

HISTORICAL REVIVAL

By Pastor Alec Rowlands

What follows below is an edited compilation of materials on revival gained primarily from conversations with David Mains, formerly of Chapel of the Air, Wheaton, Illinois. They reflect research identifying common elements of significant historical revivals. I have taken liberty with David's original materials and amended them in minor ways to reflect my own research and thoughts on the subject.

Definition of Revival

Revival is the overwhelming sense of God's presence...that falls powerfully on a Christian people who have become dead and lethargic in their spiritual life...reviving those elements of the Christian life that God intended to be normal for His Church.

Characteristics of Revival

When God's overwhelming presence falls on His people in this way there are seven characteristics of revival that seem also to be common to all of the major awakenings.

- 1.) Worship comes alive and becomes fresh and new.
- 2.) There is conviction of sin and a return to holiness.
- 3.) The importance of brotherly love comes alive again.
- 4.) There is a new excitement in serving the Lord...both in witnessing to the lost and ministering to one another.
- 5.) There is an unquestioning belief in and obedience to God's Word.
- 6.) There is a new and powerful desire for prayer.
- 7.) There is a new and unequivocal battle launched against the strongholds of Satan.

Stages of Revival

In addition to identifying the nature of revival, there appears to be a certain sequence of events common to these visitations of God.

- 1.) In a day when the forces of evil are blatant, a sense of deep dissatisfaction begins to mark certain of God's people.
- 2.) Within a core group, a vision comes alive regarding what could be, and a protracted ministry of prayer is started.
- 3.) In this setting of prayer, God richly anoints the gifts of the Spirit and an overwhelming sense of conviction is felt.
- 4.) Believers experience forgiveness of sins plus a new spirit of victory, and non-believers are strikingly converted.
- 5.) This special sense of the presence of the Lord has a way of spreading very rapidly.
- 6.) A renewed commitment to ministry on the part of all true Christians results in great social benefit.