

Preparing for the Conflict

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preparation for the coming of the Lord and the need for spiritual readiness and a disciplined life.

Duration: 1:00:52

Scripture: Joshua 6:1

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "End Time Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preparing ourselves for the coming of the Lord. He highlights the need for internal conquest, where we allow Jesus to give us victory over our wrongdoings. Once we are ready, God will bring his law and righteousness into the earth through his army. The speaker also challenges the belief that simply going through the Four Steps of Salvation guarantees salvation, emphasizing that the Bible envisions an army of faithful and righteous individuals.

Transcript

We have Joshua 6. We usually don't read together this long a passage, but we shall this morning. Joshua 6.1 through 21. Here we go.

Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the Lord said to Joshua, see I have delivered Jericho into your hands along with its king and its fighting men.

March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of ram's horns in front of the ark.

On the seventh day, march around the city seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them, sound a long blast on the trumpets. Have all the people give a loud shout.

Then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in. So Joshua, son of Nun, called the priests and said to them, take up the ark of the covenant of the Lord and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it. And he ordered the people, advance, march around the city with the armed guard going ahead of the ark of the Lord.

When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before the Lord went forward, blowing their trumpets and the ark of the Lord's covenant followed them. The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the

trumpets were sounding, but Joshua had commanded the people, do not give a war cry.

Do not raise your voices. Do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout.

So he had the ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once. Then the people returned to camp and spent the night there. Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of the Lord and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of the Lord while the trumpets kept sounding. So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp.

They did this for six days. On the seventh day they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. The seventh time around when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, shout for the Lord has given you the city.

The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the devoted things so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them.

Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury. When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted.

And at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed. So every man charged straight in and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it, men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.

Now, this is a type of two things. One is our personal conquest through the Lord of our own nature, our own sinful nature. Because there are enemies in our nature.

How many have found that out? You know, you go to try to do something, you got an enemy in there telling you to follow the flesh and do what's wrong. So the battle goes on every day. So I call this internal conquest.

Internal conquest. The second and probably the more graphic type that has more of the meaning to it is the conquest of the earth. That is the coming of the kingdom of God and the installing of it on the earth in answer to the Lord's prayer, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in the earth.

So that's the meaning of Canaan. First of all, we have to possess ourselves and the enemy. God leads us against the enemy in our own lives.

And secondly, the time is coming when the Lord will set up his kingdom on the earth. And everyone that is ready, prepared to come with the Lord to help him install his kingdom will be with him. And this is not a time, as the prophets tell us, the coming of Jesus is not a great celebration, a gala time.

It is the time of the outpouring of God's wrath on the earth, accompanied by an army of saints, just as we see here. There were two armies here, one you see and one you do not. The army of angels was active here.

And when Joshua, before they invaded Jericho, the captain of the Lord's army, the invisible army, appeared. And Joshua revered him, worshipped him, and recognized that that was God. And then there was the army of the Jews, the visible army, the two armies working together.

The Jews were carrying the Ark of the Covenant. And that's the primary thing that was going on here. From our standpoint, it looks like people were leaving a desert and going into a better place to live, the land of milk and honey.

But from God's standpoint, what was important was that the Ark of the Covenant, His holiness, His law, was being brought by the Jews into the land where they were worshipping demons. In Canaan and in the other Canaanite towns, they worshipped lust. They offered their children in a sacrifice, in a furnace, to the god Molech.

And the priests would go among the people and pick out a likely-looking baby. And the mother had to surrender it. And then they threw it into this oven, sacrificing their babies to this god Molech.

And God, of course, abhors such behavior. And so the Amorites knew nothing about God or about holiness or about righteousness, except what they were taught by their own conscience. But when the Jews came in with the help of the invisible angelic army, then if you notice the Ark, what was going on were you had the men of war, you had the priests, and you had the Ark.

And then you had the rear guard of soldiers. What was going into the land of Canaan was the holiness of God. And when the Lord comes and the saints return with Him, and we are changed and are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air in preparation for our descent with Him on the white stallions of war, what we're bringing into the earth, what Jesus is bringing into the earth with us is His kingdom, His rule, the holiness of God.

Not that our world needs it, does it? I don't need it. I don't know about the Fiji Islands, and I've never been there, and I've never been to Nigeria. But I dare say they probably have problems there also.

But we certainly do here. And we need the Lord to come. He's not coming alone.

