

Tophet - the Beating of Drums - Part 2 by Robert Wurtz

by Robert Wurtz II

The sermon explores the historical and spiritual significance of Israel's relationship with God, emphasizing the consequences of turning away from Him and the nature of sin in humanity.

Duration: 42:03

Scripture: Hebrews 6:7

Topics: "Salvation History", "Reconciliation"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of rightly interpreting events in our lives through the lens of salvation history as revealed in the Scriptures. It emphasizes the need to understand God's continuous work in our lives and the significance of interpreting events correctly. The narrative traces back to historical accounts like Solomon building the temple, the consequences of turning away from God, and the presence of a murderous nature in humanity. It also explores the consequences of resisting God's dealings and the call to open our hearts to God's desire for reconciliation.

Transcript

One of Israel's greatest problems throughout their history was that they were not able to rightly interpret the events that were taking place in their lives. The Jews that existed in the time of Jesus Christ still could not rightly interpret the events. Jesus said himself, you can discern the face of the sky, you can discern when it's going to be rain as it were, but you cannot discern this time.

You see, it is very important when we read the scriptures that we understand that we're reading more than just a historical account. What we are reading is salvation history as God has brought it to us. We are reading an account of events that took place that were meant to show forth revelation and truth into what ultimately he was doing in their life.

If we don't stop and establish this fact early on, we will read through the scriptures and we will never have a clue of what was even really going on, but the scriptures are given for our learning and for our understanding and the events that took place are to be interpreted rightly. This is what Stephen had done in the book of Acts chapter 7. God took the Jews systematically back through their history and showed them how he had been working in their lives. And having heard these things, the scriptures said they were not able to resist the wisdom with which he spoke.

Now imagine this, the Sadducees had saw Lazarus raised from the dead. They tried to squelch that by killing Lazarus again if they could have. We have all these other events that took place that were undeniable miracles, things that should have easily have shown them the reality of what God was doing.

And now we have this man Stephen who was full of the Holy Spirit that was going to stand before them and be a walking, living, breathing example of what a living temple is. You see, Solomon desired to build a temple for God, but the scripture tells us clearly that the heavens are his throne, the earth is his footstool. He asked the question, what is the house that you will build unto me, says the Lord.

Has not my hands made all these things? See, God's own hand made all of these things. God made the stone that they used to make that building. You see, God never gave up on man.

God continued to desire to move closer to man and to live among men. You'll remember that God called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt because he wanted to live among a people. He wanted to set his name upon them and dwell with them and be in fellowship with them.

He established the wilderness tabernacle, which was essentially, as some have called, a mobile palace where he could live and dwell among them and he could rule his people and they could know his fellowship and goodness. And over the course of time, God wanted to establish even a closer relationship, a more permanent dwelling place, as it were. So David had it in his heart to build a temple for God.

And God told him through the prophet Nathan, you can't build a temple for me, you are a man of blood, but Solomon your son will build it. And God did build a temple through the hands of Solomon, if you will. He desired to have it.

He wanted to be among his people. In one place he said, my name will always be here so long as you always honor me in the way that we have agreed, according to the terms of the covenant. But in the day that you disregard these things, I will surely leave off this place and I will leave this place in absolute ruin.

And that's exactly what happened. The Bible teaches us clearly that Babylon came and they utterly destroyed the temple. Why did this happen? This happened for a clear reason, because the people's hearts were turned away from God.

Solomon built a temple for the Lord, he built a brazen scaffold, he dedicated it to God. The fire of God fell, the glory of God filled the house, it was a beautiful thing. But Solomon married many women and had many pagan wives and they turned his heart away from God.

He established some terrible places that were pagan worship, high places, to worship the gods of Astaroth and even worse, Molech. Molech was worshipped by children's sacrifice. God warned Israel not to cause their children to pass through the fire to Molech, but here now years later in a backslidden condition, Solomon built high places to Molech.

