

Bible Foretells Greatest Revivals Yet to Come

by John R. Rice

The Bible promises that the greatest revivals are yet to come, as foretold in the Bible, and that they will be characterized by uncountable multitudes turning to God.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:1, Ezekiel 36:26, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 28:20, John 14:12, Romans 11:25, 2 Peter 3:3, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 7:9

Topics: "Revival Theology", "Eschatology"

Description

John R. Rice refutes the pessimism of those who doubt the possibility of great revivals by emphasizing that the Bible does not support such beliefs. He highlights that the New Testament teaches that we are in the age of great revivals, with Jesus promising His continuous presence and power for soul-winning. Rice asserts that the Bible foretells even greater revivals in the future, such as the Great Tribulation Revival and the Coming Great Revival in Israel, where millions will be saved. He stresses that Christ delays His Second Coming to allow more people to be saved, showing His deep desire for all to come to repentance.

Transcript

Does the Bible justify the pessimism of those who think there will be no more great revivals? Absolutely not. How happy some would be if they could find in the Bible justification for their false alibis and excuses, justification for their powerlessness and fruitlessness. If there were a verse in the Bible which said there would be no more great revivals, which said that soul-winning would become harder and harder, you may be sure that it would be shouted from the housetops by preachers and teachers who win few souls and who do not have revivals. I assure you that the Bible has not a single word to the effect that soul-winning will get harder and harder, that revivals will become more difficult or impossible, not a single prophecy that the day of great revivals will pass away before Jesus comes. All that is in the minds of defeated, backslidden, powerless Christians. It is not in the Bible.

In fact the whole trend of the New Testament teaches that we are in the age of great revivals. Jesus promised to the disciples to whom He gave the Great Commission, and to us who should follow them in their work, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). When Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12), He did not even hint that that promise would little by little fail, and that less and less results could be expected. The great promises of fruit-bearing, the promises of answers to prayer, the promise of the enduement of power with the Holy Spirit, are all given to be in effect

throughout this whole gospel age. There is not a word in the Bible, I say, to indicate that the gospel will become less effective, that sinners will be harder to win, that revivals will become more difficult or impossible. The contrary is true. And in the next lecture I shall go more fully into that blessed truth that we are now in the age of revivals, in the age of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and that all the promises about revival and soul-winning fit as well for us as they did at Pentecost and in the times of the apostles, and in other eras of great revivals. We are in the revival age, and great revivals may be had any time God's people meet God's requirements. But that is another subject.

In this lecture I must show you that the greatest revivals the world is ever to see are yet future. Greater revivals are to come than any the world has ever experienced. That is plainly taught in the Word of God, and what a comfort it ought to be to our hearts! When we find that God has plainly promised greater revivals than any the world has yet had, that will certainly prove that the day of revivals is not passed.

I. The Great Tribulation Revival

Jesus told of a coming time which He called the "Great Tribulation." In Matthew 24:21,22, He said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Note that the time coming will be more terrible than any the world has ever seen up until then.

Later in the Olivet discourse Jesus gave us a key as to when this Great Tribulation will be. In Matthew 24:27-31, Jesus said:

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. 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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Here we see that the Lord Jesus was particularly speaking to Jews, and so He told them of the time when He would send forth His angels and gather together His elect (Israelites) from the four winds of the earth. It will be when Jesus is seen visibly, bodily, coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory (vs. 30). But verse 29 tells us that this is to be "immediately after the tribulation." So it appears to me that after the rapture of the saints (when we who are saved will be caught up to meet Him in the air), Jesus will later return with us to the earth, this time to regather Israel and save them and reign on the earth. But the period after the rapture of the saints, while we shall be in Heaven with the Saviour, just before He returns to reign, will be the time of the Great Tribulation on earth. This is the teaching of the best premillennial scholars. This is the position of Moody, Torrey, Scofield (in the Scofield Bible), James M. Gray, H.A. Ironside, William Pettingill and Arno Gaebelein. Hence, the Great Tribulation time is yet to come. After every saved person shall be taken away with Jesus, and when the Antichrist himself will rule on the earth, will come the Great Tribulation. There will be so much persecution and trouble and war that it, above all the periods in human history, is to be called the Great Tribulation. The Antichrist will refuse people who do not take his mark the right to buy and sell. Those who get converted under these conditions will surely risk

their lives for Christ. And yet, the Bible tells us plainly that in this Great Tribulation there will come the most marvelous revival.

Revelation 7:9-17 gives us a beautiful picture of the converts of the Great Tribulation revival gathered in Heaven. Let us read that Scripture prayerfully:

"After this I beheld, and, lo, 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. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Here in Heaven are people praising God for salvation. Who are they? They are people who will have been saved during the Great Tribulation.