He's coming with His saints, just as the Jews, the army of angels that were represented by the captain of the Lord's host did not bring the law of God into the land of Canaan. And so the mighty angels that appear with the Lord Jesus and work with the destruction of the enemy will not bring the law of God. It's not given to angels to do that.

Angels fight. They fight. Michael and his angels fight, but they do not bring the law of God.

Only Christ and people can bring the law of God into the earth. And so we see right there that we have, and I spoke on this last Sunday, what the Lord is telling us now, and we emphasized it Tuesday night, is we must be prepared. This is not a time when lukewarm Christians are going to be caught up and changed when the Lord appears.

That is not a true vision. When the Lord appears, those who are raised from the dead and rise to meet Him in the air, every one of those people, every one, will be a saint, will be a warrior, will be a person who is tested in battle. And according to Revelation 19, that army will come on horses as the Lord will come on the great white war stallion.

And I'll tell you what God wants. He wants us to learn to ride that horse now. If you know anything about horses, you know you don't come out of a pedestrian life and get up on the wrong side of the horse, because the horse will throw you off.

You have to get up on the right side of the horse. They've got more sense than we do sometimes. You get up on the right side of the horse and you ride that horse around for an hour, boy, you're going to be so sore you won't walk for a week.

So it takes some doing to get used to riding a horse. And these are horses of war, and you don't come out of a careless Christian life, if you want to call it that, like we have in America. You don't come out of that and then come down with the Lord on a war stallion to bring righteousness into the earth.

Does that make sense to you? So we're in a time of preparation now. And unless I'm mistaken, that same preparation is going on in the spirit realm, because the whole army of God, starting with the righteous able up to the last victorious saint, are going to appear together. And I think there'll be a lot of people saved that are not in that army.

I'm just talking about the army of the Lord, because that's what God is interested in. Jesus is interested in His enemies being made His footstool. How many believe that? Jesus is interested.

You don't think Jesus is interested in His enemies being made His footstool? But it cannot happen in the providence of God apart from the saints. God has chosen to make Jesus dependent on the saints. That's why it says He is the vine, and we are the branches.

The fruit comes off the branches, of course, coming originally from the vine. But God has made the whole thing interdependent. So we are built up by every joint supply into the head, which is Christ.

And that is God's will, that when He brought His will into the earth, that He brings it in with Christ, head and body. That doesn't make us as great as the Lord. He's always the Lord.

He's always King of kings and everything. Don't misunderstand me. What I'm pointing out to you is we have a responsibility.

He's not coming with some silly group of church people gossiping among themselves. It isn't going to happen. Which tells me that the Lord isn't going to come tomorrow or next year.

You can quote me on that. It's not possible. We're not ready.

The church is in a mess. Amen. Everybody said amen.

I'm not running anybody down. I'm telling you that we've got to make ourselves ready. The bride makes herself ready.

Revelation 19.8. The bride makes herself ready. And so, we're changing now from church as we've known it, where we all sit in pews, the choir sings, and then we hear three points of conclusion, go home. That's not preparation for riding on one of these white war stallions that obey the Lord.

And, of course, as we read in Joshua, we saw there were commandments there. Don't touch the devoted thing. That means the silver and the gold and the bronze.

Don't touch that. Of course, our friend Achan did that. And the result was Israel lost the next battle.

So, there's going to be no Achans in the army of the Lord. So, if you hope to be ready when Jesus comes, you've got to start today, this day in June. You've got to start today getting ready.

And that's all I'm going to say right there. Alright, now we want to turn to 1 Thessalonians 4. Now, what I'm talking about is preparing ourselves for the coming of the Lord. And first, there's the internal conquest.

And that has to go in now as we follow Jesus and He gives us victory over the things that the Holy Spirit shows us we're doing wrong. And then, when He gets His army ready, then they will come and bring His law into the earth, His righteousness, which is Christ in us. The gospel is the gospel of the kingdom.

This gospel shall be preached for a witness. The gospel is the gospel of the kingdom. That's new to us.

We haven't known about that. It's the gospel of the coming of Christ and His saints into the world to establish justice. Our world today is filled with injustice.

Injustice. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. And that's the way it is.

I was reading last night about the children in the industrial revolution in England. Boy, you want to read a horror story. They had boys and girls from the age of five cleaning chimneys.

