

God's Time or Never

by Lewis Williams

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obeying God's timing and trusting in His plan, rather than trying to control the situation or follow our own desires.

Topics: "Sanctification", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Lewis Williams preaches about the significance of burning incense in the Old Testament as a symbol of prayer in the New Testament. He draws parallels between the Israelites' journey to the promised land of Canaan and the Christian journey towards sanctification, emphasizing the importance of trusting in God's promises and not being swayed by doubt or fear. Williams warns against holding onto idols in our hearts, using the tragic story of a woman who refused to surrender her idol and ultimately faced the consequences of her choice. He stresses the urgency of yielding to the Holy Spirit's leading for sanctification, as delaying obedience may lead to spiritual loss and eternal consequences.

Transcript

A third point that is kindred to the text. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided ten of the tribes seceding and establishing a separate form of government. They were afterwards spoken of as the kingdom, or kings, of Israel. The remaining tribes, under the old reign, were spoken of as the kingdom, or kings, of Judah, and Hezekiah at the age of twenty-five, came to that throne. Judah was in a bad condition. The kingdom was rife with idolatrous worship and sinfulness. Groves had been planted, and statues or images erected in them, and the people were bowing down to them, and in our first Scripture lesson we read that they were burning incense to the brazen serpent that Moses had made.

Turning to the Book of Revelation, when John was having that wonderful vision in Heaven, he saw the four and twenty elders worshipping before the Lamb, "having everyone of them harps and golden vials full of incense (margin) which is the prayers of the saints;" and again, "another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the Throne.

Burning incense in the Old Testament symbolizes prayer in the New Testament, so that while the children of Judah were burning incense to that brazen serpent, in our day it would mean they were praying to it.

Now, to understand thoroughly what it means, it will be necessary for us to go back into the history of the people called the children of Israel and examine a part of God's dealings with them. They were in slavery

in Egypt under that government controlled by Pharaoh. God heard their sighing and crying and sent a deliverer in the person of Moses. Their captivity is a symbol of the bondage of sin. Pharaoh is a symbol of the devil; while Moses is symbolical of Christ. They were bidden to kill a lamb and put its blood upon the doorposts and across the top of the door, and at midnight a destroying angel, passing through the land, would pass by wherever he saw the blood. That lamb typified Christ and His blood.

The night they turned from Egypt is symbolical of a sinner turning from his sins. When they passed through the sea, and the Egyptians, essaying to follow and recapture them, were drowned in the sea, that is symbolical of the first work of grace, when a sinner is regenerated and the chains of his old life and habits are broken. For our scriptural proof of this, turn with us to Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth and the tenth chapter: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." These verses are positive proof that that translation was symbolical of the first work of grace. The sinner does not care for spiritual food, neither does he drink spiritual drink. Paul distinctly says, "That Rock that followed them was Christ."

They marched on through the land of the wilderness and in a short time came to Kadesh-barnea, a tract of land lying between the wilderness and the land of Canaan, the land of promise. Now, we wish you to see and understand that they had the promise of this land before they left Egypt. That was to be their goal. They were not to be brought out of Egypt and left to get along the best they could, but they were to go on up to the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey where the mountains dripped down dew. They would not be compelled to plant their vineyards, build their houses, nor dig their wells; that was all to be in readiness for them. Canaan symbolizes the sanctified life.

They were told to go on over and possess the land, but some of the principal men suggested to Moses that spies be sent over first to view the land and bring back a report. God did not tell them at first to do that, but He allowed them to do so. Carnality is the same old treacherous thing wherever you find it; we begin a meeting and some folks get light on their experience and see greater things for them ahead, and then, instead of pressing right on into the land, wait to see what others do, or wait until some one else tries it. Some of you, who read these lines, would have been down at the altar before this had you walked up to all the light that has come to you; but no, you are waiting to have some one else go first and spy out the land. Some may go ahead, but bring back a report that will cause you to not go at all and damn your soul. Brother, listen, you had better obey God and do as the blessed Holy Spirit has been trying to lead you to do.

They chose out twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes, and they spent forty days in spying out the land. When they returned, they had a most wonderful story to tell. It was a wonderful country flowing with milk and honey, and they brought back large clusters of the grapes and other fruit that grew in the land; and one of their number, Caleb, "stilled the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." Joshua also stood with Caleb. But the ten said, "We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." They had their eyes on the giants that were in the land, and the high walls that were about its cities, and said, "We cannot take it."

