

The Candlestick - Sardis (The Congregation of the Dead)

by Carter Conlon

The church of Sardis had a reputation of being alive, but was spiritually dead, and we need to have a heart for God that beats for His purposes and plans.

Duration: 50:36

Scripture: Proverbs 5:7-21, Revelation 3:3

Topics: "Sardis"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of meeting with God in the appointed place. He encourages the congregation to surrender everything they have and are to God, acknowledging that everything belongs to Him. The preacher warns against turning inward and ministering only to oneself, as it leads to a lack of discernment and vulnerability to the enemy's attacks. He references Isaiah chapter 1 to highlight the consequences of forsaking the Lord. The sermon is part of a series on the churches of Revelation, specifically focusing on the church in Sardis and the need for self-examination and spiritual growth.

Transcript

Revelation chapter 3. Be continuing, this would be the fourth message in a series of seven messages on the churches of Revelation. Now we know that the context of this message is that the church in Sardis is one that has been established during several of missionary journeys throughout that area of the world. And I'm sure the church felt that they were doing very well as the other churches did in Revelation, they all did.

But it's the appearance, it's the revelation of Jesus Christ that will expose, that will show areas of deadness or bankruptcy, spiritual malfunctioning, if I can call it such, in our lives. And that's what we need to pray for this morning. Before I begin this message, that Jesus Christ, we would allow him to walk within each one of our hearts.

This message is for everyone. It's for, without exception, it's for every heart, it's for every life, it's for my life, it's for your life. If we will allow Jesus Christ to touch us, to give us revelation of his perfect plan, his perfect will for our lives.

Father, I come before you this morning, and I thank you for the unction and anointing of your Holy Spirit. Lord, you are building a house for yourself in this last hour of time. You're building a dwelling place.

And God, you don't want us at any false altar. You don't want us halfway to where the appointed place is to meet with you, O God. And I'm asking this day, Lord, by the anointing of your Holy Spirit and the power of your Word that you would expose, that you would make manifest altars that any of us have built in our lives that are halfway, O God, to where you want us to be in you, that are blinding, O God, that are leading us to a place that is not good.

And Lord, I declare the triumph of Christ over these altars in this house this morning. I curse them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Father, I ask for an unction upon your Word today, a Holy Ghost unction, that those who have cleverly disguised altars that have been built in high places, Lord God, that by your Spirit, that you would expose these places, that you would make them known.

I ask, O God, that you would cause them to appear before the eyes of all who sit in this house, individually, every soul, every life, every heart. God, and that you would smite them with your Word. Smite them with your Word.

Lord, in your Word, you sent a young prophet in to curse an altar the Jeroboam had set up halfway to Jerusalem. And, O God, when he spoke, the altar was rent in two and the ashes of it poured out upon the ground. And, O God, I ask this day, even the softest spoken word would be like cannon fire into the ranks of the enemy.

Cannon fire, O God, into the high places that the carnal heart is so prone to want to build in our quest to know you and to live for you and to serve you. God, I thank you for the unction. I thank you for the fire of your Holy Spirit.

I thank you for the power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. You said nothing would by any means hurt us. God, I thank you for an eye-savving anointing for your church this day, O God, and for all who will hear this message in the coming days and months upon this tape, O God.

I'm asking for an eye-savving anointing. Jesus, we thank you that you're building your house. Help us, O God, to meet you in the appointed place.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Revelation chapter 3 to the church, verse 1, and to the angel of the church in Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.

Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast perceived and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, for they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. But I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. The title of this message is The Congregation of the Dead. The Congregation of the Dead.

Jesus came to the isle of Patmos and gave a revelation of himself to John, and he said, I want you to send a message to the seven churches in Asia. One of these churches was called Sardis. Don't know a whole lot about this church, other than that they did have a reputation of being alive.

The same that many, many churches throughout, especially North America and the rest of the Western world, would possibly have in this generation, a reputation for life. But with the manifestation of Jesus Christ, the appearance of Jesus brings something else to light that the others around were not seeing. He says you have a reputation or a name that you live, but you're dead.

Now, there's two major indicators in the physical sense that a human body has died. Number one, the heart stops. That's certainly a good indicator that your body has died.

In the church of Jesus Christ, it's evidenced by those who have no more heart for the purpose and plan of God. Their whole worship, their whole coming to the house of the Lord is for themselves. It's a self-seeking church, and certainly there's no shortage of that throughout all of North America in this hour that we're living in.