How'd you like your little five-year-old girl to go down into a chimney, a chimney sweep? They had to use it because they had small flues. And when the chimney sweeper would come around, he'd say, We have little children if you have a small chimney. But that wasn't the worst of it.

They got off easy. It was the ones that worked in the mills that were starting at the age of eight and sometimes younger, if they were large and just working from 4.30 in the morning till dark, just grinding away. No one cared, fed poorly, filthy, dirty, no way to take a shower.

Terrible. It was beyond belief. Until some righteous citizens in England got enough people behind them to fight the industrial giants.

Injustice. There's injustice going on today. We read in the paper about some of the children where goods sold in the United States are made in third world countries and children are there working and workers are working under terrible conditions.

There's injustice in the world, people. There's injustice in the world. You can say amen or oh me or whatever you want.

There's injustice in the world. And the only answer to that is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other answer because it's been true way back before Christ came where people were slaves to the rich and treated worse than animals.

Because a good animal is expensive. But a slave, what's that? But a fine horse, that's something. Well, that's the way people have lived.

And we've overcome a certain amount of that in our own country, but there's still an awful lot of injustice. Well, that's why the gospel is good news. It's good news to the poor.

It isn't good news to the rich because they stand to lose. Tell John the gospel is to the poor because they don't have anything. And the Lord's coming will bring justice.

Hallelujah! Selah. Now, the people that are coming with him are God's untouchables. They've already died in Christ.

You can't kill them anymore. They can't be bribed and they can't be frightened. And we have to learn these things today.

We have to learn today not to live in fear. That's part of riding the horse. You go riding the horse and you come down and see the giants you're facing.

Whoa, whoa! And the horse keeps going. You've got to get, you want to stay on that horse. You've got to get victory over fear today.

God does not want you living in fear. How many today are living in fear? Slip up your hand. You're living in fear of something.

Anybody? I'm not going to embarrass you. I'm just going to pray for you. God does not want you living in fear of biopsies or family problems or anything else.

You've got to get to victory over fear. You're going to ride with the Lord. And over covetousness.

And over self-seeking. You can't be there riding behind Christ when you're disobedient and seeking your own way. You've got to march in your ranks.

You've got to be disciplined. You've got to go where the Lord tells you. And obey who He tells you to obey.

Because there will be officers. And there's no place to be able to go. I don't like you.

You're not going to tell me what to do. I'm just being a Christian as you are. That's what we get today.

That's not the army of the Lord. It's yes sir, yes sir, yes sir to Christ and whoever He puts over you. We're talking about an army.

We're not talking about some Sunday school parade. We're talking about the army that's going to make an end of sin in the earth. And if you've never been in the military, I know it's hard to understand what it's like.

But you can learn. You can learn. Yes, sir.

Yes, sir. Yes, Lord. You speak.

That's it. You give an officer something and he tells you to go here, go there and everything. I don't think I should.

I don't know who you are. Say to the person next to you, are you taking those orders? I don't think we should take those orders. Well, that's what we do today.

It's all over the place. And we're going to ride with Christ? With Elijah and Elisha and Moses and all the rest of them? They wouldn't even recognize us. All right.

We're in 1 Thessalonians 4.13. We're talking about the coming of the Lord. And we're talking about there's something in here about Joshua that you'll see in a minute. Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep.

And the reason he's saying this is because Paul did not preach you go to heaven in a mansion. So they thought when you died, that was it. And so they were grieving.

Paul preached the kingdom. So they were expecting the kingdom any minute. And here are some of the older Christians that passed on.

They thought they won't see the kingdom. That's what he's writing about here. He didn't say, I don't want you to grieve because your loved one's in heaven.

You'll see them when you die. Amen? Whoa. Or to grieve like the rest of men.

And when I die, if you're grieving in here, I swear I'll come back and rebuke you. I want the men dancing. Where's David Wagner? That group going.

And one of these we had this morning. And victory. Oh, moping around.

Of course, I'm just assuming that you'd feel better. Maybe an unproven assumption. Do not grieve like the rest of the men who have no hope.

They didn't have a hope of heaven. They were hoping for the kingdom. That's what Paul preached.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again. And so we believe that God will bring with Jesus. This passage is about.

The main theme of this passage is reconciliation with your loved ones. That's the main theme. And part of that is the coming of these millions of saints from the time of the righteous Abel.

All the heroes of Hebrews 11. God is going to bring those with Jesus. This is God's army.

