

CLASSICS

An Humble Attempt

By Jonathan Edwards



An humble attempt to promote the agreement and union of God's people throughout the world in extraordinary prayer for a revival of religion and the advancement of God's kingdom on earth, according to scriptural promises and prophecies of the last time.

The Future Glorious State

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; "It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also.' Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord" (Zech. 8:20–22, KJV).

Zechariah prophesies of the future, glorious advancement of the Church. In these verses Zechariah speaks of "many people and strong nations seeking the true God." Nothing ever happened, from the time of Zechariah to the coming of Christ, to fulfill this prophecy. It is most likely that the Spirit of God speaks here of the greatest revival and the most glorious advancement of the Church on earth.

In Zechariah 8:20–22 we have an account of how this future

advancement of the Church should occur. It would come to fruition as multitudes from different towns resolve to unite in extraordinary prayer, seeking God until He manifests Himself and grants the fruits of His presence. We may observe several things in particular:

The necessity of prayer. This can be understood as a prophecy of great revival of religion with true worship of God among His people, repentance from idolatry, and growth of the Church. This prophecy parallels many other prophecies that speak of an extraordinary spirit of prayer preceding that glorious day of revival and advancement of the Church's peace and prosperity.

The good which shall be brought by prayer: God Himself. Scripture says, "They shall go to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." Seeking the Lord is commonly used to mean something far more than seeking something from God. Surely it implies that God Himself is what is desired and sought after. We must understand that God who had withdrawn Himself (or hid Himself) would return to His Church, granting the fruits of His presence and communion with His people, which He so often promised.

It seems reasonable to understand the phrase, "seeking the Lord of hosts" means not merely praying to God, but seeking the promised restoration of the Church of God, and God's granting this promised revival and restoration.

We may observe who it is that will be united in seeking the Lord. Many people from all over the world will unite to seek the Lord. From the prophecy, it seems reasonable to assume that this will be fulfilled in the following manner:

First, God's people will be given a spirit of prayer, inspiring them to come together and pray in an extraordinary manner, that He would help His Church, show mercy to mankind in general, pour out His Spirit, revive His

work, and advance His kingdom in the world as He promised.

Moreover, such prayer would gradually spread and increase more and more, ushering in a revival of religion. This would be characterized by greater worship and service of God among believers. Others will be awakened to their need for God, motivating them to earnestly cry out to God for mercy. They will be led to join with God's people in that extraordinary seeking and serving of God. In this way the revival will grow until the awakening reaches whole nations.

We may also observe the manner of their unity in prayer. It is a visible and voluntary union that was first proposed by some of God's people with others readily joining in over time. Those who live in one city will declare to those of another city, "Let us go," etc. Many of those who hear their declaration will not only join with them but will make the call for the unity in prayer known to still others. As a result, the movement will grow, prevail and spread among God's people.

We can observe the manner in which they agree to pray. "Let us go speedily to pray," or let us go continually. Literally translated this means, "let us go in going." The Hebrew language often doubles words for emphasis (e.g., the holy of holies signifies that which is most holy). Such doubling of words also denotes the certainty of an event coming to pass.

Finally, this prophecy gives us a picture of this union in prayer being an inviting and happy thing. From the whole of this prophecy we may infer that it is well pleasing to God for many people, in different parts of the world, to voluntarily come into a visible union to pray in an extraordinary way for those great outpourings of the Holy Spirit which shall advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ that God has so often promised shall be in the latter ages of the world.

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theologians in American history. As a prolific preacher and writer during the First Great Awakening, he was known for his commitment to doctrinal purity. This article is condensed from one of his most famous works.