

The Tragedy of Departing From the Heavenly Vision

by B.H. Clendennen

The sermon emphasizes the critical need for the Church to return to its heavenly vision to fulfill God's purpose.

Duration: 27:14

Scripture: Matthew 6:24, John 15:19, John 17:21, John 18:36, John 20:21, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Ephesians 1:22-23, 1 John 2:15-17, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "Church Revival", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the true nature of the Church as seen by God, highlighting the tragic consequences of departing from the heavenly vision. It explores the contrast between the heavenly vision of Christ and the earthliness that can infiltrate the Church, leading to spiritual blindness, division, and a departure from God's intended purpose. The call is for the Church to return to its heavenly vision, rejecting earthly influences and embracing the fullness of the Holy Spirit for a true outpouring.

Transcript

And I hope you've got yourself all adjusted and wide awake and ready to hear this lesson as we continue in our Pastoral Theology series on the Church. When you realize the Church is the ultimate thing with God, everything that He's done has been to this end, and that history absolutely has no meaning apart from the Church. But what men call the Church may very well be something other than God calls the Church.

That's the reason I've asked you to leave all presuppositions on the outside when you come in here and let us look at the Church as God sees it. Now, the Church we know that was born on the day of Pentecost is the only Church to reach their generation for Christ. In the book of Acts, we have the story of that Church and the glory of God that rested upon it.

But now, in the end time, we know, and you know, and I know that the Church that Christ is coming after is a Church that hell never prevailed against. That means that that Church that He comes after must be equal to the Church that He begun with. Now, something has happened in these years in between, and we've come to the end of an age with something different than Christ started with.

And what created that? We've seen what it's going to take, and we'll see what it must be. But we're going to look today at what has brought the Church to this place where she is something other than what God intended. And in seeing the cause, I know we can further know how to effect the cure.

The title of this lesson is The Tragedy of Departing from the Heavenly Vision. I'm going to read in John chapter 20 and verse 21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you, as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

The tragedy of departing from the heavenly vision. In these lessons, we have brought into view the essential heavenliness of the Church, which we've said is a basic governing law of God's purpose for her. This we have seen to be a factor of great importance in God's dealing with Jerusalem.

The more we read and meditate upon the matter, the more we see that this lies behind Jerusalem's history, Jerusalem coming into position, her revival, always related to those elements which speak of a heavenliness, never of the earth. On the contrary, the loss of peace, of her place of power, of glory was due to earthly and worldly elements getting the upper hand. Jerusalem reached her supreme crises when the Lord came into the midst of her.

At that point, two things marked the crises of her history, and you know she's a type. The first thing was the heavenliness of Christ's own person and life and ministry and mission. The second, the earthliness of Judea's vision, interest, and association.

Now the contrast is one of the most astounding and outstanding elements of the gospel. Never was Jerusalem's worldliness more apparent than when the Lord was in her midst. He brought heaven in His own person, and by reason of His presence, the opposite state was dragged out into the light.

So with that on mind is history. We see that as the facts of God and the facts of history. Then we come to this thought, the heavenliness of Christ and His own.

Now the first of these two things, the heavenliness of His person, life, and ministry and mission is brought out most clearly in John's gospel. John's gospel is mainly concerned with matters within the compass of Judaism. Also in that gospel, Jerusalem stands very largely.

Now against that fact, we see in John's gospel the heavenliness of Christ as that which represents Him more particularly than anything else. Then so far as His own people are concerned, John's gospel makes the spiritual life of the believer a heavenly thing at every point. The spiritual life of the believer is seen to have its beginning in heaven when He says we're born from above.

In John, the Lord takes great pain to keep His own from this world. He allows the shadow of His going away to fall very heavily upon them with a definite purpose of showing first that their life is to be a heavenly life, their hope a heavenly hope and not an earthly one. Now the trouble of their heart was largely due to disappointment as to their worldly expectations.

To overcome this false expectation that was in every one of them, He carries them away from the world and fastens their hope upon Himself in glory. Their service is also set forth as a heavenly service. As the Father sent me, so send I you.

John chapter 20 and verse 21. Now listen, this verse says that our ministry, the true church's ministry, is to be the exact ministry of Christ here. As the Father sent me, so send I you.

Now that is to be the exact ministry of the church as the body of Christ. You can understand then why all hell is going to be drawn out against you as you begin to move in this ministry. Because as we hear that Christ, as we are here as He was in the earth, begin to manifest Christ, then the other, this religious world, its worldliness and earthliness is going to be drawn out in comparison.