That's why I think they're being trained. I know a fellow in Bible school 50 years ago had a vision of heaven. And what it was was all tents.

They were all camped around in tents. Sure, you've got to train people for a war. You can't just yank them out of their civilian noise and say, you know, get on your horse.

We're going to attack the enemy. But what happened? I thought I was going to my mansion. I was all set.

I had my tongue set for all that ice cream. I could eat without getting fat. And I'm all set for that.

And you're talking about war. What war? That's the condition we're in today. What war? All right.

We believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. And I just said the patriarchs. Did they fall asleep in Christ? Of course.

Otherwise, we wouldn't have Abraham. You wouldn't have these other people. They just came in after the fact.

Otherwise, they're not with us. And we certainly want them with us. And they'd be a big help in the time of war.

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not go before those who have fallen asleep. See, that was the issue. They thought, well, we're going into the kingdom, and whether the rest of them do or not, we don't know.

He says, well, you're not going to go ahead of them. They're going into the kingdom before you do. And what's that? All right.

Don't look surprised. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command. All right.

Now, you saw in Joshua, which is a type of this occurring. You saw in Joshua that Joshua said, keep your mouth shut and don't do anything until you hear what I say. You remember Joshua saying that? He said, go around, blow the ram's horn, that's fine.

Just march around it once each day for six days. And then the seventh day, seven times. But don't say anything.

Boy, you tell God's people that, you're coming down. I mean, that's difficult. Imagine him walking around.

Well, yes, he said not to say anything, but we're going to get you, Jericho people. Wouldn't they, Bill? Bill knows they would. Listen, Jesus would heal somebody and say, don't tell anybody.

Don't tell anybody. First thing they do is run out and tell the whole neighborhood. You see how many times that's in the Gospels.

He said, don't. Joshua says, don't say anything till I give the word. And so what the Lord wants us intent on today is to listen to what he has to say.

As difficult as that is at times. No charging off in your own strength. He'll tell you when it's ready, when the time is ready.

Don't do anything till I tell you. March around with your trumpets. Trumpets represent prophecy.

Prophecy your brains out. But don't say anything else until I tell you. People today say they're putting on their administrative hat and they're going to command the angels over San Diego and command the principality and all this stuff.

Dear Lord. They'll be lucky if they don't wake up with a bump on their nose. Yeah.

You don't go charging around in the spirit realm commanding the angels. What we've got into lately is really, it's a good thing that God is patient with his kids. Because they're playing with thirty-ought sixes and they don't know it.

I command the angels over the Himalayas. Depart. I've got my administrative hat on.

Don't you know all those demons are going to flee? Because you've got your administrative hat on. What you go do is you go to the Himalayas that the Lord tells you. And then maybe you're sick for two years.

And one of your kids dies. And about the time you're all wiped out, finally the Lord says, I'm going to give you a word. That's the way he operates.

Because you've paid the price. Somebody's got to pay the price. You have to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ.

Like the Apostle Paul. You have to fill that up. Because there's sufferings left over.

The Himalayas are a great demon entrenchment to the present hour. They have been. Nobody's going to go and break the back of that thing until God tells them, number one, two, until they go and pay the price of suffering in prayer.

Well, I done made my mind up. That's the way it works. I'm going to tell you that.

All right. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command. Doesn't say He's going to whisper.

When the Lord talks, it's like the sound of many waters. It's like the sound of an Icelandic waterfall. Powerful.

I don't know what He's going to say. Come up here, I guess. That's what He says in Revelation 11.

Come up here. I don't think He's going to say, go get them, just yet. Come up here.

And the voice of the archangel. That's the captain of the Lord's host there. See, that's that one that appeared to Joshua there.

Michael, if my understanding is correct. The archangel. The head angel.

The leader of the Lord's troops. And with the trumpet call of God. Remember that in Joshua.

Now, I got myself off here using the NIV. Where it says, the Lord Himself will come down with a loud command. Okay, I got mixed up here.

The King James, and this is what I'm getting after. The King James says, shout. We need the King Jimmy up there.

Alright, now. That's what I'm after there. The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout.

I'm wrong in saying that the Lord shouted there. The shout, they used to do that all the time in the time of war. That the soldiers, the army, would come.

And before they'd ever fight, they would shout for the battle. Shout for the battle. They don't do that anymore.

They push the computer buttons. But they used to come. And this side would be over here.

