

Revivals And Church History :: The Last Day revival by David Wilkerson

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THE LAST DAY REVIVAL

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What is ahead for the church of Jesus Christ? This is a question of great concern to believers worldwide. As cataclysmic events take place all over the globe, many are wondering, "Is the Holy Spirit going to revive the church before Jesus returns? Will Christ's body leave this world with a whimper or with a shout?"

The New Testament is filled with predictions of a last-days falling away. False prophets will rise up and lead many astray. Wolves will come in sheep's clothing, bringing powerful deceptions to "deceive, if possible, even the elect of God." Wickedness will abound, causing once-hot believers to lose their first love. With the flood of iniquity to come, the love of many will grow cold.

Jesus prophesied these very things. And his warnings were meant to challenge our faith. As overwhelming iniquity floods the earth, he asks: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Think about it: Christ knew everything we would be witnessing today, from horrifying school shootings, to the rise of militant homosexuality, to terrorist acts taking place throughout the world. In the midst of these things, he asks us, "Will you continue to believe, though things wax worse? Will you faint in your confidence when things don't happen as you thought they would? Or, will you continue to trust in me?"

You see, despite the rise in iniquity and great calamities, Jesus knew there would be a great last-days revival. The Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah's prophecies, and he knew full well about the prediction of a revival as the end draws near.

Isaiah said there would be a great, worldwide awakening just prior to Christ's return.

This prophecy is found in Isaiah 54 and is summed up in these verses: "Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (54:3).

I believe with a number of Bible scholars that Isaiah's prophecy has a dual application. It speaks not only about natural Israel after captivity in Babylon, but also about the spiritual Israel that was to come: the body of Jesus Christ, the church of the New Jerusalem. Paul quotes from Isaiah 54 when he refers to the "Jerusalem which is above...the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). Paul saw Isaiah's prophecy as directed "to the children of promise," those in Christ by faith.

If Isaiah addressed his prophecy only to natural Israel, it would mean his promises haven't yet been fulfilled. In short, it has not yet come to pass that "thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles" (Isaiah 54:3). Yet that word was clearly fulfilled in Christ, at the cross and at Pentecost. Think about it: when Isaiah delivered this message, some 42,000 Israelites had come out of Babylonian captivity. By the time of Jesus, their number had increased only to about 3 million.

Isaiah refers to his prophecy as a promise from God, a sworn word from heaven. We see the Lord swearing by the mountains and even referring back to his covenant made with Noah. He says, in essence, "As surely as I won't allow another Flood on the earth, I tell you there will be an awakening of my church in the last days."

In these last days, the Lord's eye is not fixed on world powers but on the church of Jesus Christ.

God is not focused on the economy, on the rise of world religions, on the roaring of the heathen. According to Isaiah, the nations are to God "as a drop of a bucket" (Isaiah 40:15). They are all under his sovereign rule and reign.

He knows all about terrorist threats, wars and rumors of wars. His Word warns that the heathen will rage, secular powers will try to outlaw Christianity, and fast-growing, anti-Christ movements will boast they'll rule the world and destroy Jesus' followers. The Bible says this about it all:

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psalm 2:2-3). In short, "Let's cast awa

y all moral hindrances, all moral landmarks of the past."

Here is God's reaction to these earthly powers and demon-influenced men: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (2:4). No matter how desperate things look, everything remains under God's full control.

I'm thankful for this word from the Psalms. More and more, we hear reports of secularism wiping out the evangelical church in Europe, of Islam being the fastest growing religion in the world, of homosexuals hijacking entire denominations, of Christ's church growing so weak it no longer has any impact on society. Yet God's Word declares, "On Christ the Rock God will build his church."

"And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Nothing from the bowels of hell can hope to destroy Christ's church. His eye is always on his people, and through everything he warns Satan and his hordes, "Do not touch the apple of my eye." "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake" (Isaiah 54:15). Do you see what God is saying here? "The devil is going to come at you. Enemies out of hell will gather together against you. But Satan will not succeed."

Let the devil do what he pleases. Let hell open its bowels and spill forth every vile thing. It won't have any impact whatsoever on God's last-day plan for his people. Glory to the Lord, his church cannot be destroyed!