And you're already seeing the hatred that's being drawn out against the truly born-again believer all the time and in every place. We begin to be referred to as a cult and worse because when you look at His life and His ministry, His holiness, His walk, His stand, His mission, that is exactly the mission and ministry of the church. All of this is gathered up and made clear in John.

They are not of this world. The earthboundness of Judaism, just look at it, there's no doubt that the earthboundness of Judaism was a background and the cause of its rejection of Christ. The earthboundness, the grip of historic tradition upon their minds resulted in spiritual blindness to everything that was heavenly.

This became manifest as blindness has always manifested in various ways. John's Gospel gives us a clear unveiling of the outworking of that spiritual blindness and jealousy, envy, hatred, smallness, suspicion, passion, etc. These all run riot in the Gospel of John and the Jews then are seen in a very bad light.

Now when you reflect upon that in connection with the heavenliness of everything in relation to Christ, you see how utterly blind they were to all that was really heavenly. Now that blindness working out in all these ways led to a full and final rejection of Him by the nation. And from that point, Jerusalem became the center of intensified religious earthliness in its outworking.

Now, at this point, you hear we, at this point, we need to remind ourselves that we are having to do with the church. We're now. This is our lesson.

This is why we're here. We're having to do with the church. Our great concern is the church, which is His body.

And we must know the nature of the church, what it is that spiritually constitutes the church. We can see quite clearly that jealousy, envy, hatred, suspicion, passion, etc. are marks of spiritual blindness.

Spiritual vision and spiritual revelation should always work out to the absence of such things as we've just mentioned. Now, that is which jealousy, that in which jealousy, hatred, envy, and such are found is not the heavenly church. That's not the heavenly church.

The state to which we've just referred found in the earthly Jerusalem in the days of Christ has been the state of Jerusalem and Judaism ever since. In Christ's reason, two things can be noted. He did not appear again to Jerusalem nor to official Judaism.

He took the church away from the earth spiritually and centered it in Himself in heaven. And from there, history began to develop along two lines, a true and a false. The church, as a heavenly and spiritual thing, developed under the control of the Holy Ghost and a false expression of Christianity as an earthly and man-governed system began to come into being alongside that true.

There you have the bride and the harlot, both of them, simultaneously moving to history. Now, the Jerusalem beneath has from very early in this dispensation become the seat of the most intensified

expression of their false conception of the church. The overrunning of Christianity by Islam is a very forceful lesson.

That victory was a result of weakness produced by spiritual division. This points to the absolute necessity for the church's oneness in spirit as a heavenly Jerusalem if she is to rise to her place of universal supremacy. If it is true that the Lord Jesus was moving out of this world and taking His church spiritually with Him, recognizing that Jerusalem's undoing was coming because of these awful conditions, how essential it was for Him to pray that they all may be one.

John 17, 21. Era, whether it be ancient or modern, will always gain its advantage by the spiritual weakness produced by divisions among the Lord's people. Now, no matter how many books the neo-Pentecostal world publishes in its effort to stifle a voice that deals with truth, no matter how much they decry the expose of era in the church and call it heresy hunting and headhunters or whatever they want to call it, era reduces the church to a certain impotency where the devil can run rampant in it and reduce it to a thing of earth.

All of this we see today. You and I, I believe, have been called of God to be that instrument where we can regain that place of the heavenly vision. Look at it, the earthboundness of Christendom.

We looked at the earthboundness of Jerusalem as a thing that caused it to lose its place under the sun where Christ never returned to it. Now we look at that instrument brought into being, the church, its earthboundness. We've seen this earthboundness clearly in the triumph of Islam over Christianity.

The history of the Crusades affords another very strong evidence of this weakness. Lasting over a hundred years, they're really the story of Christianity's most disgraceful times. That was not and is not heaven's way of doing things.

Anymore is political the way of heaven's doing things. Our warfare is not with flesh and blood. My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, said Jesus in John 18, 36. These are bedrock laws of the heavenly Jerusalem. Palestine today is a nauseating spectacle.

Every place connected in any special way with Christ's earthly life is marked by something which is a shameful misrepresentation of Christianity. The place that rejected the heavenly Christ has become the scene of the expression of the most intense conception of the false church. If man apart from the dominion of the Holy Spirit intrudes into the things of God, be it in thought, intellect, reason, or feeling, the effect will be a proportionate measure of death, division, confusion, and contradiction.