This place where he was worshipped was known as Tophet. Tophet is a word that comes from the Hebrew Toph or drum, it's hard to really tell the origin of the word, there's many arguments about it, but the reality is the rabbinical writer Rashi tells us that one thing is certain, is that when the children were being sacrificed to this God, that they would beat drums or tambrels to drown the scream. A terrible picture, this place Tophet eventually became known as the Valley of Hinnom.

That name Hinnom eventually became known as Gehenna. Gehenna is the term that we get for the place that we know as hell, eternal hell, not Hades, but the place of everlasting punishment. The first real picture that we get of this place called hell is drums drowning the screams.

Drums drowning out the sounds of the screams that would appeal to the conscience of those that were offering their children, their first born as it were, unto this false God in order to drown out the sound of this baby. I'm standing near the final resting place of a man that was coming out of a bar in 1987, having had an argument with some individuals inside, having gone out to see whether or not they were perhaps vandalizing his vehicle. He walked around a corner and someone savagely struck him with what we would commonly know as a corn knife or a heavy version of a machete.

This particular device nearly severed his head. He was killed instantly. The question that I want to address in this particular section of this entry is what is it that is in man that would cause him to want to savagely kill some other person? We don't see this type of behavior going on in the natural world, but there is a murderous nature in the hearts of men and women, and we're going to talk about that in this particular entry.

In the early 1900s, the ground that I am standing on was part of one of the most beautiful parks in all of the Midwest. As a matter of fact, the false prophet Joseph Smith, whenever he was traveling through this part of the state of Missouri, declared just a few miles from here that this place was the original Garden of Eden, and he set up a place where they could ultimately build a temple that exists today. I say that to point out the fact that this was a very beautiful park, but as you look around today, the beauty of this place is long gone.

It has since been converted into a cemetery. At one time, in Kansas City, which is some five or ten miles or so to the west of here, there was a trolley that was put in place specifically to bring people out just to see this park and the surrounding area. The question that I have is, why is it that men and women must suffer death? Why is it that this park that was once so beautiful is now literally filled with graves? There are some very famous people that are buried here, as a matter of fact.

The man who is responsible for putting the money towards what is now known as the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City, one of the great museums in this country, is buried right here in this place. But why do men suffer death? Why do we look around and we see that all the trees have lost their leaves? Why do we see that it is cold and it is snowing even today, very cold? Why do we suffer these things? Well, the reality is, is that before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the real Garden of Eden, not the place of pretense just a few miles over the hill, but the genuine Garden of Eden spoken of in the book of Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3, then we learn very much from that, that man fell, and when man fell in the Garden of Eden, when Adam sinned, that sin entered the human race, and death by sin. We are going to examine that also in this particular entry of the Girded Mind.

Genesis, God warned Adam specifically that in the day that he would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that dying he would die. This is the literal translation. Now, you will know that in Hebrew idiom, whenever a word or a statement is doubled, it is done for emphasis.

So when God told Adam, dying thou shalt die, this is ultimate death. The king of kings means the ultimate king, the lord of lords, the ultimate lord, but dying thou shalt die is ultimate death. This is separation from the goodness and the majesty of God in terms of His grace.

Ultimately, man would be separated from fellowship with God. He would be driven from the Garden of Eden, and there would be cherubims that would be placed at the entrance, forbidding man to return back into this place of pristine wonder and genuine fellowship with God. But this was the consequence of man deciding that he was going to place his will in front of God's will.

This is important to understand. It was a truly devastating thing for Adam to do. The whole human race from that point forward suffers as a result.

Scripture tells us sin entered the world, and death by sin. Death is one per person. Unless the Lord should take us in some way in the rapture or something like that, we can be guaranteed that we will all go by the way of the grave.

But death is an enemy. It is the last enemy that ultimately will be destroyed. One of the last, that is.

