



Network for Revival Prepare Issue 49 – April 2024

Revival and the Awesomeness of God (1)

Revival is about awesomeness: the awesomeness of God and our call to live in awe of him – in the church and in our personal lives.

The awesomeness of God is being ignored by many people, which should be very distressing to us Christians. It is a profound motive for praying and preparing for Revival.

However, even committed Christians can have a very inadequate vision of God. It can, in effect, be as if he is just a kind, fatherly figure in the sky. The reality is far, far different. The kindness and fatherliness of God is only part of the nature of God. Ask yourself, “What, actually or in effect, is my image of God?” It is so easy to form our own image of God, especially in the modern world.

The assurance of salvation, which God gives to those who sincerely trust in Christ, is a wonderful truth. But there is a danger in it. It can result in what I call the Apathy of Salvation, by which I mean we can be so sure of our salvation – “I’m saved and I know it” - that I don’t take God’s awesome holiness seriously enough. The devil can deceive Christians into thinking that the NT teaching on justification by faith, not works, with its great emphasis on the love, mercy and forgiveness of God, makes the OT emphasis on the fearful holiness of God out of date. But God has not changed.

Fear of God

Some Christians believe that fear of God has, in NT times, been replaced by love of God. But the writer to the Hebrews says we are to “worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Heb 12:28-29). Similarly, Paul writes “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Php 2:12). Acts 9:31 says the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria was “living in fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31). Peter says the church is to live “in reverent fear” (1Pet 1:17).

It is important to say that this fear is not distrustful terror (which the NT speaks against) but reverent, worshipful awe. The trembling Paul speaks of is evidence of a profound sense of awe before God.

Biblical descriptions of the majesty of the Lord

God is described in the NT as awesome. He is consuming fire. His eyes are like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance (Rev 1:14-16). He lives in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16). A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ... From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. ... Day and night [the heavenly host] never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,” who was, and is, and is to come.” (Rev 4:3, 5, 8). John “heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne ...” (Rev 5:11).

Also, God has not changed in himself since OT times where he is also described as awesome. “This is what the LORD says: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool’” (Isa 66:1). “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers” (Isa 40:22). He sits enthroned on high, and stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth (Psa 113:4-6). He wraps himself in light as with a garment (Psa 104:1-2).

“The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars ... The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning. The voice of the Lord shakes the desert ... The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare” (Psa 29:5-9). “The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it” (Na 1:5).

The Psalmist writes “In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared” (Psa 89:7). Obviously, this has not changed, but remains the case in NT times. If the heavenly host, who know God far better than we do, greatly fear him, then we are certainly dealing with an overpoweringly awesome God.

- He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth: heaven is his throne, the earth his footstool
- He lives in unapproachable light
- His face is like the sun shining in all its brilliance
- His eyes are like blazing fire.
- His feet are like bronze glowing in a furnace,
- His voice is like the sound of rushing waters: it strikes with lightning and shakes the earth
- He is greatly feared by the heavenly host

This is how Scripture describes God and we should bow in awe before him.

This is the God who is so dishonoured by many people in the world ignoring him.

This is the God who is so dishonoured, not just by churches which undermine biblical teaching over theology and morality (especially sexual morality), but by conservative churches which are not radically biblical in the power of the Spirit.

This is the God who is so dishonoured by our failure to live a holy life.

These are the reasons why it is so important to pray and prepare for Revival.

However, the awesome description above is only “the *appearance of the likeness* of the glory of God” (Ezk 1:28). He is actually far more awesome and majestic than that. I intend to examine this in the next issue of Prepare, in so far as we can comprehend it – and there is much that is beyond our comprehension.

Fulton Street Prayer Meeting 1857

In the late 1850s, New York was rife with rumours about economic collapse and the danger of civil war. Eventually, banks collapsed and there were a huge number of job losses. There were also deep racist attitudes to African Americans. The issue of slavery was causing much social division. There was anxiety about the future of the church.

It was at this time that the North Dutch Reformed Church in Fulton Street employed Jeremiah Lanphier, a layman, with a business background, to be a local missionary reaching out to those in need because of economic difficulties. It was difficult work and he was unsure how to achieve his aims. So, he decided to organize an hour-long prayer meeting for businessmen in the neighbourhood on Wednesdays at noon. His thinking was dominated by 2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” The church leaders were unsure about the prayer meeting idea.

On the first Wednesday, September 23rd 1857, he started to pray on his own. After a while one other person joined him, and later another five. 20 attended the second meeting, 30 the third. Lanphier wrote in his diary that one meeting was like an entrance into “the very gates of Heaven.” After six months the press reported that 6000 attended daily prayer meetings in New York and another 6000 in Pittsburgh. Five meetings were held in New York each day to accommodate the crowds. Eventually, one census reported that the Revival added 474,000 new members to the church. Other surveys counted up to a million.

God bless you,

Tony

In Network for Revival God has called us to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” This includes:

- Encouraging people to seek holiness and true biblical discipleship.
- Encouraging people to major on prayer for Revival.
- Encouraging churches to be radically biblical in the power of the Spirit (see [Church Development](#) for information and resources).
- Encouraging people to “Watch!” for the return of Jesus (Mk 13:32-37 – see [Eschatology](#)).