom of God,*" meaning they come under the kingdom rule of Christ (John 3:5-6). Then, they are progressively transformed into the image and likeness of Christ as they follow Christ and do His will because they love Him and keep His commandments.¹⁴ In this way, God's original creation decree to "*man*" to "*fill the earth, **subdue it**, and **rule**" (Gen. 1:28), which was made according His the eternal purpose and plan that the kingdom rule of His Son in the hearts and minds of people from every nation to the ends of the earth, will be fully realized. As the Scripture says in Isaiah 9:6-7, "*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders... **There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom...from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.**"**

Essential to this being accomplished and progressively fulfilled are the "appointed times" of revival. As the record of Scripture shows and church history demonstrates, this takes place when, and only when people encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. This is because, according to God's eternal purpose and plan, revival results in the continual increase of the kingdom rule of the Lord Jesus to the ends of the earth. It is through a revived church that the lost world is reached.

REVIVAL COMES AT THE TIME OF GREAT MORAL DECLINE

Since revivals are essential to God's eternal purpose and plan, when should we expect an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival. Scripture shows and church history demonstrates¹⁵ that it is at the time of great moral decline. It is when God's people become desperate, when they have given up hope for any human power to

¹² See also, Psalm 8:4,6, "*What is man, that You take thought of Him, and the son of man that You care for him...You make him to rule over the works of Your hands, You have put all things under his feet.*"

¹³ See 1 Timothy 2:14

¹⁴ John 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6

¹⁵ See, for example, the numerous lectures by J, Edwin Orr, who describes the extent of moral decline in cultures before times of great revival

bring a change the surrounding culture in which they live, when they hunger and thirst for God Himself, that God will graciously send revival.

We see this throughout Scripture. It was after 400 years in Egypt, when the lives of God's people were made "*bitter with their hard labor*" (Ex. 1:14), and as a result, they "*sighed because of the bondage,*" that they then "*cried out and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God*" (Exodus 2:23). It was then that "*God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*"²⁵ *God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them*" (Exodus 2:24-25). God then brought salvation to His people in the Exodus, and this historic work of God became the archetypal model in the Old Testament for revival of God's people.¹⁶

In the cycles of revival recorded in the book of Judges, we see that in times of rebellion against God and great moral decline that "*the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed*" (Judges 2:15). During this time, "*Israel was brought very low and they cried to the LORD*" (Judges 6:6; also 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:7). It was then that "*the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them*" (Judges 2:18). He then sent the empowering, manifest presence of the Holy Spirit upon leaders and revival took place (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6).

Perhaps the greatest demonstration of this is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. More often than not, Christians don't realize that at that time the spiritual atmosphere of the city of Jerusalem was as dark and desperate as it possibly could be. Just a few weeks before, both the religious leaders and the civil government, along with the people, committed the greatest possible sin there will ever be in the history of the world - they crucified and killed the Son of God. In this spiritually desolate city of the greatest possible moral decline where Satan himself was manifesting his evil kingdom rule, God worked to bring revival. According to His eternal purpose and plan, He raised His Son from the dead, enthroned Him at His right hand in heaven as the highest authority in the universe, and then from there, He poured out the Holy Spirit upon the praying believers in the Upper Room. It was at this time of the greatest possible moral decline, in this place of the greatest spiritual darkness that God gave revival when His people encountered and experienced the manifest presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the way of God, that in the time of great moral decline He will send revival. As God said, "*In the land of My people, **thorns and thistles** shall come up, the palace **abandoned**, the populated city **forsaken**, until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and **the wilderness becomes a fertile plain***" (Isa. 32:13-15). And again, as God said, "*I will pour water on **the thirsty land**, and streams on **the dry ground**. I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants*" (Isa. 44:3).

REACH A LOST WORLD THROUGH A REVIVED CHURCH

Revival comes at times of great moral decline. This is because revival is essential to God's eternal purpose and plan. Every revival is the sovereign work of God because it is God Who gives life as people encounter and experience the manifest presence of Christ through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Every aspect of revival, God answering prayer for revival, the fruitful proclamation of the truth of the Word of God, the conviction of sin, and repentance, is essential to God's eternal purpose and plan. And every room of the house God is building, every color of the rainbow of the light of the glory of God shining through the rain of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the sovereign work of God in a revived church that will reach the lost world. It is as the "waves" of revival break up the shores of the history that the rising tide of the glory of God continues to fill the earth. Through revival, God makes Himself known. Through revival, God fills the earth with His holy, manifest presence. Through revival, the church will be composed of people from every nation. Through revival, God makes alive and transforms His people into the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through revival, the continual increase of the kingdom rule of the Lord Jesus Christ will go to the ends of the earth. Through revival, the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁶ See, for example, *The Exodus Motif in Isaiah*, Bryan Estelle, Westminster Seminary Resource Center, January 1, 2008

It is because of these things, we are to pray with great expectation for great revival, because revival is essential to the eternal purpose and plan of God. His purpose and plan will prevail. He will reach a lost world through a revived church. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.