1. Everywhere we turn in the last days, we will see God's glory breaking forth in a last revival. Christ's church will stretch beyond all former limitations to spread the good news: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (Isaiah 54:2-3). Simply put, the church will gain strength and raise up multitudes in Christ.

As we look more closely at Isaiah's prophecy, we see it is meant not only for the church body but also for individual members. I know godly servants, friends of mine, who have laid hold of this prophecy as a personal word from the Holy Spirit. And they have built up their faith by its promises: "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more" (Isaiah 54:4). Isaiah makes it clear in this verse: God's church will not go out under reproach.

Yet just a few verses down, we read this warning to the last-days church: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires" (54:11). We are told we'll be afflicted, tossed with tempest. Yet we are also promised a foundation made of sapphires. What does this mean, exactly?

As believers, we can be under covenant with God, carrying in our hearts his precious promises of no fear, no shame, no confusion, no reproach. Yet, it is still possible for us to be tossed about by personal storms, to experience loneliness, to have no one to comfort us. In short, we are allowed to be buffeted by Satan.

In verse 16, Isaiah gives us a picture of our adversary at work. God says, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy" (54:16). Here is an image of a blacksmith, pumping the bellows on his fire to cause a white heat. He then uses that heat to beat and pound out weapons of warfare on his anvil. This smith represents Satan, who constantly devises new weapons against the church and individual believers.

What an incredible picture. It is as though God is saying, "Behold the devil fanning his fire, making weapons he uses to try to destroy my people. I made this smith, creating him as an angel. He once had power and authority, but he was cast down because of rebellion. I created him, and so I can chain him. He can go only as far as I permit."

Note God's amazing promise in the very next verse: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (54:17). In other words: "Let the enemy make all his weapons. Let him arm legions of demons. Not a single weapon he forms against you will bring you down." What a glorious promise!

Satan is using his weapons of hopelessness against God's people, tempests too violent to endure without the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Yet God declares, "I will lay thy foundations with sapphires" (54:11). The message here is, "When ev

everything in the world is being shaken, you will not be moved. The foundation I'm laying underneath you is as solid as these stones. What I'm doing in you cannot be shaken."

These sapphires represent spiritual knowledge and wisdom, insights into the very heart of God. We know that those who endure suffering come out armed with greater insights into God's mercy. You may be tempted, tossed, afflicted and alone, but through it all he is forming underneath you a rock-solid foundation. It is all so that you may comfort others in their trials.

2. Paul echoes Isaiah when he says the Lord cherishes his church as a loving husband cherishes his wife. Many are familiar with the passage where Paul equates marriage to God's relationship with the church: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31-32).

Now note what Isaiah says: "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Isaiah 54:5). Who is the Maker here? It is Christ, creator of heaven and earth. And Isaiah tells us he is our husband. However, the wife has separated herself from her husband: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (59:2).

Where do we see this separation today between the church and God? I see it most obviously in compromised mainline churches. Yet I also see it in the soft-pedaled gospel of post-modern churches. It is evident there has been a separation from God's manifest presence. Indeed, it has happened just as Jesus and Paul prophesied: many have become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God...having a form of religion with no power...despising the gospel of their fathers...tearing down the old moral landmarks...changing God's infallible Word to suit the times.

I challenge you to go to any city, from church to church of every evangelical persuasion. Try to find one where you recognize the awesome, manifest presence of Jesus, where you encounter his heart-melting conviction. When the Lord is truly present, you recognize it, whether in the singing, the preaching or the fellowship. Something stirs your soul, and it produces an awe and a reverence. In my experience, this is rarely found.

I am not condemning the modern-day church; God forbid. But may the Lord help us if we don't have his manifest presence in these last days. And because of the compromise of such churches, he has had to hide his presence from them for a time. Yet God has not divorced the compromised church. Isaiah says he calls her to return to him:

"Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of...divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" (Isaiah 50:1). God is saying, in essence, "You walked out on me. You loved the world and the things of the world, and you left me for them. I didn't leave you; you left me. Show me the divorce papers! Show me where I sold you to another."

"Thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money" (52:3). He continues: "I tell you, this marriage is not over. It is not hopeless. I still love you, though you prostituted yourself. You grew weary of me, but in spite of it all I love you. I want you back."

"The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (54:6-8).