Two verses here are specially important. Verse 9 tells something of the number of these saved. "After this I beheld, and, LO, 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." Verse 14 is also important, "And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

In the first part of this same chapter, we have a discussion of 144,000 Israelites who will be converted during this time of the Great Tribulation, from twelve tribes. But aside from the Israelites, here is "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. ." who are saved. These will have come out of the Great Tribulation, when we see them assembled in Heaven. They will have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

It is suggestive that the scene is laid in Heaven. Most of these converted in the tribulation period will have been martyred on earth. No such mighty assembly of Christians can be gathered on earth in those awful days when it will mean death not to take the mark of the Beast. But when these multiplied, uncounted thousands and millions who will be saved during the Great Tribulation are later assembled in Heaven, they will be given the honor due to martyrs, due to those who came to Christ in spite of such temptation and persecution and trouble. These to be converted in the Great Tribulation period will not be allowed to buy nor sell. Many of them will starve. But now we are told that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (vss. 16, 17).

Oh, my heart leaps within me as I think of that revival! I am not against counting the numbers. At Pentecost they were counted and found to be about three thousand. But in this blessed revival to come

and spread over the whole earth during the reign of the Antichrist, during the tribulation period itself, when true preachers and Christians will have been carried away in the rapture, to Heaven, and the churches will have been taken over by unbelievers, and when it may mean death to turn to Christ--then uncounted multitudes that no man can number from every nation and kindred and tongue and tribe will turn to God. What a revival! Nothing less than millions could be meant by these terms, "a . . . multitude, which no man could number." Past counting will be the converts in the marvelous revival yet to come in the Great Tribulation.

The Great Tribulation revival, so clearly prophesied in Revelation 7:9-14, proves that the day of great revivals is not passed, shows that the greatest revivals are yet to come.

And this blessed revival also proves that whatever the outward distress, God's people can seek His face and have His power. Whatever the human limitations, we can have revival. We can have revival when it means persecution and death for Christians. We can have revival when the government is wicked and anti-Christian. We can have revival when modernism is everywhere in the saddle. We can have revival, provided God's faithful few pay God's price and have His mighty power!

Thank God for this wonderful revival when such multitudes will be saved in every nation of the world that they will be uncountable! Thank God for the 144,000 Israelites saved to witness for Christ in that period, but thank God still more for the multitudes, the uncountable multitudes, to be saved in every nation, saved among every heathen tribe, every language and dialect. What a revival God will give in the tribulation time!

II. The Coming Great Revival in Israel

But another great revival, in which millions are to be saved, is plainly foretold for the future.

Throughout the Bible there runs a story of God's love for Israel. Often He has punished His chosen people, and they are even now scattered through all the world because of their sins. But again and again, in both Old Testament and New Testament, God has promised that He will bring the nation Israel back to Himself.

One of the clearest statements in the Scripture about the coming conversion of the Jews who will be left alive on the earth is in Romans 11:25-31 which follows:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy."

Everybody knows that blindness in part has happened to Israel. How difficult it is now to win a Jew to Christ! I see some Jews saved in my large union revival campaigns, and I thank God for it. But it is difficult to win Jews. They are usually spiritually blinded and prejudiced, and not many of them are saved.

But it is God's plan that the blindness that has happened to Israel will be taken away. When is that? It is, verse 25 says, after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." After this gospel age has run its course, after

Christ comes and receives His own into the air, and then, after the tribulation when He returns to reign on the earth and restore the kingdom to Israel on David's throne in Jerusalem, then, the nation Israel is to be saved.

The plain statement is, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

At present Jews are our enemies for the sake of the gospel, but they are beloved for the Father's sake. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. That is, God cannot turn away from the promise He made to Abraham. God cannot turn away from the choice He made of Jacob. God will not go back on His promises to David. So one of these days, after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, God will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and the nation Israel will turn to their God and be saved. So is the plain teaching of the Word of God. We Gentiles have obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews. God turned to the Gentiles with the gospel. But one blessed day when the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, then God will take away the blindness from Jewish minds and hearts, and they will turn to Christ.

This marvelous conversion of Israel is foretold away back in Deuteronomy 30:1-6. There God promised:

"And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. if any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

We see here that when the people of Israel turn with all their heart to obey God and seek Him, the Lord will bring Israel back to Palestine, gathering Jews out of every nation where He has scattered them. God will bring them into the land of Palestine and they will possess it and multiply. Then verse 6 promises, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." That means regeneration. That means that God will make Christians out of those Jews who will be regathered from all over the world.

The prophet Ezekiel foretold also this regathering and conversion of Israel. In Ezekiel 20:33-38 we are told that God will bring the nation Israel out into the wilderness and plead with them as He did with their fathers in the days of Moses. Then He will purge out the rebels, all who will not be converted, and settle the rest of them into the land of Canaan.