So we need to understand very clearly that all of the things that we see going on in the world, things that often God gets blamed for, is the direct result of Adam disobeying God. What did Adam think God meant when he said, dying thou shalt die? I propose to you that really it is impossible for anyone, even Adam, to have truly reckoned with the consequence of what he was about to do when he disobeyed God. And he believed the word of the serpent over against the word of the Lord.

But this is the consequence. We are separated from God at birth. But secondly, that death is one per person.

Constructed in 1902 as a holding vault for temporary entombment, when inclement weather did not permit traditional entombment. Since the time of the construction of this temporary vault, there have been some 50,000 people buried in this cemetery. But you know, God also has a place of temporary entombment, if you will, only not for the dead, but for the living.

You will remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus. There was a certain rich man who fared sumptuously, the scripture tells us, and that there was a beggar who desired even to eat of the crumbs that fell from his master's table. And it happened that the rich man died, and he was buried, and the poor man died, and he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.

Now, it is interesting when we examine the fact that God uses this as an illustration to tell us that there is a place, even right now, where the unsaved, or those that did not believe and trust in God by faith, those that did not walk with God, and are not part of the heirs of the righteousness that is of God by faith, these individuals right now are in a place of torment, with an S, plural. This is a terrible place. And this rich man, being in torment, lifted up his eyes, the scripture said, and he saw Father Abraham afar off, and he asked Lazarus if he could come and to dip his finger in water and touch it to his tongue, for he said, I am tormented in this flame.

But Father Abraham said, you will remember that when you were on the earth, that you lived a good life, as it were, but now you are tormented, and he is comforted. This is a fearsome thing to consider. Now, understand that this is just Hades.

This is the temporary place, or the abode of the dead. Now, Abraham's bosom is the place where those that are the heirs of the righteousness that is of God by faith lived. Before, of course, the time when Christ ascended into heaven.

Paul the Apostle said to be absent from the body, to be present with the Lord. Another word that is used for this place, Abraham's bosom, is also paradise. And you'll recall that Paul said, I was caught up unto paradise.

In other words, paradise is now in the very presence of the Lord. But this rich man, that had fared sumptuously, that refused to turn to God, had made this bold statement to him. He said, perhaps you could send someone, Lazarus, to warn my brothers, and that they would not come to this terrible place.

But you will know that Father Abraham essentially told him, he said, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they do not hear them, they will not believe, even if one were to be raised, even from the dead. This is a very sobering reality.

You see, individuals that don't believe, or refuse to trust Christ, don't do so as a result of the fact that God has not shown himself to them. The book of Romans tells us clearly that God has shown himself to them. But they do not like the knowledge of God.

They don't like to retain God in their knowledge. They want to push farther and farther away from God. They are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

So God essentially leaves off striving with them. You'll remember in the book of Genesis, chapter 6, God said, I will not always strive with man. So we as individual believers must understand that the reason why people don't truly believe is not because of lack of information.

It's not because they're not truly convinced. You'll remember that the Sadducees at one point, when they saw Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, when they saw how many believers that had produced, that they desired to put Lazarus to death. Now imagine this, here's a man who was dead, and now he's been raised, and now they're wanting to put him to death again.

See, the evidence was right before them. The Pharisees were also living dangerously. They liked to attribute the handiwork of God, the very finger of God, the very evidence, the very voice of God in the miracles themselves to Satan.

They wanted to attribute him to the devil so that they did not have to believe in Jesus Christ. So they could somehow deal with what they were seeing. You see, individuals are suppressing their conscience.

They are holding the truth in unrighteousness. And Romans 1 tells us that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all that do such things. When Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, it wouldn't be long and they would give forth a son by the name of Cain.

You will remember that God had told Eve that from your seed there would come one that would bruise the head, if you will, of the serpent. But Cain, who means the one received, or in other words, Adam and Eve believing that Cain was in fact the one that God had promised, probably had high hopes for him. But then they bore another son, and his name was Abel.