Here is a sworn promise by God to bring back to himself a harlot wife. In short, the last revival will be one of mercy alone. The Lord is telling his church, "When you return to me, I won't condemn you or reprove you. Instead, I will anoint you with my Spirit. I will empower you where you had no power before."

Some may still say, "Isaiah 54 applies only to natural Israel."

I offer indisputable proof that the promise of Isaiah 54 is meant for God's church today. Isaiah clearly speaks of Christ in 53:10: "He shall see his seed" (my italics). Simply put, Christ's travail and sacrifice will bring forth many children: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (53:11). This is all to be fulfilled after the cross.

The nails that pierced Jesus' hands and feet were fashioned on the devil's anvil. The sword that pierced his side

was forged in that smith shop of hell. But the blood that poured forth from his body has never lost its power. Isaiah is telling us: "God has sworn his Son's blood will be sprinkled on transgressors in every nation on earth. It has power in every Arab nation, in Israel, in Africa, in Europe. He will see his seed spread to many multitudes, from all tribes and tongues." A great awakening will continue in the end times.

It may be discouraging to see false religions grow in great numbers while Christ's church seems so few in number. But Isaiah says, "It is time to sing, O barren wife. Enlarge the dwellings of worship, lengthen and strengthen your vision. You're going to see breakthroughs on the left and right." "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord" (54:1).

3. How will this last revival come about?

How is this last revival going to happen? It requires something powerful, something world-shaking to precipitate it. Isaiah tells us this shaking will happen in one day. In chapter 47, he says the spirit of Babylon must be dealt with. Throughout Scripture, Babylon has always represented a spirit of prosperity, ease and pleasure. And the Babylonian spirit is the same in every age.

In short, Isaiah says there can be no widespread, last revival until the spirit of greed and false security is brought down. We can pray for revival, we can cry out to God to pour out his Spirit, but it is impossible unless the Lord first shakes all things: "Hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me... Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know" (Isaiah 47:8, 11, my italics).

God is not going to overlook sin, but he will strike down the devil's strongholds. He's going to sound a wake-up call to his church with a "sudden desolation." Indeed, this will be a great act of love on the Lord's part. He so loves his church that he refuses to allow ease, pleasure and apostasy to blind and ruin the object of his love.

"Let favor be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (26:10, my italics). Here is proof that revival is impossible in a time of ease and prosperity. Isaiah says in plain terms, "In a time of blessing, the people will not turn." Nothing is going to happen until the pocketbook is affected. Only "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (26:9).

Isaiah offers one final proof that a last revival will come after a shaking:

"According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

"As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever" (Isaiah 59:18-21).

The spirit of Babylon is about to be broken through desolation. Yet, do not misinterpret Isaiah's prophecy as a message of gloom and doom. On the contrary, Jesus says, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Even now, we are seeing the beginnings of the last revival, as Acts 2:17 is being fulfilled.

"It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). In all my years of ministry, I have never been able to envision this prophecy happening in our day. Now I believe it is being fulfilled.

In nations everywhere, Christ is revealing himself to multitudes in dreams and visions. In China, India and Arab nations, people are reporting their experiences with Jesus in dreams. Even here at Times Square Church it is happening.

One of our church's security men was once New York's third-highest-ranking high priest in Santeria devil worship. His territory was the Bronx, and his apartment was filled with human bones. He had sold himself body and soul to Satan. But this man's heart was stirred by the Holy Spirit. He became restless, and one night he challenged Jesus, "If you are stronger than the devil I serve, show me in a dream tonight."

That night in a dream, the man saw himself on a train bound for hell. As it passed through a tunnel, on the other side stood Satan. The devil told the man, "You have been faithful to me. Now I'm taking you to your eternal resting place." Then suddenly, a cross appeared. At that moment, the man woke up.

He came out of that experience on fire for Jesus, rid his apartment of every trace of evil, and gave his life to the Lord. Today, he is a sweet, devout man of God and is active in our church. I stopped him recently and told him, "I see Jesus in you." He answered, "Brother Dave, you don't realize what those words mean to me after twenty-five years of serving the devil." His miraculous new life had all come out of that God-given dream.

Dear saint, the day is coming when the whole world will see Jesus. The apostle John envisioned "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9-10).

This is not a little remnant, but an innumerable multitude, just as Isaiah prophesied. And they are all worshipping the Lord. Praise God for that promised day!