

The Awe of God - "The Jesus Revolution"

Ecclesiastes 12:13

This is the second week of Advent - the week of Peace - and, as we come together in faith and expectation, could this be the day that the third great awakening happens? Is *this* the day when God will show up sovereignly and supernaturally, not because we prayed harder, gritted our teeth more, or repented better, but because God *loves his people*, and he loves this world so much that he gave his only Son for it.

So, *why not here? Why not now? Why not us?* We are believing that God wants to bring revival and spiritual awakening to America, but in the midst of contending for revival, breakthrough, and spiritual awakening, if we're not careful, we will forget that we also have to deal with our humanity, and that people are hurting right now. This Christmas, while it is the most wonderful time of the year, it can also be a brutal time of the year for many, especially for those who have lost loved ones recently. That has the potential to forever imprint the holiday for them in a negative way.

"One of the dangers of living in a constant state of distraction is that we never go to the bottom of our pain, our sadness, or our emptiness, which means we never find that rock-bottom place of peace that passes understanding, and rest ourselves there." - Ruth Haley Barton, from her book "Sacred Rhythms"

In the midst of all this activity, we still have to move back to the place where we find peace, and we do that by moving closer to the Prince of Peace - and by embracing Peace. We *welcome* Peace, and begin to labor from a place of peace and rest. *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14:27 NIV)

We continue to examine historical revivals and also biblical revivals. In the Book of Nehemiah, Babylon had come in and destroyed the walls of the city of Jerusalem, looted the Temple of its treasures, and enslaved the people. Surely the Jews thought they were experiencing the end of all things, like our own generation was marked by Nine-Eleven and Covid, where we wondered how we could possibly come back from those things.

But, history tells us that we *always* come back, and that God is faithful to redeem and restore - to bring people back from pain and trauma. Every setback - culturally, globally, or locally - is a *set-up* for a God-kind of *comeback*, because God built in us the ability to be resilient - to come back and to be stronger from it - just like a broken bone that is stronger when it heals than it was before. We are no different.

What we think will destroy us actually prepares us to be stronger in the long run. Every trial, trauma, and crisis we've been through is preparation for *now*. We're not who we used to be. We're more resilient and stronger than before. If we woke up and had a pulse, we hit the lottery today, and we're stronger than we've ever been. It's a new day. A new season and anointing are coming our way. We don't *pray* for trauma or trials - but *life happens*. The good news is that every setback we experience is a setup for a comeback - a *God-kind* of comeback, as we can see in Nehemiah.

In 1966 the sexual revolution was in full swing. The drug culture was expanding at an exponential rate, and decadence, sin, and rejection of God were extremely high, to the degree that the cover of Time Magazine proclaimed, "*Is God Dead?*" There were racial tensions and riots, a deep mistrust of government and traditional cultural norms, and a rise in godlessness and unbelief.

What we see now is like that - and God can do something once again. Sometimes he has to shake the culture so that whatever *can* be shaken will come out, but whatever remains is *intended* to remain. God will allow us to be shaken by the enemy, but Jesus said on the cross, "*It is finished - Tetelestai*", and the war has already been won by him. There are, though, residues of war with the enemy and the dark side and we must still fight a good fight of faith.

In 1966, Chuck Smith became Senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa in California. At the same time a preacher named Lonnie Frisbee was leading hundreds of hippies to Jesus, and they started going to Calvary Chapel, quickly overwhelming it with their presence *and* with their stinky feet. The regular churchgoers were upset by this and asked Pastor Chuck what he intended to do about the dirty hippies messing up their clean church.

The very next week, Pastor Chuck showed up early with a large basin of water at the front door of the church waiting for the hippies to return. As they did, he washed the feet of every one of them. It was his act of love, grace, and mercy as an answer to the complaining congregation. That sparked the revival that God was setting up among their generation, as thousands of hippies began coming to Christ because they were hungry for the love and the Word of God.

Pirate's Cove, a small rocky beach, became the place where thousands of young people and hippies were baptized into Christ. On one day they baptized 4,500 people in the Pacific Ocean. God showed up in a culture that looked to be lost, much like our current culture of sexually and morally confused young people, whose very identities are lost and even erased. Now, as then, the only way to discover our true identity is by becoming followers of Jesus, where we become sons and daughters of the Most High God.

It's been said we are but one generation away from pure paganism. That's why we have to preach Truth and to not be ashamed of God's Word. That revival in southern California soon exploded and swept across and throughout the United States. Five years later, Time Magazine ran another cover, "*Jesus Revolution*", with an article inside that talked about what God did and how he showed up for thousands of hippies.

Billy Graham, when asked, said he believed it was a sovereign move and an act of God. In 1972, at Expo 72 in Dallas, over 100,000 converted young people and hippies gathered together at the Cotton Bowl to hear that evangelist preach the Gospel and give his blessing on the Jesus revolution movement. Do we believe that God can do it again, and that he wants to do it again?

This is not the worst it's ever been - it's just one more aberration - the same song and 400th verse throughout the history of man - another cycle of oppression and sin that God will use as a setup for revival. We are ripe for revival right now. If we'll take the right approach with the right attitude and perspective, we too will say, "*My goodness, this is a setup if I've ever seen one!*"

Our culture is ripe and it's hungry. People are getting saved. A report was just published about Upstate (First Baptist) Church in Simpsonville, South Carolina, where 141 people followed the Lord in baptism on one Sunday. Pastor Wayne Bray said, "*We have never seen anything like this in our church... This is supernatural and it's a sovereign work of God. We couldn't prepare for it or make it happen. God did this, and all we did was try to get in and cooperate with Him and stay out of the way. And, it's not just happening here - it's breaking out everywhere.*"

We have a choice. Will we catch the wave when it comes? We don't *create* the wave of revival, but we let the wave carry us. We as a church, are planning to prepare our hearts for revival in a five-day fast, where we will put aside the distractions of meal-taking and give ourselves instead to devotion to God - where we zero in and focus on God for five days. Why are we doing that? As the new year begins, we are asking God in his sovereignty to move. Also, we're saying to God, *"We're committed to You, and we open ourselves up to You by removing distractions from our life just to hear Your voice."*

1] Revival starts with reformation

Nehemiah 1:8-9 NIV

"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'"

2] Reformation results in repentance

Nehemiah 8:1-6 NIV

"All the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law."

4 "Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground."

Revival creates in people a hunger for the Word of God and results in repentance (to turn or to align with God). We turn to God with all of our attention, then everything else is behind us, and naturally falls away because we're focused on him. When we try to give something up, it's a struggle, but when we just turn to him and not worry about it, all of it starts to loosen its grip on us. That's what repentance does.

3] Reformation restores rejoicing

We are not dragging our Christianity around like a ball and chain. Instead, we're filled with Joy as we repent and are set free from the weight and burden of sin. We aren't just looking for an escape from this world. Repentance brings joy that in turn brings strength that we need for life and for service. When revival comes, the world will see a joyful people ...and they will *want what we have!*

Prayer

Father, we stand in agreement wholeheartedly and say, Bring out the Book again! We don't want to stand as spectators as You are moving. We want to be a part of Revival. Let Your Word take deep root in our hearts, so it will produce much good fruit in our lives. Send us out into a broken land, speaking the Word of the Father God. Thank You that You carry us safely to our destination. Thank You for everything that You're doing. We love You and honor You. In Jesus' name. Amen