And over the process of time, both of these young men came to bring their offering before the Lord. You will know the story that God accepted Abel's sacrifice. He had offered it in faith.

Now faith is right response to light or revelation or truth. God quickens the truth to our heart. We respond rightly to it, and God calls it faith.

See, when God speaks, that enables us to be able to do what God said. See, Cain could have brought an offering that was acceptable unto the Lord as well. But he chose to bring forth from the fruit of the ground.

His brother Abel brought forth of his flocks and herds. Now, he had grown angry, and he rose up, and he killed his brother. Now you will know that the devil is called a murderer from the very beginning.

That murderous nature had entered into the human race. And we see it played out all throughout society today. In the book of 1 John, the Bible said that he that hates his brother is a murderer.

And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. This murderous nature exists in the hearts of unregenerate men. It plays out in many ways.

But it is first seen in the very son that Adam had first produced through Eve, Cain. He rose up, he slew his brother. And when God comes looking, he asks Cain, Where is thy brother? And it's terrible that you see the first real reaction, some of the first glimpses into what the sin nature that is in man ultimately is like.

After having killed his own brother from a murderous nature that is inside of him, the Bible said because his own works were evil and his brothers were righteous, he talks to God in a very smart aleck kind of way. He said, Am I my brother's keeper? Now this is another very telling aspect of the nature of Satan itself living and moving in the heart of human beings. Very smart aleck towards God.

Very irreverent towards God. Understand that even as Ravi Zacharias has pointed out, that guilt dealt with by irreverence is not functional. It's not possible.

See, it's only a means of temporarily knocking the edge off the guilt, but it doesn't truly deal with it. But men do it all the time. They act irreverently when they know they've done something wrong rather than stand up and declare or acknowledge what they have done or to say the same thing after as God would expect him to do.

This is our concept of confess to say the same thing after. Man doesn't want to say the same thing after. Man doesn't want to acknowledge what he's done.

And in Cain's case, he talked very disrespectfully towards God. He said, The voice of thy brother's blood cries to me from the ground. This is a tragic, tragic first picture of what the sin nature is in man.

For hundreds and hundreds of years, man grew darker and darker in his and her heart. Ultimately, you will know that God had to destroy the world that then was by water because the people had corrupted their way. They had reached the point of no return, and there was no hope for them.

God had to destroy them. He had to destroy the earth with water. But he gave the rainbow and the cloud as a promise to say that he would never do that again.

But yet he used Noah, the Bible said, one of eight that was spared or saved therein by water. And God, by this great flood event, started all over with the human race. It was a regeneration, if you will.

When he walked out of the ark, it was almost as if he could look around and in the words of some ministers, behold, all has become new. But there was something that wasn't new. The environment might have been new.

It might have been a fresh start. But they didn't have a new heart. And they continued on in their wickedness.

Some have shown and pointed out the fact that Noah was even drinking. He may have even had a problem with alcohol as one of his grandsons had left him or stripped him naked. And you know the story.

But things still were not well. But God kept working. God kept dealing because God loved man.

And he kept working with him. And over the course of time, there was an individual that came from the family of Eber that ultimately came to be known to us as the Hebrews by the name of Abram. God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees.

This is a command. This is how everyone begins their walk with God. You'll remember that he walked by the disciples and he said, Follow me.

That is a command. You see, the call is a command. And when we begin to come underneath that authority, when we're willing to surrender to that authority, then the process by which we can come into right relationship with God is begun.

But it has to begin right there. When you're willing to surrender your will and say, I will do what God has said. I will obey.

I will follow. I will allow him to rule and reign over me. Very important to understand.

Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. He obeyed. He went out, the Scripture said, not knowing whether he went.

And he began to dwell in a place almost as if it were intense perhaps or just out in the wilderness. He was living by faith. He had walked away from the security that was in Ur.

