

## SIGNS OF GENUINE REVIVAL

### Nehemiah 9:1-10:39

**Introduction:** Christians know all about "revivals" for their churches have had them and have attended them, often with no visible changes occurring. What are revivals for? Who is supposed to benefit from revivals? How does anybody know if the "revival" had any positive effect on anybody? In rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah faced tremendous difficulties and relied upon God to show him what to do. God told him to call everyone together to hear God's Word read and then to celebrate the Feast of Booths which had not been done for many, many years. After the celebration Nehemiah had the people prepare for a time of national confession sin where everyone fasted, wore sackcloth and put dust on their heads as external expressions of their humility before God. Humility before God is showing dependence on God which requires:

- An awareness of the great difference between one's sins and God's holiness.
- A willingness to submit ones self to God and His authority.
- A recognition that other people are also valuable and important to God.

### I. CONFESSION AND PRAISE ARE SIGNS OF GENUINE REVIVAL (9:1-37)

1. Not everybody is interested in history but by reading God's Word, one can clearly see how God's people lived and whether they obeyed Him or not, what His commandments were to them and how they responded, God's judgment and/or punishment, God's merciful forgiveness of their sin and the record of His blessings and gracious promises. Do you see now how important History is to God?
2. God cares much about His Word for it reveals the history of His dealings with His people and we are to learn from the past.
3. The joyous Feast of Booths ended for the scattered people of Israel who had been drawn back to destroyed Jerusalem and now it was a time to return to listening to God's laws read which Moses brought to the people from Mt. Sinai.
  - Upon hearing God's Word the people responded with mourning and weeping over their acts of disobedience.
  - They gathered, fasting, wearing sackcloth and poured dust over their heads, all symbols of humility before God, in recognition of their sin and their desperate need.
  - They had just learned that they were not to intermarry with those of any other nation other than their own. They learned that they were a special, chosen people of God and that they had violated God's laws in many ways.
  - For FOUR DAYS they STOOD listening to God's Word being read and continually confessed their sins and honored the very God whose laws they had broken in times past.
4. The Prophet, Ezra, and the Levites told the people of the history of God's relationship with their forefathers, with their own nation of Israel.
  - They were reminded of God's greatness, uniqueness, supremacy and glory as they thought upon God's past creativeness of all things and was therefore justly rightful owner and ruler over all creation.

- To create is to own and to own is to have absolute rights of rulership. God is God and there is none beside Him.
  - This same God who created all things and has absolute rights over heaven and earth is the same God who has shown such favor and attentive care to Israel, starting with Abram to their very day (and to this very day as well).
    - This same God who started with Abram also chose a land for the people who would come from Abraham and that land would belong to all his descendants.
  - This same God also showed favor to them by bringing them out of bondage in Egypt in a miraculous manner so that they could be God's won people whom He provided for for the 40 years in the wilderness.
    - Despite God's extraordinary favor and blessings, Israel still rebelled against God over and over, even killing the very Prophets God would send to warn them.
  - Israel deserved only God's punishment and wrath for such open rebellion and sinfulness. God promised that as they obeyed, He would prosper them, but in their disobedience, God would judge them as HISTORY shows He did.
    - Such grievous offences and transgressions, God would finally leave them to their sins.
    - If America has been chosen by God to be a witness to the world has done the very same things that Israel was guilty of, will not America receive the same judgment?
5. Thankfully, God's final word to His people then was not of judgment but of renewal and restored blessing.
- What compassion for God never promised to FORSAKE His people, even in their rebellion, but would punish them and eventually bring them back to their land.
  - The Levites called out to God to hear again the cry of the people's hearts for His mercy to be shown.
  - Surely Israel's sin throughout HISTORY has been great, BUT God's mercy has always been greater.
6. What is to be learned from this HISTORY? Why did Israel turn away from God over and over again and again, despite all the favor God showed them? What would lead to such sin and rebellion? Is forgiveness from God an entitlement that God's people should expect?
- What do YOU think about God's grace and forgiveness?

## **II. RENEWED COMMITMENTS TO GOD IS A SIGN OF GENUINE REVIVAL (9:38-10:39)**

1. To say something is one thing, but to put it in writing is an entirely different matter. Nehemiah called upon the people of Israel to put their renewed commitments to the Lord in writing!
  - This was an exceptional day for such a former rebellious people of God but God's grace had brought them back to their land and REVIVAL had taken place.
  - We need to be reminded that even with a sincere heart and mind, then signing a pledge of renewed obedience did not/does not prevent sin from taking place. By God showing mercy again and again shows us WHO is the more faithful and sincere....HE IS!

2. In signing their pledge, they agreed to not intermarry anymore and to be diligent in keeping the Sabbath as a day of worship to the Lord and then to bring the first fruits of their crops as recognition that God was the provider, also pledging the firstborn of their families, herds and flocks to the Lord and to tithe generously.
3. Throughout the Bible, God calls His people to heed and obey the call to Holiness, not to intermarry with those whose practices are contrary to God's will and ways for God's way is to be His people/children's way.
4. God requires His people to use what He provides for them in the way He wants. Money substitutes itself as a god for it competes for our trust, our hope, our devotion and our love. True commitment to God involves voluntary giving.
5. One other sign of genuine revival is seen when one loves to be with God's people meeting in love and adoration of God.

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. Did God treat Israel as they deserved? Why?
2. Does God treat us as we deserve? Why?
3. Are God's people free from disobedience and sin?
4. God's definition of Holiness differs from ours, even so how do you measure up to **YOU OWN** definition of holiness?
5. How do you react to being asked to tithe?
6. Have **YOU** ever experienced genuine revival in your own life? Did you do some of the same things Israel did when they experienced genuine revival after the Feast of Booths?
7. Genuine Revival among God's people has visible results that bring changes to lives.