Entire congregations with reputations for being alive, but they're coming in to the house of the Lord. Their heart has stopped. The heart of Jesus is no longer motivating them.

The heart of God is not beating within them anymore. They're now seeking for themselves. Every time they come to the altar of God, it's for some new thing that they can add onto their lives.

In other words, they're building a spiritual resume, if I can call it such, of all of the things that they can get from God. But they have no more heart for the purpose and plan of God. And even though you may have a semblance of life, you may have come into this house this morning, and you may have a semblance of life, you may, your physical, natural heart may be beating, and you may be standing here and worshiping and looking down in the Word of God, and have at least a semblance of desiring truth.

But if your heart is no longer beating for the purposes of God, then you're on your road, you're on the road to a spiritual death. All that's left is an exterior stimulus. All that's left is, you can enter in, and you can worship with those who really do have a heart for God.

And there can be an exuberance around you, and you can stand, and you can raise your hands and shout the praises of God, but something is wrong. There's a death that's beginning to take place in your life. You're worshiping in the wrong place.

That's, I'm talking about a place of the heart. And the second indicator that a physical body has died is that the brain dies. When a person comes into intensive care, at least it's been my experience, that they monitor the heart, and once a person is officially declared brain dead, then there's really no way of reviving that person anymore.

Even if you did revive the physical body, there'll never be any semblance of normal functioning anymore, because the brain has died. In the spiritual sense, that's when a child of God comes to a place where there's no longer any discernment. No longer any ability to know the difference between right and wrong, and good and evil.

The Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 5.14, Strong meat belongs to those who are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. It's God's desire that we have discernment, that we know the difference between good and evil. There's so much that's going through the body of Christ now in North America that's an absolute disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ.

And I'm absolutely appalled at the lack of discernment now in even the leadership and those who supposedly know God. I believe because their heart stopped years ago beating for the purposes and plans of God, and they turned inward and began to minister unto themselves and began to be ministers strictly to the house and to the needs of their own life. Their brain died, and there's no more discernment.

They don't know the difference, so the enemy can come in like a flood, and they don't even know the difference between the Spirit of God and other spirits. Isaiah cries out against it in Isaiah chapter 1. Just let me read it to you, verses 4 and 5. He said, to Israel, ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord.

They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger. They have gone away backwards. Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more.

The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. You see, God knew the signs even in Isaiah's day of spiritual death, a sickness of the head, an inability to discern anymore, and a faint heart no longer beating for the plans and purposes of God. You might ask me a question this morning and say, can you love God and die a spiritual death? The answer to you is, yes, you can.

You can love God and die a spiritual death. Now, how does it happen? In the church of Sardis, there must have been people in that church that loved the Lord. I mean, there are churches founded not too long after the resurrection of Christ, and I'm sure there were people in that church.

They loved God with all their heart. They heard the message. They cast down their idols like in other churches throughout Asia.

They turned to the Lord with all of their heart. They wanted Him. The anointing of the Holy Ghost came upon them.

They spoke in tongues and prophesied, as was happening throughout all of the church in that age. There were incredible times, I'm sure, of worship, but only several years down the road, Jesus appears to John, and in the midst of this church, the revelation of His presence says, you have a reputation. They had maintained that reputation for life, but a death, a spiritual death had set in to this people.

How does it happen? I think we can best understand it through the life of Solomon. If you'll go to the book of 1 Kings, please, chapter 3. I'm going to show you through the scriptures this morning, incredible truth about how you can love God and completely lose out with Him, and die a spiritual death. 1 Kings, chapter 3, beginning at verse 1, And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days. And Solomon loved the Lord, verse 3, walking in the statutes of David his father. Only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

Look at that verse again, Solomon loved the Lord, and he was walking, at least to the best of his ability, in the statutes of David his father. Only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. In other words, he sacrificed when and where he chose.

There was something, there was a seed of spiritual death in Solomon's life. That same seed, if we're not careful, can be in the heart and life of any one of us that are gathered in this house this morning. You can love the Lord, you can want to walk in the truth of God, but there are some high places in your life.

And that's where I'm going to, that's what I'm going to talk about this morning. Solomon chose when and where he would sacrifice, and it was the beginning of his downfall. In other words, there was a mixture in Solomon's worship.

The Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, says these words. Now listen carefully. He says, David kept to the ark.

In other words, David kept to where the presence of God was, and he did not care for the high places. But Solomon, though in other things he walked in the statutes of his father, in this he came short of him. He showed thereby a great zeal for sacrificing.

Solomon had a great zeal for sacrificing. There are people who come into the house of the Lord and have a great zeal for the sacrifice of praise and a great zeal for other types of spiritual sacrifice, like Solomon had. But to obey God would have been better.

This was an irregularity in Solomon's life. He loved the Lord. He walked in the statutes of David, but he continued to offer sacrifice and burn incense in the high places.

Now, we need to understand what these high places are. Go ahead to the book of 2 Kings, please, chapter 17. 2 Kings chapter 17, the high places.

Now, the context of this particular passage of Scripture is after Solomon. We know that Solomon, after him the kingdom was divided between his two sons, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. And this Scripture is written, after the northern kingdom under Jeroboam fell to the king of Assyria.

Now, in verse 24, it says, And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Kuthah and from Ava and Hamath and Sepharvim and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel. And they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there that they feared not the Lord.

Therefore the Lord sent lions among them which slew some of them. So now the children of Israel have been displaced. And in other people, the Assyrians have come in to take their place.

And they did not fear God. And God sent lions among them which began to devour them. Now, listen to their response in verse 26.

Wherefore, they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed and placed in the cities of Samaria know not the manner of the God of the land. Therefore he has sent lions among them. And behold, they slay them because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

Verse 27. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye have brought from thence. In other words, bring back one of the priests of Israel and let them go and dwell there

and let him teach the manner of the God of the land.

Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the Lord. How be it? In other words, every nation made gods of their own and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made. Every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

And the men of Babylon made... And it goes on in verse 30 and 31. It talks about all the gods now that they made and brought into supposedly the worship of the true God. In verse 32, it talks about the end result of this mixture in high places.

So they feared the Lord and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. And verse 33 tells the entire tale. They feared the Lord and served their own gods after the manner of the nations whom they had carried away from them.

They feared the Lord and served their own gods. And I believe that that one passage of scripture speaks for many, many people in the body of Christ in this last hour of time that we're living in. If you ask them, do you love God? Like Solomon, they would say, yes, I love the Lord.

Are you walking in the ways of God? Yes, I'm walking in the ways of God. Do you fear the Lord? Yes, I fear the Lord with all of my heart. And yet they continued to serve their own gods after the manner of the nations that had carried them away captive.

It was a mixture, the high place of truth and error. It was a worship of convenience. Many of the high places were places where it was just too hard and it was just too far to go to the appointed places of God.

And so they would stop on some high hill or some place and say, well, this looks like a good place to worship God. And they would stop and build an altar. And in those high places, sometimes offer thousands of sacrifices unto the Lord, a great zeal for God.

But they were living, they were not at the appointed place that God had appointed for them. It was a mixture. It was a worship of convenience.

They were self-made altars. The Scripture says, of the lowest of the people were gathered that were made priests around these altars. What a type and shadow of so much of what has happened to the church of Jesus Christ in this last hour of time.

All throughout North America, a seed of evildoers, of corrupted children that have forsaken the right way and gone running greedily after gain through the air of Balaam. These low priests make their own altars and these altars are full of men's ideas. I call them the prophets of I think and I feel.

I think and I feel. That's what you hear from them continuously. They get up and they're standing on their high place with all of those that have gathered around them because they don't have the heart of God beating fully within them anymore.

I tell you, the heart of God, brothers and sisters, takes you past the high places. The heart of God takes you and I to the appointed places of God. There are places that God has appointed that we're to meet with Him and we're to worship Him and we're to consecrate our lives unto Him.

But there are so many that don't want to go to those appointed places and so they stop at these altars in the high places. That's what Solomon was doing and that's why the seeds of death were sown in his life at a very early age. I think and I feel.

You'll hear it continuously. I think God would. I feel God would.

That's their whole prophesying. And they form another God. They fashion another God.

It's a God of their own image and they call Him Jesus. And they lead the people to Him in these high places. I challenge you with all of my heart, get out of these high places if you're in them.

Get out of them. Run from them for they will cause you to die. They will cause a spiritual death to come upon your life.