But the security came with a great price. See, he had to live among idolaters. He had to be amongst paganism that is almost unconscionable.

See, this world has been loaded with paganism. People have made gods after their own image. They reject the one true God and then they begin to make up gods after their own lust.

And that has filled the world. From every corner of the globe, we find this. From the deepest, darkest jungles in South America, Central America, right here, not even 300 miles from where I am standing, human sacrifice was performed right outside of St. Louis.

A lot of people don't realize these types of things. But man has been a very violent creature. He has dishonored his God.

And when you read the book of Romans chapter 1, God lines it all out for us. Men may go up into the halls of learning and begin to blame God in their Cain-ish type, smart-aleck way, but God has already established the guilt and the fact that man is holding truth and unrighteousness. And there is going to come a day of reckoning.

But see, God at the same time loves man. Though His wrath abides over them, there is a sense in which He is still always reaching out to them to try to get them to reconcile or to get them to turn away from their

evil. You'll remember that Jesus told Paul the Apostle when he was Saul yet on the road to Damascus, He said, It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

It's hard for thee. Pricks were goads that used to be used to goad cattle or oxen, let me say, when they would be plowing a field in order to keep the rows straight. To take maximum advantage of the land, you couldn't have crooked rows, you had to have them straight.

So they would use these goads to keep the ox going in a straight line. And Jesus was essentially saying to Saul, You are kicking against the goads. In other words, you are being pricked and you feel it.

You sense the dealing of God. You sense the dealing of the Holy Spirit. But you continue, no matter how much pressure it is, no matter how painful it is, you continue to want to go your own way.

And that is the course of man. God deals with man. He said, I won't always strive with them.

Their days will be a hundred and twenty. See, God loves man. Let's get the story straight.

God loves man. He has sent His only begotten Son to die for man. What more can He say to us than He said? Behold, the heavens declare the glory of God.

The firmament showeth forth its handiwork. But yet man still desires to be willfully ignorant of these things so that they can suppress the truth in unrighteousness. It's no different than when the Sadducees saw that man raised from the dead and said, We're going to kill him.

Think of how crazy that is. If someone was raised back from the dead, surely we would think in our minds that people would believe. But Abraham said, No.

If one came back from the dead, they won't even believe. So it's not an issue of evidence. It's not an issue as much as I even love to study apologetics.

We are fooling ourselves if we think that if we can just build enough evidence, we can get people to turn to Christ. There were individuals who'd seen people raised from the dead who still wanted to try to come against God, come against Christ, and all kinds of things. The issue is a matter of the heart.

They have to begin to respond rightly to the truth that they see and stop trying to suppress it, which is such a dangerous thing to do, especially when they went so far as to begin to attribute the working of God to Satan himself. Imagine that. But that is what man is willing to do in order to maintain his autonomy.

They don't want Christ to rule over them. So this is the situation. This is the condition of the hearts of men.

God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, away from that mentality, and he was going to start up a new group of people, people that he could command, that he could speak a word, and they would obey him. Totally different than what the world is wanting to do. But the question I want to answer in this particular entry, what is God going to do with all those that continue to kick against the pricks? What is he going to do with all of those that continue to resist the Holy Ghost? Obviously, he's got to do something with them.

They can't just continue to roam around causing havoc and destruction as we've seen. History bears out. Thousands of years we've seen it.

He can't continue to allow people to want to gravitate towards evil in such a way that they're willing to slay people in genocide. They're willing to sacrifice individuals up on hills as they did with the Aztec Indians. And we're told through historians that they would literally take individuals high up on top of these peaks, and these four priests would hold them down, cut their heart out, pull the heart out, still beating, holding it up, and just kick their body off the side of the cliff.

And the sad thing is we've got educators that try to promote this idea, saying that they had a higher regard for nature than they even had for human life. What liars. They are liars.

