

Scripture:

Intro: The moral condition of our society is appalling. Allow me to read the following words:

Quote: Lyman Beecher (Orr, 19)

Quote: Timothy Dwight (Orr, 18)

Oh, by the way, did I mention who said these words? Lyman Beecher and Timothy Dwight. They lived 200 years ago. And they were describing the moral climate that existed in our country at the end of the 18th century.

Morality was at an all time low during the 1790's. Great colleges that were once places of training for those entering ministry were hotbeds of spiritual corruption. During the last half of the 18th century, the typical Harvard student was atheist. Students at Williams College conducted a mock celebration of Holy Communion. When the dean at Princeton opened the chapel Bible to read, a pack of playing cards fell out, some radical having cut a rectangle out of each page to fit the pack. Christians were so unpopular on the college campuses that they met in secret and kept their minutes in code! A radical leader of Deist students led a mob in burning the Bible. Students disrupted church worship services with profanity. They burned down buildings. They forced the resignation of college presidents.

Quote: J. Edwin Orr, in his book, "Campus Aflame," draws this conclusion, "The last 2 decades of the 18th century were the darkest period, spiritually and morally, in the history of American Christianity, the low-water mark of its lowest ebb-tide, when infidelity rode roughshod over the feelings of the disoriented majority." 19

Quote: Chief Justice Marshall wrote to Bishop Madison of Virginia and declared that the Church was too far gone ever to be redeemed. (Orr, 20)

Things were bleak in America. Then something dramatic happened. Perhaps out of despair or out of hope, a group of New England men put out a call for a nationwide "Concert of Prayer." The purpose? To plead with the Almighty to intervene in the sad state of affairs in America.

What happened? Revival took place. Not just in New England, but in the Maritime provinces of Canada, throughout the Middle Atlantic States, across the south, and even to the Midwest. What happened is what we now know as "The Second Great Awakening of American History."

Q: What is revival? Do we need revival today? If revival were to happen in our midst, what would it look like?

Problem: There is great misunderstanding of biblical revival. . .

Q: What are the marks of true, biblical revival?

With those questions in mind, we must (as always) turn to God's Word. We must allow God to tell us through His Word what revival is. After all, revival comes from Him.

This morning we are beginning a 4-week series "Great Revivals in the Bible."

Q: What are the marks of genuine, biblical revival?

Proposition: In II Chronicles 29, revival occurred under the leadership of King Hezekiah. This morning I invite you to notice 5 marks that were apparent in the genuine revival of God's people.

- I. Repentance (3-9)
- II. Rededication (10-19)
- III. Reconciliation (20-24)
- IV. Recovery of True Worship (25-35)
- V. Rejoicing (36)

II Chronicles:

- last book of Hebrew Bible, possibly written by Ezra, in the 5th century BC
- parallel to I & II Kings
- a history book, yes, but more than that! Theological History. God is interpreting the meaning of historical events for His people

The Setting for Revival: (1-2)

V 1 "Hezekiah began to reign when he was 20 years old"

Hezekiah was king of Judah. The year was 715 BC. He would eventually reign 29 years. He would go down in the annals of history as one of Judah's greatest kings.

But you need to know that things were certainly bleak when he took the helm.

The 8th century BC was a significant time in the history of God's people Israel.

- lots of revelation given (prophets--Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jonah)
- Political vacuum in Middle East

In the middle of the 8th century, there was no great political rival to threaten Israel and Judah. It was a time of great economic prosperity. Unfortunately that led to great pride, idolatry, and spiritual prostitution for both Israel and Judah

Things were bleak when Hezekiah became king of Judah--economically, politically, and spiritually. The mighty Assyrians were breathing down his neck. Just 7 years earlier (722 BC), the Assyrians plundered and raped the land of Israel, and demolished the northern Kingdom of Israel. Judah was next.

But even worse than the bleak political climate was the bleak spiritual climate. Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, was once of the most spiritually hardened kings to ever reign over God's people.

28:1 "Ahaz was 20 . . . but he did not that which was right. . ."

28:2-3 "For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. . . images"

28:24 "Ahaz. . . shut the doors of the house of the Lord"

That was the setting when Hezekiah took over. A bleak setting. Yet a setting which was ripe for revival!

Illust:

Hezekiah was not like his father. 29:2 "He did that which was right. . ."
Hezekiah didn't produce revival. Revival is the result of God's Sovereign work.

Q: What are the marks of genuine revival? Let's see. . .

I. Repentance (3-9)

Hezekiah wasted no time. What was his first major task as king?

V 3 "He, in the first year, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of Lord"

Wow! Think of it!

