



Prayer Resources

Online Articles

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Recognizing The God Of Revival

O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not. Jeremiah 14:8-9

A familiar line from an old Negro Spiritual says, “Please forgive us, Lord, we didn’t know who you were.” The theme of the song is that Christ in His incarnation was a stranger to the Jews, who while looking for a preconceived Messiah, rejected the Suffering Servant and crucified Him. This old spiritual raises an interesting question: When is God a stranger to us? A study of the Scriptures and of church history reveals that the God of Revival is indeed a stranger even to His own people.

In Jeremiah 14:8-9, the prophet ponders: *O the hope of Israel, the savior thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.* In his moving prayer, Jeremiah has drawn a precise portrait of the God of Revival.

The God of Revival is pictured by Jeremiah as God Unrecognized (*a stranger*). Many great men and women of God have failed to recognize Him for Who He is and thus, He was as a stranger to them: Abraham in Genesis 18:2; Jacob in Genesis 32:29; Moses in Exodus 3:13,14; the eleven disciples in John 21:1-12; Mary in John 20:14; the Emmaus Road disciples in Luke 24:13-15; and Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:5 and in Acts 22:8. When the God of Revival came in Andrew Murray’s South African church, He was at first rejected by Murray because the experience was too disorderly for Murray’s proper English background. One of the greatest tragedies in revival is the people of God not recognizing Him as the God of Revival! Sadly, in our day many can testify of knowing God in salvation, even in personal victory over some crisis, but not in revival. If the God of Revival would seek to reveal Himself to them, He would go unrecognized.

The God of Revival is pictured by Jeremiah as God Unwelcomed (*a wayfaring man*). In the four Gospels, the Holy Spirit records seven distinct times that Jesus entered into various people’s homes (Matthew 9:10f, Luke 7:36f, Luke 10:38f, Luke 14:1f, Luke 19:7f, Luke 8:41f, and Luke 24:29f). In all but one of these visits by Jesus, He was greeted by murmuring and criticism. He was only welcomed once – in the home of the Emmaus Road disciples. Today the God of Revival is unwelcomed not only in many homes, but also in many churches. His requirement for cleansing and renewal of priorities is viewed as a threat and inconvenience. While at first the 1970 Asbury Revival was well received throughout North America, by the time its representatives came to a conservative Southern Baptist seminary, the God of Revival was as an unwelcomed man – an intruder passing through and interrupting the students’ semi-

nary experience! As Jeremiah states, the people of God might at best receive Him into their midst for a *one night* event, but certainly not as a lifetime companion. All too often revival is received merely as a temporary event and not as a life changing experience.

The God of Revival is pictured by Jeremiah as God Unbelieving (*a man astonished*). Amazingly, God is often pictured as being surprised and finding His children's spiritual condition unbelievable. In Isaiah 59:16, God is astonished by the lack of intercessors in Israel; in Isaiah 50:2, He is shocked by the lack of those who genuinely are seeking after Him; and in both Matthew 6:30 and Mark 4:40, Jesus is surprised by the lack of faith among His disciples. Jesus raised a serious question at the end of His parable about the widow who persevered before the judge and thus pictured persevering prayer. He asks, *When the Son of Man returns, will He find this kind of faith on earth?* Is the God of Revival astonished today at the lack of belief and faithful praying among His children concerning His ability to walk among them in revival as He has done in days of old? Countless are the illustrations of needed revivals that never took place because God's people did not pray in belief for the God of Revival to dwell in their midst. Oh, that we would pray as the nineteenth century General William Booth did concerning revival. He was often heard crying, "Oh, Lord, do it again! Lord, do it again!"

The God of Revival is pictured by Jeremiah as God Unconquerable (*a mighty man*). Man often makes God in his own diminutive image and fails to see Him as magnificent and awesome as He truly is. When man finally does encounter Him as Joshua did in Joshua

5:13-15, he discovers God to be so overpowering that he cannot stand in His presence. When Isaiah encountered God he addressed Him as the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6), the Mighty One (Isaiah 1:24, and the Almighty (Isaiah 13:6). When the God of Revival comes into man's midst, He is often rejected because His omnipotent power and astonishing miracles can be neither comprehended nor controlled. During the Cane Ridge Revival in pioneer Kentucky, the God of Revival unquestionably revealed Himself as a mighty man. While some immediately rejected God's moving in their midst in unordained ways because they could not explain His work, still others attempted to control the mighty man by duplicating His works in their fleshly abilities. The revival became the victim of extremes and fanaticism exacting great cost to the Body of Christ. The God of Revival is unconquerable by those who attempt to limit Him through either disbelief or through their imitation.

Unfortunately, we in the modern church are like those who have gone before us. When the God of Revival comes within our midst, He is like an unrecognized stranger, and unwelcomed wayfaring man who passes through our midst in a singular night, an unbelieving man who is astonished by the lack of our expectancy, and an unconquerable man who is rejected because He cannot be manipulated to accomplish our purposes. Has there been a time in your life when the God of Revival passed through and was unrecognized and rejected? Oh, that we would learn from Jeremiah's lament to be more discerning in our prayers and in our longing for the presence of the God of Revival!