The truth of the matter is they are rebels, and they're in rebellion against God. That's the facts. And they're continuing on, willing to do whatever they have to do to get some other kind of influence, some other kind of help.

If it has to be from a demonic spirit, we'll do what we've got to do to get help from it. But we're not going to turn to God. We're not going to look to Him.

We don't want to keep Him in our knowledge. You see, those gods will let them go fornicate when they want to. Those gods will let them go get drunk when they want to.

Those gods will let them dance around a fire like wild, crazy individuals and let them party and carouse and do what they want to. Whereas the one true God expects us to live in harmony with the design that He has made for us. And in so doing, we can live a peaceful life.

But they've rejected that. A very sad fact indeed. So what's God going to do with them? We're going to discuss that next in this entry.

In Hebrews chapter 6, the Bible tells us some sobering truths. The Bible said, The spirit for the earth that drinks in the rain that comes often upon it and brings forth herbs, meat for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from the Lord. But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected.

It is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. When John the Baptist came preaching, he said, Behold, the axe is now laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

Fire ultimately being Gehenna. Now, think of the language there. The earth that drinks in the rain that comes often upon it.

See, God deals with man. He deals repeatedly with man. He pours His Holy Spirit out.

He gives them His Word. He deals with them over and over again. But yet, men resist God's dealings.

They resist what He's trying to do. And God said that if it continues to bring forth thorns and briars, I have to reject it. It's near to cursing, whose end is to be burned.

Now, there are various types of trees that are in this part of the country that are thorn trees. There are hedge-type trees. There are other types of trees that really are not useful hardly at all.

They're not useful not because the wood of the tree is not useful, but because there are so many thorns on the particular branches. There are so many thorns on the branches that you can't really work with the wood itself because they are too prickly. See, God's got a deal with that.

He wants trees, which is a metaphor for human beings. The Bible talked about how God would have a planting of the Lord, trees of righteousness. And trees are symbolic of men and women and people.

And He's saying that the earth that drinks in the rain, in other words, if I continue to pour out My Spirit on individuals and they continue to bring forth thorns and briars, they are rejected. They are near unto cursing. And their end is to be burned.

There's nothing left that can be done. When God approaches man, when God approached man in the time of John the Baptist, the human race had turned a corner. For years they had been in a place of suppressing, if you will, the very sin nature that is in man.

God had given commandments. He had dealt with it. He had found ways to manage it.

But now He wanted to deal with it. And instead of man bringing forth thorns and briars, God wanted to begin to bring forth fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, fruit of righteousness, fruit of holiness, and also the fruits that are listed out in the book of Galatians chapter 5. So God's wanting to bring forth fruit. But man continues to bring forth thorns and briars, things that are very much contrary to his personality.

And it's not because the individual is not able to change. It's because they refuse to be changed. That's the warning in Hebrews chapter 6. In the book of the Revelation chapter 3, our Lord Jesus Christ said to the church at Laodicea, Behold, I stand at the door and I knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, I will sup with him, and he with me. This has always been God's desire to come in to man, to live in man, not just among man, but in man. But we asked the question earlier, what is God going to do with all of these that have resisted his dealings day after day, year after year, all their life? Well, the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, If you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation.

As in the days of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me and proved me and saw my works for forty years, wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They do always err in their hearts. They have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is deceitful and it is the means by which the enemy causes us to harden ourselves.

It's important that we understand that. But the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the book of Revelation chapter 3, is standing at the door and He is knocking. He is desiring to come in and to have fellowship with us.

But it's up to us. In our last entry in this Girded Minds series, we're going to explore God's dealings with man and His desire to be reconciled with Him. And we will take a few final looks at the final destiny of those who, year after year, God has dealt with them.

They have resisted the Holy Spirit. They have kicked against the goads. And there is still no change.

The earth that drinks in the rain that was poured often upon it continued to bring forth thorns and briars. God has to do something with those that refuse to change. In our next entry, we're going to take a look at that as well.

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