

12 Fallacies of Christian Church Revival

Do you make these mistakes on Christian Church revival? Take 10 minutes and you will grasp them and how to avoid them.

For centuries, Christians and the church of Jesus Christ have experienced revivals and spiritual awakenings. These revivals differ from a mere revival of religion or devout religious practice.

The interest in revival has mushroomed during recent years. Prayer groups for revival have sprung up all over the world. Some urge fasting and prayer for it.

Articles and books on the subject have exploded into the marketplace. Some people have announced its arrival. Despite its current popularity, ignorance and errors about revival abounds.

Confusion over revival

The notoriety surrounding the issue of revival causes problems. Misunderstanding and ignorance about the meaning of revival grows unabated. The announcements of its arrival by certain groups cause confusion. In addition, others dismiss the whole belief about revival.

Any one who investigates the current discussions on revival senses these problems. The clues that they exist are many. These frequent statements identify their presence:

- “It’s here. The river of revival flows at...”;
- “We do not need revival. Everything is going great.”; and
- “I do not believe in revival. That is Old Testament practice.”

These remarks barely scratch the surface of the problem. Few people even want to discuss revival. Often, when I tell friends and acquaintances of my ministry and desire for revival, they walk away without further comment. Some switch the subject to another topic. Others who remain to discuss it usually reveal great confusion about it.

Consequences of confusion

Ignorance and misunderstanding about revival produce consequences. As a result, Christians lack spiritual power and miss God's glorious manifest presence in their lives. Sometimes, believers separate over the issue.

The greatest repercussion, however, comes from their impact upon the Christian’s relationship with God. These changes identify significant effects in the believer’s life:

- They deify humanity and dethrone the sovereignty of God.
- They center Christianity around self and personal gratification.
- They keep Christians from obeying God.
- They deny God glory, honor, praise, adoration, and fear.

- They degrade His character and nature.
- They abase the truth of Scripture about revival.
- They degrade and reject the works of Christ.
- They reject the work of the Holy Spirit by grieving and quenching His ministry.

Cause of confusion

A few major explanations emerge. Ignorance of the Biblical truth of revival causes the greatest confusion. Sadly, Biblical ignorance in the Church abounds, especially on revival. Many simply do not know that Scripture speaks about it.

Believers doubt God's word as it relates to this important issue. They deny that the Bible speaks about revival or its need in the present day. They ignore the signs for its need and question its possibility today.

Others misunderstand the Biblical record on revival. In some instances, Christians distort the means of revival. Further, these misunderstandings lead people to mistake some religious expressions for revival. In so doing, they prescribe a formula built upon certain methods and means. If followed, they will produce a revival, so they say.

However, God is not a jack-in-the-box. He moves sovereignly in revival even when sincere believers follow Biblical means for revival or follow methods and means used in other revivals. Neither guarantees it.

Clarification of fallacies

Because of confusion about revival, certain fallacies contain the aura of truth. These false assumptions, however, do not comply with Biblical truth. Moreover, although some of them contain a kernel of truth, they miss the whole of the truth. They appear convincing, but closer examination reveals their falsity. The following observations expose their errors.

- **Evangelism**

Many Christians today confuse evangelism with revival. They are not the same. Revival does result in the salvation of lost souls. But, it occurs because of the effects of true revival.

Evangelism pertains to reaching lost men and women with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Of necessity, evangelism reaches the world, the non-Christian. It entails the message of regeneration by the Holy Spirit who brings saving faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners.

These people, dead in their trespasses and sins, need regeneration, the new birth from above by the Spirit. (See John 3.3-8 and Ephesians 2.1-9.) Evangelism is not revival.

- **Excitement**

Segments of the Church mistake excitement for revival. This error equates commotion, thrill, and inspiration with revival. Certainly, they say, such lively animation in religious practice must mean revival has come.

