

# Understanding the Presence of God in Revival

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*Revival is a time when heaven is closer to earth, marked by the manifest presence of God, which brings glorious impact and hope.*

**Duration:** 16:27

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:7

**Topics:** "Gods Presence", "Revival Movement"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the concept of revival, emphasizing the closeness of heaven to earth during such times. It explores the allure of heaven, not just in terms of physical aspects like golden streets or eternal day, but in the personal connections and the unbroken presence of God. The sermon also discusses the different aspects of God's presence - essential, manifest, and cultivated - highlighting the transformative impact of experiencing God's manifest presence, especially during revival.

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## Transcript

Revival is a time when heaven is closer to earth than at any other time. Did you ever ask the question, what is the most wonderful aspect of heaven? Is it the fact that the streets are paved with gold? I can slip and fall on concrete. I don't get very excited about the concept of walking on golden streets, even though I know God could make man slip gold if he chose.

Is the greatest and most alluring factor of heaven the fact that there's no night there? Personally, that doesn't excite me at all. I think night is absolutely wonderful. It's when you start talking about who's there that it begins to get intensely personal and interesting.

Some of us have mothers and fathers who are already there. And we're looking forward to seeing them again. And many of us have friends who made their way heavenward long ago, long before we wished they had departed this life.

And we'd love to see them again. And then some of us are great readers and students of history. And we can imagine what it might be like.

For instance, I can see myself sitting down besides George Whitefield in a quiet corner of heaven and having a conversation that lasts 55 years. And why not? But as attractive as the saints who've gone before are and the prospect of meeting them again or for the first time, that doesn't really begin to speak of the

greatest attraction of heaven. Obviously, the greatest attraction of heaven is the Lord himself.

I have said to you, revival is a time when heaven draws closer to earth than any other time. And whereas now, here and there, you find an individual who is walking in closeness to God during season's revival. Massive numbers of people are experiencing at one and the same time this glorious sense of God's presence.

Now, we have confused the issue a great deal because we're not very diligent in our study of Scripture. And we have failed to recognize the distinctions that the Bible makes concerning the presence of God. Let me take a moment to spell this out for those of you who haven't come to grips with this urgent issue.

When the Bible speaks of the presence of God, there are three critical things we need to understand. We can describe these various aspects as the essential presence of God, the manifest presence of God, and the cultivated presence of God. Let me help you by trying carefully to lay out the difference.

The essential presence of God is what the Bible is speaking of when it says, God himself speaking, I fill heaven and earth. And we understand that there is nowhere you can go, anywhere in all of God's creation, where God is not. Because God is everywhere.

That is the reason why the psalmist was able to say, if I descend into the depth of the deepest sea, thou art there. If I ascend to the height of the highest mount, thou art there. Whither shall I flee from thy presence? And we understand that if it were possible to load a young person onto a rocket ship, would you like to make a trip? Suppose you put this young person on a rocket ship and shot them out into space and they traveled outward for 40,000 years.

In all those 40,000 years, they would never pass a place where God is not because God fills heaven and earth. But what impact does the essential presence of God have upon the moral quality of human life? No known impact at all. God is as much present in the deepest dive of iniquity right now as he is in this room when speaking of his essential presence.

Now you can't make the assumption because God is everywhere present that his nearness is always the same. That is clearly not so. And if you have not made any careful study of Scripture relating to the righteous judgments of God, I would recommend that sometime you get a new Bible and you read through quickly and you use some symbol, maybe just a J in the margin, to indicate every single place where God makes a statement about his righteous judgments.

You will find that your Bible is completely saturated with these judgments of God if you ever carefully study the matter. And as I have said already, the foremost of these righteous judgments of God is the remedial judgment of the withdrawal of his manifest presence. So I've said there are three aspects of the presence of God.

I've spoken briefly of the essential presence. Now consider that which he'd been talking about this morning and that which is so critical to the subject of revival, the manifest presence of God. When suddenly God is present in the church, you know when God is present.

It's not noise. It's not physical exuberance. It's God in the midst of his people.

That's why revival is a time when heaven is closer to earth than at any other time because God is present in this manifest or this felt way. And the impact is glorious. Sins that have long ago been covered up and

forgotten suddenly burst into the light and shame and sorrow is felt and confession takes place and repentance at the death that had never otherwise occurred.

But I ask you to think about heaven and to ask the question, what is the most wonderful aspect of heaven? And I have merely said the unbroken presence of God because sooner or later every revival ceases. Some people who are not very smart argue against revival saying the problem with revival is it doesn't last. Now would you say the problem of a good rain is the fact that it doesn't last? We thank God that it doesn't last.

How could we handle storms like we had last Sunday if they lasted week after week, month after month, year after year? You never saw the sun again. You never ever walked on dry ground. Revivals were not intended to last perpetually, but the impact lasts forever.

Once you have known the manifest presence of Christ in the midst of his people, you never forget it. In my early years of extensive travel, I was often invited to preach in the little principality of Wales. And Wales is one of the two nations on earth that has borne the title the land of revival.

You know what the other nation is? The United States of America. Two nations incredibly blessed by the manifest presence of Christ. But in those early years of preaching in Wales, it was very common to meet someone who had participated in the revival of 1904, 1905.

And it only took a moment or two in talking with them to know there was something different from them than the rest of the crowd. True revival endures. Its fruits never pass away.

But revival is like the rain. It does come and it does go. Thank God for the rain.

But thank God for the greater rain of God's glory upon the earth in the manifest presence of Jesus Christ. But having spoken in that way, would it not be advisable to look at the other side of the issue and to ask the question, what is the most horrible aspect of hell? Is it the fire that is never extinguished? Is it the worm that never die? Is it the evil that never lets up? The most awful aspect of hell is that one can be there for 12 years or 12,000 years, and in all that time, they can never have a single ray of hope. They can never think, oh, sooner or later, God will come.

Because just as heaven is marked by his unbroken presence, so hell is marked by his unbroken absence. So what we're talking about is the most blessed thing that can happen while in this life on earth. I mentioned the essential presence.

I mentioned the manifest presence. I would like to remind you that when God's people sin and do not repent, he brings them under judgment. I tried to make it clear that what was common of those judgments is the withdrawal of his manifest presence.

But here is a very beautiful truth. You can be part of a church that may look on the surface as if it were flourishing, even though God is nowhere near in anything that is going on there. Or you can be in attendance at the worst church in the city, where there's hardly a soul that believes anything that's real and true.

But either way, you can cultivate God's presence. You can personally enjoy God's manifest presence, even though all around you are other so-called believers who have lost all sense of God's glorious presence. And it would be fair and right for me to ask, how seriously have you been cultivating God's

presence in your own life?

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