They'd shout for the battle. This side would be over here. And they'd beat their swords on their shields and make a terrific uproar.

They were building up themselves for the conflict. See, for the danger. They were hyping themselves up.

And so God said in Joshua, because the Lord brought this forcibly to my mind. I didn't realize it was in the NIV. I didn't realize the NIV says allowed to man.

The Lord just brought that forcibly to my mind the other day. That you'll notice if you read Joshua carefully, that the wall did not fall down when the priest blew the seven trumpets. It did not fall down at that point.

And if you read the scripture carefully, it says that Joshua gave the word, and then the people shouted. The people shouted. And when they did, the moment the people shouted, the wall fell down.

The wall of Jericho fell down. So this shout here, I think probably allowed to man is the same thing. But I think that the word shout in here is critical.

Because I think that it will be the saints, the army, who will shout. The Lord will give the word, and the army will shout, and the archangel will respond. And that will mark the falling down of the walls in the earth that prevent righteousness.

Be the overcoming of sin in the earth. That's the type in Joshua. They march around for six days, and blow the trumpets, say nothing.

Then on the seventh day, they march around seven priests, each with a trumpet. They march around, nothing happens. Then Joshua gives the word, and the people, the warriors, shouted.

And then the wall fell down. And it just came to me so forcefully, I wasn't even thinking about it, that that's what it says right here. Notice, we'll have to read the King James, because this loud command doesn't fit at all.

The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. Now I don't think the Lord himself will do all the shouting. It doesn't appear to me that way.

This will be a shout from the army. And with the trumpet of God, like in the time of Joshua, what I'm pointing out to you in this passage is that this, which is so familiar to us, is actually a statement of war. This is characteristic of war.

You see that? Descend from heaven with a shout. That's a shout for the battle. Why else would they be shouting? What other reason would there be for shouting? See, that word, even if you say loud command or whatever it is, I think it's shout in this case.

I think probably the Greek would admit to either one, I expect. But sometimes the NIV tries to figure things out for us. I think probably because whatever it is, this is no quiet thing.

This is an onslaught of war backed up by the fact that there is a trumpet, which is what they use in the Old Testament for war. There is the commander of the angelic army. This is war.

This is the next coming of Christ here in this passage. This is the next coming of Christ. And it's obviously a time of war.

Shout. Michael's voice. Trumpets blowing.

Just like Jericho. Exactly. But the walls don't fall down.

I mean, the prophesying continues. The prophesying increases until Joshua gives the word, and then the people shout and the walls fall down. It's a time of war.

Now, why is it a time of war? Because if you notice, that after that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up together with them. That's the Lord's army. Caught up together with these saints who have come with Jesus.

All one group. And the word caught up in the Greek has the implication of resting something by violence. Of catching up something.

I think it's used when the soldiers rescued Paul from the mob. It's that kind of a thing. It's not that they're caught up kind of just to send, but there is evidently something resisting them.

The idea is there's something resisting them, and they're caught up by force. The word caught up in the Greek implies force, and that's the way it's used in the New Testament. Catching up something by exerting energy.

Now, why would that be? Because when these people, when the dead of history are raised from the dead, which is the dead in Christ will rise. That does not mean up in the air. It means rise from the dead.

The Greek word is resurrection. The dead in Christ are resurrected, and then we who are alive, it says we'd be caught up, but 1 Corinthians 15 says we'll be changed. We have to be changed before you're caught up.

So the picture is there is a tremendous shout or voice of command, whatever it is, and I think it will come from all of God's people, those who have descended in the Lord and everyone else, and then the trumpets sounding, the trumpet call of God, the last time that that sounded was on Mount Sinai, that the whole mountain shook, the trumpet blast that scared the people to death, and then it says the voice of the archangel. Did you ever think about that? I mean, these are things that people will hear on the earth, and they'll be petrified. These are things that people will hear.

They'll hear the shout or the command. They'll hear the trumpets. They'll hear the voice of the archangel.

This is war. And then the force of the Holy Spirit, here's the dead have been raised, the living have been changed, and then in spite of all that hell can do, they will be raised up to meet the commander-in-chief in the air, because this is the onslaught of Armageddon. This is the beginning.

The Lord has descended. All these people have come with Him, waiting to get their bodies from the ground, as it says in Revelation, we shall reign on the earth. They're coming down to get their bodies.