The spirited celebration of David when he first attempted to bring the Ark to Jerusalem resulted in God's judgment for failure to move it according to God's instructions. (See 2 Samuel 6.1-10.)

Certainly, those at the celebration of the Temple in Solomon's day would not have described it as exciting. It went beyond that. (See 2 Chronicles 7.1-3.) Excitement is not revival.

- Enthusiasm

Numerous others interpret enthusiasm as revival. A devoted and eager interest in God and the Church must signal revival. After all, enthusiasm drives participation and cooperation with programs, even Biblically taught programs.

The disciples in Acts 1.1-8 certainly displayed enthusiasm. However, Jesus bridled their enthusiasm and instructed them on their need for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. Enthusiasm is not revival; revival exceeds enthusiasm.

- Enhancements

Others within the Christian community suggest enhancements correspond to revival. By enhancements, they usually mean updated and modern facilities, with the latest in design. Modern equipment, they say, spurs worship and makes it more meaningful (than what?). They prize location of the church property and rely upon external conditions and elements.

Jesus spoke emphatically to this very issue with the woman of Samaria at the well recorded in John 4.19-24. She, like these mistaken ones, thought externals and location resulted in proper worship. Jesus rebuked her, teaching her that God requires true worship, in spirit and in truth. Externals, like enhancements, have no bearing upon it. Enhancements are not revival.

- Emphasis

A large number of believers deem revival as a special emphasis. This special emphasis takes on several uses. To some the emphasis comes in the form of special meetings. The Church designates a certain time of the year for these meetings and calls them "revival meetings."

Still others emphasize certain doctrines to the exclusion of the fundamental truths of Scripture. When this concept results in perceived benefits, they believe that revival has arrived.

Others promote Christian duty as revival. They stress practical Christianity and obedience to designated Biblical means. Practical Christianity certainly needs application, and it can, in some instances, lead to revival. The Church of Ephesus, as described in Revelation 2.1-11, sounds a lot like this kind of church, one with several special emphases in practice. Yet, Jesus rebuked them for their sin and called them to repentance. Emphasis is not revival.

- Emotion

This particular fallacy receives vast recognition as revival. Waves of emotion usually accompany times of revival. Many equate the two and conclude that emotion equals revival. It

does not. Effective speakers and musicians can generate and manipulate emotion in crowds. Individuals can self-generate it, too. Some go to one extreme with an over emphasis upon it, while others dismiss it entirely.

You can have emotional experiences without either saving faith in Christ or repentance. The Old Testament provides a prime example in King Saul, who grieved over his mistreatment of David. The Gospels describe Judas, who betrayed Christ, as deeply sorrowful for his sin. Yet, none of these repented of their sins. (See 1 Samuel 13.8-16; 15.10-31; and Matthew 27.3-10.) They sorrowed not unto repentance.

In 2 Corinthians 7.8-11, Paul warns against false emotion, which does not lead to repentance. Emotional responses do not guarantee revival.

- Effects

In this fallacy, Christians mistake the presence of the effects of revival for revival. In this way, two particular effects get notice, unity and prayer.

Sadly, some Church leaders of today have urged unity with other religious organizations in the hopes of securing revival. Ecumenism has brought joint doctrinal statements and joint efforts. Others beg for unity at any cost, without purity and without truth. However, this kind of agreement yields neither Biblical unity nor revival. It merely opens the door for the entrance of *“false prophets and grievous wolves.”* The Bible warns believers about them. (See Matthew 7.15-23 and Acts 20.29-30.)

In particular today, prayer groups for revival have mushroomed, believing that this special practice equals revival. Yet, error exists. It can result from the desire for selfish advancement, without brokenness for sin, without repentance, and without seeking God's face. It succumbs to the practice of merely saying prayers. Further, it attempts to promote prayer among those who do not and cannot agree in prayer. Such activity fails.