Ezekiel, chapter 36, tells also of this wonderful regathering of the nation Israel from all the heathen countries when God brings them back into the land of Palestine. And Ezekiel 36:26-28 says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your

fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

That is a wonderful picture of a saved people, regenerated, with new hearts, with God's Spirit dwelling within them. That is what will happen to the Jews when Christ returns to reign and regathers them and saves them.

One of the most moving descriptions of this marvelous revival among the Jews is given in Zechariah. Zechariah 12:10 says, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." When Jesus returns and delivers Israelites from the persecution and trouble of the Great Tribulation and destroys the Antichrist and his armies, then Jews will know this is the Saviour.

Zechariah 13:1 says, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."

That fountain was not opened at the crucifixion. It will be opened at a future time when the nation Israel will have their hearts opened to the gospel, in Jerusalem, and will turn and be saved.

Then in the same chapter, Zechariah 13:6 tells us, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." When Jesus shall appear among the Jews and rescue them, they will see the wounds in His hands and ask Him questions. He will reveal to them that He is the Saviour the Jews hated and crucified before--the Lord and King of the Jews, the Prince whom the Jews have so long despised. And when they see these wounds and know who Jesus is, they will mourn in repentance and turn to God.

Again I remind you of Paul's inspired word in Romans 11:26,27, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

There have been some great revivals in the past. I should like to have stood at Mt. Carmel when Elijah prayed down the fire from Heaven and when all the assembled people fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!" I should like to have seen the crowds that heard John the Baptist and repented of their sins and were baptized in Jordan. I should like to have seen the "multitudes" who heard Jesus and turned from their sins. (That term multitude or multitudes is used more than twenty times in the book of Matthew about the crowds who heard Jesus.) I should like to have seen the great revival at Pentecost when three thousand turned to God in a day and other thousands of men and women in the days that followed. I should like to have been in the revivals where D.L. Moody preached, and Finney and Torrey and Chapman and Billy Sunday. But bless God, I will be in a revival far greater! I will be there to see it and so will all the Christians, all the saints of God, when Jesus regathers the nation Israel so long despised,--the blinded nation yet so beloved for the fathers' sake--and shows them His hands and has them repent of their sins and turn to Him, a whole nation in a day! What a blessed revival!

I think this wonderful revival to come at the beginning of the millennium, when Christ returns to reign and gathers Israelites out of every nation under Heaven, is good evidence that the day of great revivals is not done. God is the same, His plans run on toward their climax and victory. How wicked for us to be defeated and unbelieving!

III. Christ Delays His Second Coming That Others May Be Saved

We have shown that a mighty revival with unnumbered millions of converts will occur in the Great Tribulation time, and that after that, when Christ returns to reign and regathers the nation Israel, all Jews left alive after some rebels are purged out, will turn to Christ and be saved at once. Those revivals are wonderful, but what about the immediate future? What is God's will for these days?

God's will for these days is the same as it was for the days of the apostles. Christ Himself today longs to see souls saved more than anything else. And the Scriptures plainly teach us that Jesus delays His return on earth so that people may be saved.

The Scripture has a wonderful picture of the heart of Christ and His intense longing for the salvation of sinners, in II Peter 3:3-9, as follows:

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Scoffers are to arise, says the Scriptures, who shall doubt the return of the Saviour. Their argument is that "since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And believers naturally wonder why Christ does not come again and put an end to the present wicked world system, resurrect and gather His saints and close up the present tragic age. But why does Christ not quickly return? Verse 9 tells us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The Lord Jesus is not slack in His promise about coming again. But His long-suffering heart wishes to delay until others may be saved. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And this is given in the Bible as the reason for the delay in the Saviour's coming.

This Scripture shows what the Lord Jesus has on His dear heart. The "Bible teachers" who spend their time principally in speculation about the time of the Lord's coming, about the mark of the Beast and signs of the times; the men who preach from newspapers as much as the Bible would do well if they should prayerfully consider what the Lord is concerned about. Instead of spending their time on speculation and guessing and date-setting about the Lord's return, they would far better be spending their time in soul-winning, making glad the heart of the Saviour.

We have shown in this chapter how God will give mighty revivals during the tribulation time and then when Jesus comes from Heaven to set up His throne as promised, at Jerusalem. But we should remember that the Lord Jesus is now waiting for us to have revivals. The Saviour delays His coming because He is not willing that sinners should perish. In other words, the Lord is as much concerned about revivals and as willing to give them now as at any other time. It is not fair to draw any inference from this Scripture

contrary to this; the Lord Jesus, before He returns for His saints, still longs for multitudes to be saved and willingly will give great revivals when His people pay the price for them.

This age is an age of revivals. We still have the Great Commission. We still have the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." All the promises of answers to prayer are ours. In Heaven they still rejoice more over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine just persons. And Jesus is longing continually to have souls saved and delays His return to earth for that one purpose, to give us time and opportunity to have more revivals and win more souls!

Those who say, no more great revivals ignore the clear teaching of the Word of God concerning great revivals yet promised for the future.

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