Therefore, men must go out as men. Christ, the heavenly man, must be the son over God's house, must be the head of the church. His headship must be administered by the heavenly Holy Spirit.

God today is not coming down, is not coming back after a broke-down religious machine. He is not coming after a mixture of Romanism and Pentecostalism. Nothing God hates worse than a mixture.

That was a challenge of Elijah on Mount Moriah. Let the God that answers by fire be God. If Baal is God, then serve Baal.

If God is God, then serve God. But the answer was you cannot have both of them. There can be no mixture.

Today God is calling out a vessel with the pure life of God within it to effect this last day outpouring. The church he comes after will be no different than the church he started with. If Christ comes after a church less than he birthed on the day of Pentecost, then he failed.

The gates of hell did prevail against it. I can tell you he never failed. And the church he comes after will be a church that has regained that heavenly vision, that heavenly place.

Herein lies a necessity for the cross as a constantly working, active reality by which the whole realm and range of carnal mind is ruled out and kept out. Herein is a necessity for the fullness of the Holy Spirit if the church is to be the place seen for her as coming down from God out of heaven to be the center of God's universe, God's government of this universe. If she is to be that, then the cross has to be a working reality at all time to dispense with that which is not Christ.

And the Holy Spirit must be the absolute government of that church that we may be led in to all that is Christ. We saw how this church is a vessel. We saw how this church is to be that vessel.

And we cannot emphasize too much that that scripture that says as he was in this world, so are we. We are his representative right here in the place of his rejection. So when we look at him, when you read these gospels, his life, his ministry, his mission must be our life, our ministry, our mission.

We represent him. We are here as that instrument of God on this earth. And as we do, as we, as you and I, truly move back to that place of the heavenly vision, we're going to draw out against ourselves death.

All of the powers of Satan are going to be brought against us. You're going to be seeing how, you're going to see rather how that we're going to become hated by the neo-Pentecostal world as it projects its imitation, its prosperity gospel that has to do with everything of this earth. It is an earthly thing.

It's not a thing of heaven. It's not a thing of the spirit. It is an earthly thing and its whole emphasis is on material things of this earth.

You listen to them as they proclaim their prosperity gospel. They bring a people whose greatest fear is to be without things, whose greatest desire is material. Now this has become the gospel of the neo-Pentecostal.

And their hatred for that true church, though they, they do not declare it to be the true, you can be sure, but their hatred for the true church and the reason they can pray for Holy Ghost machine guns to kill that church is motivated by the same hatred that Judaism have against the Christ. When He was among them, His holiness, His life, His ministry showed them to be what they were, a worldly institution with no desire, but for an earthly kingdom and for this they sought to kill Him. That hatred against the truly elect of God by the religious of this world is motivated by the same cause.

As we walk with God in heaven and our ministry and mission and life is what His was, then we expose that for what it is, an institution of the earth that has nothing to do with God and His purposes with man. This is the reason that you're seeing such a hatred being brought out against us. That Neo-Pentecostal appeals to religion, trying to bring about a unity with Romanism and the true church of God.

In Russia, you find that greatest voice dealing with the Orthodox Church, which is the total misrepresentation of what Christ is. As we came there producing this ministry, this vessel through which God could pour and through which in two years produced 700 churches, then they began to say on their radio this religious body that I, calling me by name, was the greatest enemy in Russia, that I was the most dangerous person in Russia, wrote ads in the paper that we were a cult. Why? Because this life of Christ manifests through the believer, exposes that to be nothing more than an earthly system.

That is where we are today as we, the vessel of God, begin to return and recover this heavenly vision. Then we begin to expose that that in departing from that heavenly vision become an earthly institution whose soul and absolute value is the earth. They don't preach any heaven, they don't preach any cross, they preach big cars, jet airplanes, designer clothes, all of it exposes it for what it is, an earthly system and Christ is not coming back for such a system.

The tragedy of departing from that heavenly vision cannot be calculated in words. There must be a return and for that return to happen there must be a vessel formed in the fire by God through which again he can put this life in its fullness pour it back into that stream. Hallelujah! Well this brings us to the close of another lesson but we're coming next and we come back to our pastoral theology lessons.

We'll be dealing with the church again and this time the church is a prophet. This will be very profitable to you as we really see what the church is. Let us stand and worship God as we leave the class.

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