Still others concede to the practice of a “back door” revival. This approach persuades people that they are spiritually ok. They just need more of the same. However, this conclusion ignores the marks of true revival and the manifestations that reveal the need for revival. Therefore, these people lack understanding as to why true revival eludes them.

Each of these instances describes the condition warned by Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:5: *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”*

Effects, then, are not proof of revival.

- Escape

In recent times, this delusion has crept into the Church of Jesus Christ. It describes those who desire revival for the sake of saving their country or the world. The world and every nation have indeed slid into grave sin. Some, then, use revival as an attempt to save a nation, an

organization, or a career. In the process, they “pray” for revival to remove sin that they refuse to forsake. They “pray” for revival to remove problems that the Church refuses to overcome according to Scripture.

God, contrary to this notion, sends revival to glorify Himself. The disciples missed this aspect in their desire for Christ to establish the kingdom. (See Acts 1.6-8.) No, revival is not an escape.

- Education

Frequently in this day, Church leaders emphasize spiritual growth programs as revival. They implement Bible studies, exhort attendance in Sunday School, and promote spiritual growth. Usually, however, these programs concentrate upon Biblical knowledge and “how to” sessions. Virtually never do they urge personal holiness.

Paul warned against this kind of practice by reminding the Corinthians that the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life. (See 2 Corinthians 3.6.) Though important, spiritual growth does not equal revival.

- Entitlement

Others emphasize a formula to produce a revival. If the Church will follow certain steps, they say, a revival will result. To them, revival comes as an entitlement to those who do it right.

Nevertheless, many Godly, well-intentioned people have tried this approach with dismal failure. Joel the prophet called God's people to repentance and spiritual renewal, but warned them that it was no guarantee. Note his statement in Joel 2:12-14:

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: {13} And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. {14} Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?”

Joel conditioned their spiritual renewal upon God's sovereignty, where it belongs. No, revival is not an entitlement.

- Expansion

Church growth experts tout numerical growth as revival. They push the adoption of prescribed methods to facilitate physical expansion of a Church. If a Church will follow these methods, they declare that it will increase in size. They will experience God's blessing, a kind of revival.

Sadly, however, most increases in Church attendance today result from transfers from other churches in the locality. They want to become part of something new, different, big, or fun. This is not true Church growth by adding new Christians.

They have fallen into the snare that the Church of Laodicea did. Jesus described them as rich and increased in goods, but knew not that they were poor. (See Revelation 3.14-22.) Expansion is not revival.

- Extravaganzas

The modern Church specializes in the extravaganza and calls it revival. Some churches emphasize the extraordinary. These may include miracles, physical manifestations, and even supernatural manifestations. Another form stresses spectacular events. They include special productions, especially around holidays, and special programs with heroes and star-studded speakers and musicians.

Remember the Church at Corinth. Indeed, they had supernatural manifestations of the Spirit. Nevertheless, they also allowed and practiced grievous sin.

Even the presence of the supernatural, and certainly God still does the supernatural, does not guarantee revival.

Conclusion

With great sorrow, I conclude that these fallacies describe the Church and many believers today, perhaps you and your Church. In essence, they almost entirely set aside the agency of the Holy Spirit in revival. They represent revival as an article of manufacture. You only have to set the machinery in motion, raise the steam of excitement, and you have revival.

They take no account of the fuel used to make it happen. Artifices catch the attention of the masses. Devices entrap the careless. An exaggerated style of preaching produces alarm, shakes suspicious hopes, and raises a state of general excitement, no matter what kind. It does not seem important. It brings people to hear, and some converts result, proponents say. However, truth, reverence, humility, and faith vanish over such machinations.

Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ face a crossroads. They can continue the present downhill path in spiritual decline. Unhappily, most believers choose this path. On the other hand, they can correct the present path to seek spiritual reformation and revival by God's grace.

This latter path requires Christians to read and study their Bibles to learn of God's great works in revival. The confusion, which they experience over revival, would disappear with the application of Scriptural truths.

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