

Business as Usual

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon emphasizes the urgency of individual spiritual awakening amidst the distractions of ordinary life and the importance of aligning with God's will.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Ezekiel 16:49, Matthew 24:40, Luke 17:26, John 6:53, 2 Timothy 2:21, Hebrews 4:9, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Spiritual Preparation", "Personal Revival"

Description

Robert B. Thompson preaches about the importance of being spiritually prepared for the return of Christ, drawing parallels between the days of Noah, Lot, and the present materialistic culture in America. He emphasizes the need for individuals to choose to serve the Lord and be revived, rather than relying on mass revivals. Thompson highlights the significance of doing God's perfect will, seeking His personal will, and allowing Christ to establish His throne in our hearts. He urges believers to focus on living in Christ daily, being led by the Spirit, and preparing for the fullness of redemption.

Transcript

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. "Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures [eagles] will gather." (Luke 17:26-37)

I have been concerned about the Christians in America. Our materialistic culture is killing our spiritual life. There is nothing that will separate us from the Life of God as quickly and as thoroughly as will the ordinary pursuits of life.

Thinking about the days of Noah, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, one would expect the Lord to say the people were violent; they were immoral; they worshiped false gods, or something of the sort; and

then the flood came, or then the fire fell. Wouldn't you expect something like that?

Instead the Lord spoke of eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building. Isn't that remarkable?

I think there is a message here for us today.

Last Sunday while John Beck (our youth pastor) was speaking, he mentioned his conviction that the revival we are looking for is going to come to individuals. We have been mentioning that God is raising up a generation who will serve the Lord. We have been thinking of the youth. However Christine Beck, one of our young ladies, said age is not the criterion. The refreshing is for whoever will choose to serve the Lord. I think this was a word of wisdom for us.

John's comment that the revival is going to come to individuals, rather than to the masses as was true in past revivals, made an impact on Stan Josephsen (our assistant pastor).

Stan and I were talking the next day. Stan said, "Maybe this is what the Lord meant when He said one will be taken and the other left."

This really clicked with me.

I understand that the passage about one being taken and the other left is in the context of the Words of Christ about His return in glory. Nevertheless I sense that something is taking place today in preparation for the worldwide return of Christ.

I have noticed that we can speak to people about what the Lord is doing today, such as moving us past the spiritual fulfillment of the feast of Pentecost to the spiritual fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles. We are entering the third great work of grace, there is no doubt about this. Pentecost is not the fullness. There is much more of God to be had today.

Included in the Divine refreshing that is upon us is the work of the Holy Spirit as He shows us how to attack the sinful nature and gain victory over it.

But it is clear that some people can hear, and others cannot. It is as though we are speaking a foreign language. So it is possible that the groundwork is being laid for one to be taken and the other left.

The following verse is familiar to all of us, I am sure.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

Remember, this was written to the seventh and last church. I believe this verse is being fulfilled today as never before.

I have heard the passage of Revelation 3:20 applied to the unsaved. Perhaps it does have a limited meaning for the unsaved. But remember--it was written to the church in Laodicea.

What is God saying to us today? I believe the Lord is asking us to open our personality to Him so He can dine with us. He dines on our obedience and worship. We dine on His body and blood.

Also, the Lord of Hosts wants us to open the everlasting doors of our heart so He can drive the enemy from us.

The main purpose of the Lord seeking admittance to our personality is that we may do the will of God as we never have before. In fact, Jesus wants every believer to become the visible expression of the will of God. We are learning to depend on His body and blood, as well as on His resurrection Life that is being formed in us, so that we may do God's will perfectly. This is the rest of God, of which the Book of Hebrews speaks.

Doesn't this excite you? It does me!

How important is it that we do the perfect will of God at all times?

In all of eternity, and in all of the spiritual and physical universe, the will of God is the most important matter.

To know God's will and to do it--there is nothing else as worthwhile as this.

There are three forces that motivate man: his need to survive and be secure; the appetites and lusts of his body and spirit; and his desire to achieve something of significance. Sitting on top of these three forces is his will. Until his will becomes one with the will of God, man is a potential destroyer of God's universe.

Is it true that the Lord Jesus is standing at the door of the personality of each Christian? Are some welcoming Him and dining on His body and blood? Is this what is meant by 'one is taken and the other left', in that some do not open to Him? Is it true that this is the meaning of where the slain Lamb is, there the eagles will gather?

Do you have a passion to do the will of God? I do!

What am I saying? I am saying the Lord is coming to individuals today. He is inviting us to open the door that He may dine with us. We may be surrounded with Christians who are busily engaged in eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building. They are not aware Christ is entering us so we may do the will of God as never before.

If this sound good to you, go to the Lord Jesus in prayer and ask Him to make you the visible expression of God's will.

The body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ form the foundation of our resurrection.

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. (John 6:53-57)

Whoever feeds on Christ is gaining the resurrection Life of God. He or she will be raised in Christ in the Day of Resurrection.

If this indeed is the distinction that will cause one to be taken and the other left, can you see that the separation must take place today? We can't wait until the last minute and then decide to turn away from

our animal existence and learn to live by the Virtue and strength of Christ. We have to start now. So in this sense, one is being taken and the other left today.

Are we promoting some kind of "special" gospel that only an elite few understand?

Not at all. Rather, we are promoting the original Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is the current grace-rapture-Heaven emphasis that is "another gospel." We are not preaching the Bible today. We are reciting over and over the dead traditions that are resulting in the moral weakness in our churches, and consequently in our nation.

The Lord did say many are called but few chosen. What does He mean by this? After considering the state of Christianity in the world today, I would say there are multitudes who have been called to eternal life, but only a few are able to wrench themselves from the eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building of the animal existence.