They acted and talked just like a lot of folks do today. Everybody is agreed that the experience of entire sanctification, or heart purity, of which the land of Canaan was typical, is a beautiful life, and one that should greatly be desired, but there are many reports that "it is impossible for anyone to obtain such an

experience;" "no person could keep it even if he did get it, not while he lived in this life". "No person could live without committing sin," and a lot more of such stuff that we have not time to mention.

Are you a professing Christian? If so, what kind of a report have you brought back to those about you? We wonder what your daily life is saying to them regarding God's great salvation?

But there were two men among that number who believed and trusted in God. Dear old Caleb and Joshua remembered that awful bondage they were in down in Egypt; they remembered that awful night they left, with the Egyptians begging them to depart. They would not forget how God had so wondrously saved them out of the hands of the enemy at the crossing of the sea; how He had given them water to drink and manna to eat along the journey. And they had faith that the same God could and would give them the victory over all who opposed their entrance into the promised land; and they urged the people to go over at once. But, alas, the majority ruled, and public opinion was warped and made to see the dark side, and the people "murmured in their tents." The account reads, "And the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God we had died in the land of Egypt; or died in the wilderness; and they said to each other, Let us make unto ourselves captains and return into Egypt. And God spake to Moses, and said, I have heard their murmurings, and as I live they shall not possess the goodly land, but as they spent forty days spying out the land, so shall they spend forty years wandering about in the wilderness." Moses told them what God had said; then they arose up and said, "We will go in and possess the land," but Moses said, "No, don't go now, for God is not with you." Nevertheless, they arose up and endeavored to go into the land, but the Canaanites beat them back and many of them were slain.

Friends, there is a tremendous truth taught here, and I want you to take notice of it, for it may determine your eternal welfare. You cannot get sanctified just whenever you choose. You will seek for and obtain the experience when under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and when He is throwing light across your pathway, or you will never obtain it. If you suppose you can trifle along with God's Spirit, and refuse to enter into the experience when He is endeavoring to lead you, and then afterwards go in at your pleasure, you are greatly mistaken. You will enter at God's time or you will never enter at all, and will come down to your death-bed and, without God, die in the dark.

Just a few days ago we learned of the death of one to whom we had preached several years ago. Under the light that God flashed upon her pathway, she came to the altar, but found she had an idol in her heart which she could not give up. After dealing with her for some time, we felt that such was the case, and arising from our knees said, "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." We did not know at that time what her idol was, but recently conducting another meeting in the same city, a friend, who had knelt by her in the former meeting, related to us the circumstances, as follow:

"When you were here several years ago, one night after the sermon the altar was filled with seekers. Among them was a young woman some twenty-five years of age. She was married and the mother of two beautiful children, a member of the church and teacher in the Sunday School. She was of a good family, her father being a minister. We were close friends, and when she went to the altar I knelt by her side. During the latter part of the altar service, you came and spent considerable time in trying to get her to give up to God and pray. She would not do so, and finally, arising to your feet, you pointed your finger at her, saying, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.' It made her indignant, and arising to her feet, she said to me, 'Let's get away from here.'

On our way home, she talked about you, saying some harsh things, and finally said, 'I never expect to give up my idol.' I did not know at that time what her idol was, but during the following year I discovered her secret. She had made a trip to the coast to see her father and mother, and had met a young man with whom she became infatuated. He followed her to this town, and unknown to her husband, who was here in business, she met him often. After I learned of her love for him, I remonstrated with her, but she called me a holiness crank. She was beautiful and brilliant. I found out later on, that other young men called upon her; and yet during the entire time she kept up a profession of religion and taught the class in Sunday School. She did not like to have me go near her and treated me very coldly.

"Finally, unknown to her husband, she was to become a mother. She tried to thwart it, and did what caused her death. She sent for me and, lying on her bed, begged and begged me to pray for her. I called in a number of true women of God, and we prayed and prayed while she moaned and begged God to have mercy on her. I told the doctor my suspicions, and after he had examined her, he told me I was correct and that she would die. Her husband did not know the truth and I never told him. When he was told that she would die, he cried bitterly and nearly went crazy with grief. She was nearly two days dying and suffered more than tongue can tell, all the time begging God for mercy. I never saw such a death, and I pray God I may never witness another like it. God gave her an opportunity, and, under your searching sermon, the Holy Spirit drew her to the altar, but she would not surrender her idol, and when you said, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone,' she decided then and there; and her decision that night damned her soul."

My friends, God will not be mocked! At a tremendous cost, He planned the Atonement for your deliverance from all sin; and when the Holy Spirit comes to you and tries to lead you into this blessed experience, of which Canaan was typical, you will go in then, or you will lose your soul.

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