What was God's House? The Temple. The temple Solomon had built according to God's instruction. God's House was the place of worship for God's people. God's House was the place of sacrifice for the sins of God's people. But there had been no worship there, no acceptable sacrifice there, for decades! In fact, v 3 makes it clear, the people had so neglected God's House that the doors didn't even work! They needed repair!

Revival begins right here with step #1--Repentance. Repentance is the decision I make in my heart that things need to change! My life needs to change. My attitude towards God needs to change. The place I give Jesus Christ needs to change.

Hezekiah saw the need for change! Listen. It took courage for him to institute this change! He had to abandon the course set by his own father! He had to admit, "We've been wrong! We've not been giving God the place He deserves in our lives!"

How did Hezekiah bring about the needed change?

He got the leaders involved!

V 4 "He brought in the priests and Levites" What did he tell them?

V 5 "Sanctify. . . yourselves. . . and the house of the Lord."

Watch this. Hezekiah was not afraid to break tradition, and call sin what it is!

Vv 6-7 "For our fathers have trespassed. . . done evil. . . forsaken. . . shut the doors"

Hezekiah gave the leaders REASONS why repentance was needed.

Vv 8-9 "The wrath of the Lord was upon Judah. . ."

See: 28:5-8

Problem: Ahaz trusted his own ingenuity. Instead of trusting God, he asked Assyria for help when Syria attacked. Hez recognized the folly of that!

If revival is to ever occur, God's people need to repent.

You say, "Wait a minute. You said 'God's People' need to repent. Don't you mean 'Unsaved People' need to repent?" Listen. Unsaved people need to repent, true. But we're talking about REVIVAL. Revival is the reviving of God's people! God's people need to come to grips with the stench of sin in their own lives, and repent of it. Just like Hezekiah did.

Illust:

Tran: Step #1 was Repentance.

II. Rededication (10-19)

Notice what Hez said to the priests and Levites in vv 10-11.

Vv 10-11 "Now it's in my heart to make a cov't with the Lord. . ."

Watch carefully. Where did the revival begin?

"in my heart" (10)--If you study the great revivals of church history, you'll find this trait. It starts with a godly leader (not necessarily a preacher either!). It starts with a godly leader, and then spreads to others.

Hezekiah meant business. He purposed to renew the covenant God had established. A covenant is a binding promise, and oath, a commitment. Hezekiah knew that his people were the people of God's covenant. But they hadn't been living like it. They needed to rededicate themselves to the Lord.

Hezekiah rededicarted himself. He challenged the other leaders to do the same.

V 11 "My sons, be not now negligent, for the Lord has chosen you. . . serve"

Did the leaders accept Hezekiah's challenge? Yes!

V 12 "Then the Levites (= Worship leaders) arose. . . "

What did they do?

V 15 "they gathered. . . sanctified themselves"

The Levites could be of no help to others until they had taken care of their own sin. They "sanctified themselves" first.

According to what authority? What authority brings about real change?

V 15b "according the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord."

Key: Another factor associated with revival is a proper respons to God's Word.

Illust:

Q: What did the priests and Levites do?

A: A Major Housecleaning Job! Where? In God's House!

Vv 16-17 "And the priests went into the inner part of the house. . . to cleanse it. . ."

Hezekiah and the priests and the Levites were obeying Dt 12:2-4. Revival occurs when God's people get serious about obeying and living by God's Word!

The leaders took 7 days to clean up the outside and 7 days to clean up the inside of the Temple. The problem was not just dirt and rubbish. The problem was sin. King Ahaz had brought all kinds of filthy idolatries into the temple. Forbidden, unacceptable, pagan images and relics. All that spiritual trash had to go. So the Levites carried it to the Kidron Valley, east of the temple.

note: same place Asa burned his grandmothers Ashura object 50 years earlier

Application: There can be no acceptable worship of God without cleansing first. Hezekiah knew that. The Temple had to be cleaned up before the people could worship. Sin had to go.

Q: What is God's Temple today? Where does God dwell?

A: We are God's Temple. God doesn't dwell in buildings, but in people, people who have received Jesus Christ into their lives!

I Cor 6:19-20 "What, know ye not. . . temple of God"

Problem: The problem today is the same as in Hezekiah's day. God's Temple is polluted with sin. Is there unconfessed, hidden, tolerated sin in your life?

Illust: Sin in the camp--Achan; Students at GRBC cleaning up lives

Key: The leaders reported to Hezekiah, and reported the job was done.
Vv 18-19 "We have cleansed all the house. . ."

Tran: What are the marks of genuine, biblical revival? Repentance. Rededication.

III. Reconciliation (20-24)

What happened after the temple was cleansed? Hezekiah went there.
V 20 "Then Hez rose EARLY. . . and went to the House of the Lord."