Get out of these high places. Stop worshipping at places that exalt themselves above the knowledge of God and get back to the appointed places. I want to talk about three appointed or acceptable places of worship that God had established in the Old Testament.

Places where men and women of God met with Him. And by His response, we know these were acceptable places. The first one is found in the book of 1 Samuel.

Go back in your Bibles, please. 1 Samuel chapter 1. Hallelujah. God is going to reveal today, as this message goes forth, if you have stopped at a high place.

He promised me in His Spirit that while, like the young prophet who came and cursed that altar that was halfway to Jerusalem, that God's going to show you your altar. And I pray with all my heart that you'll have the courage to curse that thing in the name of the Lord. To see it broken in two and that you will walk through the middle of it and come and meet Him in an appointed place.

The first appointed place was called Shiloh. 1 Samuel chapter 1, beginning at verse 7. Shiloh. Now, it was a town where the worship tent or the tabernacle was set up after the conquest of Canaan.

Shiloh became the center of Israel's worship and the tent was replaced later on by a more permanent building. It was to this place that we're about to read that a man named Elkanah and his wife Hannah, they traveled to Shiloh to worship God. In other words, they didn't stop at a high place, but they came to an appointed place.

And brothers and sisters, it's in the appointed place that God meets you. It's in the appointed place that God will bless you. It's in the appointed place that God will work in your life, that God will lead you forward, that the nature and character of Christ will be formed within you.

It's in the appointed place. God is not at the high places. He's not at these altars of noise.

God doesn't meet with you there. That's just like the children of Baal who ran around and cut themselves and made a great noise hopping on and off that altar. God is not at that altar.

It's a continual place of noise with no deliverance, no pure heart, no absolute formation of the purposes of Christ in the life of the believer. You see now at this appointed place called Shiloh, a woman called Hannah coming and pouring out her grievance before the Lord. In 1 Samuel 1, verse 7, and it says, And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her.

Therefore she wept and did not eat. In other words, the other wife of Elkanah was provoking her because her womb was barren. She had no children.

Then said Elkanah, her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou and why eatest not thou? And why is thy heart grieved? Am I not better to thee than ten sons? So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. In verse 10 says, She was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore.

And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou will indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid and remember me and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life and there shall no razor come upon his head. Now Shiloh represents brokenness. We see Hannah coming and she's coming to the Lord in a place of brokenness.

We sing that song this morning. Welcome into this place. Welcome into this broken vessel.

And I wonder sometimes if we fully understand what we're really singing. It's a place of brokenness. That's an appointed place.

That's where God will meet with us. That's where God will begin to work in our lives. Genesis 49, 10.

Jacob speaking to his sons and prophesying about their future. And he said to Judah, he said, The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes. Shiloh means Jesus.

And unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Shiloh is a face-to-face meeting with God. It's a face-to-face meeting with Jesus.

It's not some high place. It's not some worship of convenience. It's not some other altar somewhere.

It's not a place of self-seeking, but it's a face-to-face encounter with the risen Savior, with the risen God, the risen Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew chapter 21, Jesus said, He's speaking of himself as the stone that the builders were going to reject. There are many altars that have been built in this generation that have rejected the cornerstone.

But Jesus speaking of himself, He said, Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken. There's a brokenness when you come to Shiloh. We see in 1 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 10, Hannah was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore.

You see, it was a place where she came and she confessed her bankruptcy. She came before God and said, God, I am a barren womb. I am nothing.

I have produced nothing. I can do nothing without You. I have tried and tried, but nothing has come in my life.

That's an appointed place. That's where God begins to meet when there's a brokenness and a confession. Like when Elijah was before the Lord Brother, Isaiah came up before God and says, Woe unto me, I'm undone.

I'm a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. When Isaiah met in that appointed place with God, face-to-face with Jesus Christ, it was then that the call from the altar came and touched his lips.

It was then that he was commissioned to begin to prophesy to Israel in a way like he never had before. Psalm 51, 17 says, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Verse 11 says, She vowed a vow in this place called Shiloh.

She vowed a vow and said, O Lord, if You will look at my affliction and remember me and not forget Your handmaid, but will give me a man-child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. This was a place of dying to self-will. It's a place of coming alive to the purposes of God.