Those who are living are joined together with them with this tremendous commotion of trumpets and the voices, and then they're caught up in the sight of people. They'll be caught up. I saw this in vision one time, and all the wicked spirits and wicked people were watching this thing, and there was nothing they could do about it.

There was not a thing they could do about it. The power of God was so present. And, of course, before there can be any catching up or any resurrection, the power of hell has to be overcome.

The power of hell has to be overcome. Well, that's why you have a word that indicates force. These people are forcibly removed from the earth, the enemies standing all around looking at them, and God said to me

that if I were to do nothing else, they would be in terrible torment, the people that were seeing this thing happen.

But He said this is just the beginning of their sorrow. This is just the beginning of their sorrow, because then the vials of wrath will be poured out. It's kind of like a softening up operation.

The saints are yanked out by force. Then you have the vials of wrath, and then the Lord has His army in the air. These people have to be mounted on these stallions according to Revelation 19.

The Lord's at His army, and then He descends to the earth. Antichrist will be in the realm of Jerusalem at that time. We know from Daniel, and then Christ and His mighty men will go and attack Antichrist in the plain of Megiddo.

It's called Armageddon, Armageddon of Megiddo. So that's what we're looking forward to. It's not a time of frivolity.

Another thing the Lord said to me when I was watching this, He said, you have prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies. Because the enemies of God will be all around seeing this thing. You want to understand, this means the end of their rule in the earth.

This is the end of their rule in the earth. Naturally, they're going to be concerned about this thing and trying to resist it, just as we read in Revelation 19 when the Lord comes with His saints. Alright, now the point is this.

What the Lord is telling us in these days is we are facing a tremendous time. Sin is going to get worse in the earth, I'll guarantee you, because the Bible tells us that the wheat and the tares will grow together to maturity. So sin is not going to get any better, it's going to get worse.

But at the same time, God is going to put righteousness in His church. See, the righteousness is going to grow the same time as the sin. They're going to grow side by side until the time of harvest, the Bible says.

Alright, then the Lord is coming from heaven to reap His harvest. And the point is this. What God is telling us today, the burden of the spirit today is this.

The church is not nearly ready. We're not ready for anything of this magnitude. We're ready to die, maybe some of us are ready to die.

Hopefully, we're not going to go to hell. We're going to be somewhere with the Lord, somewhere in a peace, not in a place of burning. I believe that's true, but the burden on my heart is the coming of the Lord.

And of course, all of us hope that we will participate in that, because if we don't, then we remain in the grave for a thousand years and then come out to be judged. As the Bible says in Revelation 20, that in the first resurrection is for the blessed and holy priesthood. And God's got a lot of them that are already prepared.

They've been prepared. They've been in the spirit realm for thousands of years. But God's speaking today to His church, get ready, because the kingdom of God is at hand.

And we can't get ready by doing the four steps of salvation and say, well, I'm saved, now I'm going to wait for the Lord's coming. It isn't going to wash. We have to be prepared for the conflict of the ages.

Now, I talked last Tuesday night about some of the preparations. Let's see. I've got so many here.

It's a case of, well, I talked about Psalms 149. Psalms 149, verses 5 through 9, points out a couple of things that we need to think about. Psalms 149, verses 5 through 9. Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.

That's what we have to learn. Now, I'm telling you, as I've told you before, I'm telling you that I'm telling you again, the big danger to Christians and non-Christians is going to be fretting. Now, we see this in this Timothy McVeigh.

He did not set off this bomb for personal aggrandizement, to get money, for personal anger, to rob somebody. Those were not his motives. This is an idealistic young man, believe it or not.

He's an idealistic young man. And he was in the camp of those who are so the extreme right-wing that keep up a constant litany about what's wrong with the liberals, and what's wrong with the Democrats, and what's wrong with the homosexuals, and what's wrong with the Jews, and what's wrong with everybody else. And they keep this fretting going.

This fretting going. He keeps fretting. And fretting will always lead to sin, as it says in Psalm 37.

And that's what caused this man to do what he did. He wasn't like the rest of them that was content to just fret about it, and then go out and get drunk. He's idealistic.

And they worked on him until he was brought up to the point where he wanted to make a statement. That's what's going on there. It was caused by his fretting.

And these people that go out and shoot abortion doctors. It's caused by fretting against evil. God has not called us to fret against the people that are doing wrong.

