

World Revival?

The straight and narrow path has not developed enough traffic to need a four lane highway

Are we heading for apostasy or world revival? What does the Bible say? Most Christians today are being persuasively convinced that world revival is close. For one hundred years this *imminent revival* message has been taught on and off! Today more than ever, songs are being sung in churches with words like, *'By faith we speak revival to this land'*. Messages are being preached to prepare people for a 'mighty world-wide end-time harvest' coming *soon*. Does the Bible say there will be a great end-time world-wide revival? Why are people each decade being increasingly convinced of this teaching?

The word 'revival' itself is *never* used in reference to an end-time revival. Most of the Old-Testament Scriptures refer to an individual being revived in spirit or soul, or to Israel being restored. The New Testament has only *two* Scriptures using the word 'revive', (Rom.7:9; 14:9). Both these Scriptures have nothing to do with an end-time revival!

Where then do some find the idea of an end-time revival in Scripture? One way to come to this teaching is to take Scriptures that pertain to Israel and apply them out of context to the church. This is called 'Replacement Theology' and falsely leads to the idea of a Christian domination of the world in the end-times. This idea is at least partly refuted by the fact that the world is *not* progressing for the better. False religion and evil are increasing at a rate greater than Christianity in most countries. Many believe that we are indeed approaching days similar to the days of Noah and Lot (Lk.17:26,28).

Most who teach a world-wide revival refer to Joel 2:28-32: *'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh...'* But many fail to read the *next three verses* (30-32) *'...And I will shew wonders in the Heavens and in the Earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come...'* The key word is 'afterward'. After what? The exact timing is important! Matthew 24:29,30 gives the answer: *'Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds'*. These events, (*same* as in Joel), are also spoken of in Revelation 6:12; 16:10; and the *sun* and *moon* are mentioned in Mark 13:24-27. All are 'after the tribulation', as proven by Matthew 24:29.

If this prophecy, *'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'* - Acts 2: 17,18 cf. Joel 2:28, is speaking of a world revival, what are the signs of those days? The signs are clearly those mentioned above: *'I will show wonders in the Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come'*, (Acts 2:19,20 cf. Joel 2:30,31). In Acts 2:16-21 Peter says: *'But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel'*, (Acts 2:16). This was at least a partial fulfilment of Joel's prophecy because *'wonders in the heaven... and in the earth'*, (Acts 2:19,20 cf. Joel 2:30), have not occurred then, and have not occurred since! Therefore many commentators believe we are still to see the complete fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, (*'Latter rains'* - Joel 2:23).

Will this be a world-wide end-time revival? Is this prophecy to the world or to Israel? When one reads the whole of Joel, phrases like *'Israel'* (2:27), *'in Zion'* (2:1,15,32;3:16, etc.), *'in Jerusalem'* (2:32;3:16), *'thy people'* (2:17), *'His land..His people'* (2:18), *'my people'* (2:26,27), *'the northern army'* (2:20), *'your sons and your daughters'* (2:28), and *'I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen'* (2:19), are referring to *Israel*. In fact when one reads the *whole* of Joel it should appear that God is warning more of *judgement* rather than of any revival!

The *'day of the Lord'* in Scripture is a phrase that refers to the *final return* of Jesus Christ. This phrase is mentioned *many times* throughout Joel. Most commentaries see this phrase as referring to the coming of Jesus Christ. Words and phrases such as *'afterward'* (vs.28), *'in those days'* (vs.29), *'in those days and at that time'* (3:1), clearly refer to the end times.

In view of the timing of these events (Matt.24:29: *'after the tribulation'*), those that believe in a 'Rapture'* or a 'Great Tribulation'** should see any world-wide revival as being *after* the Rapture and at least at the end of the 'Great Tribulation', with the coming of Jesus Christ. Yet those that teach an imminent world revival usually teach a rapture and tribulation and have therefore completely misplaced the timing of any 'revival' in Joel 2 or Acts. Nowhere in Scripture do we see any mention of an end-time world revival! A world-wide end-time revival is unbiblical and in *opposition* to numerous passages of Scripture. The Scriptures that speak of a massive falling away from the faith are overwhelming! Below are just a few:

'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy:... (1Tim.4:1)...the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first,... (2Thess.2:3); For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;...and they shall turn away their ears from the truth,...' (2Tim.4:3,4). The Bible clearly predicts 'false christs and false prophets', (Matt.24:11,24); false and 'lying signs and wonders', (2Thess.2:9,10; Matt.24:24); increasing 'deception' (2Tim.3:13; Matt.24:11,24; Rev.6:4); and 'iniquity', (Matt.24:12).

However, there is no doubt that localised revivals can take place as this is attested to by Scripture (eg. Acts), and history. God is sovereign and He can bring revival to any part of the earth that He desires. The idea of a world-wide end-time revival, however, does not have the backing of God's Word! The Scriptures rather speak strongly of a 'falling away' - a great apostasy before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we really preparing for a world revival or are we blinded to a major apostasy? The Bible says *'many'* will go down the *'broad road that leads to destruction'* and *'few'* will travel the narrow way, (Matt.7:13,14; Lk.13:23,24). Does this sound like a world revival? God's Word says: *'as it was in the days of Noah so it be in the days of the Son of man'*, (Matt.24:37). In Noah's day only *eight* people were saved! God has always kept a remnant to Himself: *'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace'*, (Rom.11:5). *Let the Words of Jesus be true: 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?'*# (Lk.18:8)

Terry Arnold (For further reading see the book 'Finding The Balance')

* Some teach a 'Rapture' - from the Latin 'raptus' and Greek 'harpazo' meaning 'taken out' or 'caught up'.

** Some teach a 'Great Tribulation' - believed to be a seven year period of terrible judgements.

The original Greek construction of this sentence requires what is called a 'negative answer'!