What did the priests do next in the temple? Sacrificed 28 animals!

Why? As a Sin Offering!

V 21 "And they brought. . . for a sin offering. . ."

--seven bulls sacrificed (22)

--seven rams sacrificed (22)

--seven lambs sacrificed (22)

--seven he-goats (23)

What did they do with the blood each time?

Key: 4 times we're told they "sprinkled it on the altar"

note: altar is not a table in front of a church; it is a place of sacrifice

Q: Why were these sacrifices necessary?

A: V 24 "they made reconciliation. . . atonement. . ."

Our God is a Holy God. He cannot tolerate sin. Sin must be covered. Sin must be atoned for. Only blood can do that (Lev 17:11). In Hezekiah's day, that meant animals needed to be killed, and their blood sprinkled on the altar in the Temple. Reconciliation was possible only through sacrifice. Blood had to be shed if unholy men were to be reconciled with a Holy God.

"atone" = to avert punishment by paying a ransom

Friends, that truth has not changed. No, we don't need to slaughter lambs to be reconciled with God. Why not? Because THE Lamb of God was slain. He shed His precious blood on the altar of a wooden cross.

Mk 10:45 "For the Son of man came. . . to give His life a ransom"

Rom 3:23-25 "For all have sinned. . . Whom God. . . a propitiation"

Q: Perhaps you're wondering, "How can I be right with God?"

A: Look to the Lamb of God. Look to Jesus Christ!

Hymn: "Look to the Lamb of God, for He alone is able to save you"

Tran: Now watch what happens next. Revival spreads. It started with Hez and then the leaders. Now it affects the people. Repentance, Rededication, Reconciliation. . .

IV. Recovery of True Worship (25-35)

What did Hez ask the Levites to do next?

Vv 25-27 "And he set the Levites. . . with cymbals

v 25 "acc to the commandment of the Lord. . ."

Key: The Levites were the Worship Leaders, responsible for the Temple (Nu 18).

Watch what happened next!!

Vv 28-29 "And all the congregation worshiped. . ."

Wow! The people had not worshiped God acceptably for years! V 28 is so beautiful. There we see the recovery of true worship by God's people!

Don't miss something. The order is very important. First, repentance, then rededication, then reconciliation, then the recovery of worship. There can be no real worship until we confess our sin and until we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ!

Notice what was involved in their worship:

--God honoring music of praise (30a)

--Humility (30b) "bowed themselves"

--Consecration of their lives to God (31-35): Thank and Peace Offer

v 31 "Now you have consecrated yourselves unto the Lord"

v 33 "And the consecrated things. . ."

Key: An entire nation is worshiping God in v 28! It all began with one man--Hezekiah. What started with Hezekiah, spread to the leaders, and filtered down to the rest of the congregation.

And listen. It only takes one person to hinder revival. . .

Illust: Korea, January 1907 (McGavran, 190)

Tran: What are the marks of genuine, biblical revival? Repentance. Rededication. Reconciliation. Recovery of worship. And finally. . .

V. Rejoicing (36)

V 36 "And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people. . ."

What a day! The people of God experienced real revival. They acknowledged and got rid of their sin. They rededicated their lives to God. They experienced reconciliation with God. They recovered the awesome experience of proper worship. And v 36 sums it all up: They rejoiced!

Why did they rejoice?

Key: Don't miss this. Did revival take place in Hezekiah's day?

Yes. But why? Because Hezekiah was such a great leader? No. Because the Priests and Levites did such a good job in cleaning up the House of God? No. Because they impressed God with the right number of offerings? No. Because they forced God to bless them with their beautiful music? No.

Q: Why did revival take place in Hezekiah's day?

A: V 36 "God had prepared the people. . ."

Listen. Revival comes from God. He is sovereign. You say, "Well does God hold me responsible to commit my life to Him today?" He sure does. And if you do it will be because of His sovereign grace prompting you to do so.

Illust: Elijah's prayer on Mt Carmel in the great showdown with Baal
I Kgs18:37 "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."

Concluding Challenge:

We stand in need of revival today. All of us. We need for God to turn our hearts back to Him. We need to follow in the example of Hezekiah. We need to experience: Repentance, Rededication, Reconciliation, Recovery of Worship, and Rejoicing.

Challenge: Are you willing to consecrate your life to God today?

Closing Ministry in Music: "The Altar", Tammy Edwards

Response:

1. Do you have areas of sin in your Temple that need to be removed?
2. Has your heart been cold towards God? Have you been living your life as though God did not exist, as though you alone were the boss?
3. Do you need and want to be experience a right relationship with God?

If so, I want to invite you to acknowledge it to God right now. And to make it public. . .