And I'm telling you, this is going to be a tremendous problem. Because you cannot ride with the Lord. Now hear me.

You will not be eligible to ride with Jesus in this tremendous conflict that's coming until you're singing aloud for joy on your bed. You cannot exercise personal vengeance. People want McVeigh to be executed.

Why? Because it's a spirit of vengeance. Well, that's understandable with people. You kill someone I love.

That's called in the Old Testament the avenger of blood. And there's nothing going to be accomplished by executing this man. I'm not against the death penalty or anything.

I'm just saying maybe it should happen. But it won't solve anything. You see what I mean? It's not going to bring back the people that were killed.

Because this young man who got led astray is executed. And I'm not saying he shouldn't be. Don't misunderstand me.

I'm telling you that it won't accomplish anything. Because all he did was prevent the people that got killed from ever hearing the Gospel and getting saved. And when you shoot an abortion doctor, the same thing.

How is a man going to get saved after you shoot him? And you go up and cursing the liberals and cursing the lesbians and cursing the homosexuals. How can they get saved? God hasn't called you to curse them. He hasn't called you to exercise vengeance.

I can tell from looking at you that some of you are having a struggle with this. Now hear me. What I'm talking about is preparing yourself to ride with Jesus.

In order to exercise this judgment up here, you have to be singing with joy on your bed, which is just a way of saying you're at peace in the Lord, you're happy, and the evil in the world is not getting you down. Jesus did not come around cursing this one, cursing that one, cursing the Roman government, cursing the Sadducees, cursing everybody in town. He kept his peace as much as he could.

He was gentle unto all men, patient, teaching them. Paul was gentle unto all men. He prayed about Alexander the coppersmith.

He said, beware of him. But Paul would have been the last one in the world to harm this man. Now, getting rid of the spirit of vengeance and of personal judgment against people is a tremendous problem for us in inner conquest.

And until you have that inside of you where you want judgment, want to exercise your self-righteous ways on other people, until that is completely conquered, you'll never ride behind Christ because coming with Him will be to you a personal vendetta. I'm going to get against these people. You may be faced someday with somebody who has harmed you.

And here you've got the power of judgment. I know him. I remember you.

Zap! That's not the judgment of God. You have to hear from Jesus. If you're criticizing people and gossiping, you're never going to ride behind the Lord.

He's not going to have gossips and people with personal irritation and criticism riding with Him because you can't exercise righteous judgment. You have to be so calm and poised in your spirit that you're only doing what you're hearing from the Lord. Now, how many people have you criticized this week and gossiped about, yet you never heard from the Lord so you don't really know if you know the truth? Now, is that right or wrong? Boy, you're sure quiet.

Is it right or wrong, saints? Have you ever criticized somebody and then found out later you were wrong? How many say that's true? Well, then, during that time then, you were working with a lie and slandering someone because you didn't have the facts. But that's true to human nature. And that thing has to be conquered in us before we can ride with Christ because you cannot ride in that kind of an army when you've got personal bitterness, judgment, criticism, and self-righteousness in your personality.

Preparing. You have to be conquered internally before you can enter into the external conquest of the world. You cannot go out against sinners when you yourself are sinning.

And judging other people and condemning them is sinning. Right? Judging other people and gossiping about them and slandering them is sinning. And in the New Testament it says, such are worthy of death.

Well, you're not going to ride behind the Lord if you're worthy of death. What I'm trying to point out to you is we have believed for years that everybody that did the four steps of salvation had nothing to worry about

because even if they blew it every once in a while, when the Lord came, they were going to go with Him. That's what I'm coming against.

That's what I'm telling you is not the Bible vision. The Bible vision is of an army. And it says in Revelation 19, they're clothed in the white raiment of their own righteous works.

Revelation 19.8. That's the white clothing that they wear. So we're not talking about the average American Christian at all. The average American Christian, unless he changes, is not ready to meet the Lord.

That's what God is telling us. We have to prepare ourselves. Now, if you're faithful and you say to the Lord as I'm preaching, you say, Lord, that's what I want.

I want to be with You. I want to work with You in installing the Kingdom. I want to be ready when You come.

If you're saying that in your heart, the Lord sees that. And He will bring you into experiences starting right now. I'm just preparing you.

He's going to bring you into experiences that will make that happen for you. But when it happens, be alert because you're going to think something happened that got out of God's control. You're going to think this can't be right.