And what did Jesus warn concerning those who insist on groveling in the mud instead of looking upward to God?

The flood will come and take them away. The fire will fall and destroy them.

Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." Why did Lot's wife suffer such destruction? Because her life was wrapped up in the ordinary activities of Sodom, not necessarily sinful activities. Mrs. Lot was no worse than any other homemaker of any place or any period of history. She just wanted to have her home, her family, her friends, and her city. I read somewhere that Sodom was a prosperous farming community.

We may picture Sodom as consisting only of sexual perverts. I would not be surprised if Sodom were a good deal like America of today, having an abundance of food and of idleness.

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen. (Ezekiel 16:49,50)

The above description is uncomfortably close to being a picture of America in our day.

I doubt seriously that Mrs. Lot was heavily engaged in the immorality of Sodom. Her problem was, as the Lord said, "business as usual." Business as usual may be fine for a while; but it produces disaster when God is moving.

What will it take to wake up the American believers to the fact that Christ is seeking those who want to move from just being called to being chosen?

I don't know, but it will have to be an event that significantly affects our material way of life, I would imagine.

I mentioned previously about doing God's will.

I have been preaching for years that we cannot move past the Pentecostal experience to the fullness of God until we are willing to obey God sternly and completely.

But don't all Christians do God's will?

If my understanding is correct, very few Christians even know God's personal will for their lives. The predominant teaching has been on grace, the "rapture," and eternal residence in Heaven. There has not been enough emphasis on seeking God's will and doing it, as far as I can see.

In order to find God's will we have to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus each day. There is no other way of finding God's will for our life.

Of course, we have the general will of God set forth in the Bible. But this is not enough. We have to find out God's will for us personally.

The disciple is required to deny himself or herself, according to the Lord Jesus.

To deny ourselves is to choose God's will over our own.

This may sound like a dreadful way in which to live, I suppose. The truth is, doing God's will is not difficult most of the time; and in every instance it leads finally to love, joy, and peace.

We make many decisions each day, most of them minor and perhaps one or two major. If we desire to live by the body and blood of the Lamb of God, thus preparing ourselves for the separation that will occur when He is revealed in the sky above us, we must offer every decision to the Lord for His wisdom and approval.

Perhaps, we will not hear the Lord speak to us about each decision. That does not matter. The Bible tells us to commit all of our ways to the Lord and He will direct our paths.

In order to commit every decision to the Lord we must be persuaded:

That God knows the details of our life.

That God's desire is to bring us to love, joy, and peace.

That God is able to bring us to love joy and peace.

These three factors are a definition of faith.

Until we are doing God's will we are not acting as part of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the doing of God's will in the earth as it is done in Heaven.

You know, the Jews missed their Redeemer because they thought He would come as a great king in the style of Solomon.

Instead He came as a sin-offering. They looked for manifest strength, but apparent weakness appeared instead.

As I said, we know there is a revival of unprecedented power and authority that will come from Heaven in the last days. We have had no idea that the revival, at least in part, would consist of the coming of the Lord to individuals to establish His throne in their hearts.

We picture revival as bringing such joyful deliverance that people will flock to us by the thousands. Instead, we see that Christ is searching for those who are willing to be His Life expressed in the earth.

The emphasis in many assemblies is on the Church being caught up to Heaven. But now we understand when the Lord said " I will come and receive you to Myself that where I am, there you may be also," He was not speaking of His historic coming in the clouds of Glory but of His coming to an individual in order to bring that person into the very center of God's Person and will; for that is where Christ eternally is.

We might desire a physical catching up to Heaven, as occurred with Elijah. Instead, the catching up is inward as we minimize our animal existence and concentrate on living in Christ at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. This does not mean we neglect our earthly responsibilities. These we absolutely must fulfill. But it does mean our desires are focused each day on what the Spirit is saying.

We must let God interpret the Scriptures, for it is easy to formulate in our mind a false impression of what God is doing at any particular time. We just have to keep walking with Jesus and waiting for Him to direct us. He then will tell us how the Scriptures apply to us right now. Isn't that so?

The Christian churches speak of many things, usually concerning how to gain more members or to evangelize the world. We can easily lose our first love while carrying such burdens. These obligations are frustrating to most of us. We cannot find a way to accomplish them, and so our once-joyous romance with Jesus becomes a grinding at the ecclesiastical mill.

When we finally do break through to the Lord we discover He may not be emphasizing the gaining of more members or evangelizing the world. He may instead be showing us marvels and delighting us with opportunities to draw closer to Himself.

It is well that we are willing to work hard. But the Lord is looking for a bride who will love Him. It is easy to become a religious drudge if we are not careful. We need to eat from the tree of life so we can be free of the anxieties and cares of our sojourn in the wilderness.

The Scriptures are being opened to our understanding. Jesus Christ is ready to move us toward the fullness of redemption. The Holy Spirit is prepared to remove sin from the Kingdom. The Father is searching for those who will put His welfare, and the welfare of others, ahead of their own narrow interests.

This is no time to be so involved in the world that we give our very soul to the American way of materialistic death. We need to hear the Spirit of God each morning as we arise.

"Come away, My love. I am skipping on the mountains of spices. Come skip and play with Me. Let us enjoy the wonderful world the Father has created for us.

"God knows your needs and will help you acquire all that is necessary for you. But be sure you save enough time and strength each day to enrich your soul with the vision of the new world of righteousness that is on the horizon. All your present concerns will one day be gone. But you and I will just be beginning to share the splendors that God has prepared for those who love Him.

"Come away. The time of My appearing is at hand. Those who have prepared themselves will be drawn up to me. Many will be pierced with remorse when they realize they have killed their inner life with that which is worthless.

"For My sake, and your sake, don't let that be true of you!"

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