It can't be right. Here I've had all my ducks in a row, my house is in order, and all of a sudden it shambles and I don't understand what happened. And the temptation is going to be to blame people, to blame the tools that God uses.

He has to get at our love of money. He may have to strip you bare of every cent you've got. I'm not talking up here something impractical or something that isn't going to happen.

I'm telling you, if we're leaning on money, God, I don't say He will, and I don't want Him to. We've got to pay the bills around here. But your soul is more important than us paying our bills.

It'll get paid some way. Your soul is more important. And if God sees that you're living a typical worldly life and you dip in on Sunday and maybe Tuesday night, but you pretty well got your house in order, I'm telling you, get ready because you're not ready for Christ.

You have to be brought down, as I said, you go into the Himalayas and the first thing you know, you're sick for two years and then one member of your family died. Then you're ready to hear from God. You've come into the place where your life is abandoned to Christ.

It isn't like we're used to. Now, I don't know what God's going to have to do to get us ready, and I'm not afraid. And I tell you, if you have fear, God will back off.

You go no place. But if you really are going to be prepared to ride in this tremendous conflict with the loud command and the shout and the trumpets and the voice of the archangel and being caught up violently from the earth, you will have to be a person that is prepared to come with Christ. And God wants you prepared.

This burden's been on me now for a week and a half to tell the people, which tells me that the Lord is going to get metal in your life. And I'm telling you, so you'll be prepared for it. And you won't think it's the

devil or people or somebody else, but you will use it to go to the Lord and say, why is my rest disturbed? Why am I afraid? What is going on here? What is it that I'm clinging to? And you'll go to Christ and say, Lord, if you want to take this and my health and my life and my family and my money and everything else, here's your boy.

Anything else is not Christianity. It's just 20th century charismatic nonsense. No man can come unto Me unless he deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.

That's why we go after the Master this way. Already dead. Already dead.

These people that follow Christ are dead living people. They've been crucified with Christ. They know they're alive.

Don't be worried. You'll make it, but you'll have to be prepared, which I'm trying to do. And you will have to really mean business with God.

Because I'm not talking about something you're supposed to do or I'm going to do or anything else. I'm just bearing witness to you of what God is going to do and how you should realize why this is. Why these strange ashes? Why these strange ashes? Why, as Elizabeth Elliot said, why? Why are these five young men speared to death? Why is this? Why did we lose our husbands? Come down here all full of joy and Bible school and singing the happy choruses and everything, and the next thing you know, my husband's laying in the river with a javelin in his back.

Why these strange ashes? But look at what's come out of that. Look at what's come out of that. Not only for Elizabeth, but for the Alka tribe and for all these people.

That's the way God works. Through gates of splendor for the five men. But the widows are left here.

These strange ashes. Brothers and sisters, don't count at all any amazement. God wants people who can ride with Him.

Faithful, proven, call, chosen people who love Christ above life for me to live as Christ and to die as Cain. The Apostle said and wrote the epistles that have changed Western civilization. That's how it works.

Sober words, but we're facing the conflict of the ages, people. The church hasn't been here before just like Israel had not been at the border of Jericho. They had all their 40 years that they talked and griped and tried to stone Moses and learn their lessons in the wilderness and they thought this was it and finally got settled down and didn't want to leave the wilderness and they wanted to go back to Egypt and everything else.

And finally one day, they found themselves at the border of Canaan. And what were they facing? Milk and honey. They were facing something else.

They were facing farmers that had their ancestry went back in that land for over 400 years and that was their home and they didn't want to give it up. When we face, when we say we're going to serve Christ and not obey the Spirit of the world, you want to remember this thing has been entrenched on this planet for 6,000 years and Satan and his angels and his demons have no intention of giving it up. But I'm going to tell you something.

They're going to give it up. I'm going to tell you something. The Lord is coming with His people, with His saints! Hallelujah! Saints! Men of war! Tried, proven, faithful people coming from one end of heaven to the other.

All the righteous dead from the time of Abel. And God wants you in that army and you can be. And they can be in Fiji too.

And they can be in Nigeria. And God will call them from all over the world. Shall we stand? Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're ready.

We're getting ready. Prepare the way of the Lord and prepare it in your own heart because you must be conquered internally before you can do any external conquering. We must be made ready.

Hallelujah! The bride prepares herself. She makes herself ready. Hallelujah!

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