I'm sure with all my heart that Hannah would have cherished that son Samuel. It was the longing of her heart to have a son. But she said, God, if You will take away this barrenness in my life, if You will birth something within me this day, God, I will give it back to You.

That's where God meets with His people. It's when you come to the altar and say, Lord, I'm barren. God, I'm broken.

God, I'm empty. God, I'm not producing fruit for Your kingdom. But Lord, if You will birth something in me this day, if You will start something in my life, if You will give me a gift, if You will empower me, if You will do something, Lord, I will not keep it to myself.

As much as I may cherish it, I will bring it back, and it will be used for Your house and for Your glory. As long as it lives, I'll give it back to You. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Shiloh is a place of loving God and embracing His will and His heart for your life, for the rest of your life. That's what Shiloh is all about.

It's brokenness. It's confession. Hallelujah.

And it's a determination that if God puts something within your life, that you're not going to keep it for yourself. You see, that's where these high place altars fail. They come, and some of them even know a portion of brokenness, and they even know a portion of confession.

But what God births within them, they take it home, and they hide it in the earth. They hide it in the heart, and they don't even let it be invested for usury for the kingdom of God. Oh God, I'm sure that Hannah, when she came back to that temple after she had weaned Samuel, she loved that little boy.

He was the treasure, the treasure, the treasure of her heart. I'm absolutely sure of that. And she came up to the temple, and a weaned child was somewhere, maybe perhaps up to two years old.

It is possible that he even knew her name by that point and was talking a little bit. And she brought Samuel into the temple because she had made a promise. God, if You birth something in me, I'm not keeping it for myself.

I'm going to let it be used for Your glory. And year after year, the Scripture says she came into the temple and brought a little coat that she made for Samuel every year. Oh, how she loved Samuel.

And she gave the best thing that God had ever given to her for the use of the Lord. Israel had a need. Israel needed a prophet.

Israel needed a man of God. And I'm so glad that Hannah was not willing to withhold what God was birthing within her life. God has a plan for your life this morning.

God has a purpose for your life. God has gifts that He wants to give you. God has things that He's already planted and birthed within you.

If you will have the courage not to meet God or try to meet Him in some halfway altar, but come all the way to Shiloh. Come all the way to the place where God has appointed that you should meet with Him. And what He has birthed in your life, lay it down at the altar.

You say, God, whatever You give me, I give it back to You. If You give me a hundred sons and daughters, I give them back to You, God. If You prosper my business, I give it back to You, God.

Everything I am and have is Yours. It's not for my use. It's for Your use and it's for Your kingdom and for Your glory.

If You give me the ability to speak, God, I'll stand on a mountain and declare Your kingdom. I'll go anywhere in the world You send me to go to declare Your goodness. That's Shiloh.

That's what Shiloh is all about. That's where life is. That's where the heart of God begins to get a hold of you as a child of God and beat within your breast.

That's where discernment starts to come into your mind. You begin to know the difference between good and evil. Everything that exalts God.

Everything that fulfills the plan of Christ. Everything that lifts Him up is good. Everything that falls short in the high places is evil.

There's a discernment that comes into your heart. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Year to year in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah and judged Israel in those places. And His return was to Ramah, for there was His house. And there He judged Israel.

And there He built an altar unto the Lord. God allowed Samuel to build an altar in Ramah. And in that place, God met with Samuel.

God spoke to Samuel. Samuel judged Israel. Samuel was a righteous judge of Israel.

But Samuel had a meeting place at an altar that he had built in his house. That was an altar of consecration. Samuel was set apart.

He was nailed down to the purposes of God only. I want to ask you a question this morning. Have you worshipped in Ramah? Have you come to that place, that meeting place with God of consecration and dedication? Have you built an altar at your house and said, God, I will meet with you every day.

And in this place, I will get your instruction. My life is not mine anymore. It's yours.

And as you speak, I will begin to walk with you. You will speak to me. That's an altar at your house called Ramah.

That's where Samuel's altar was. There are so many that tried to turn Jesus from building that altar, that altar of consecration. Peter, when he turned to Jesus and said, Jesus said, I'm going down to Jerusalem.

I'm going to be betrayed into the hands of sinners and crucified. And Peter tried to turn Him away from this, and tried to turn Him away from that place of consecration and being set apart to the purposes of God only. Acts chapter 21, the apostle Paul, he had built that altar in his heart.

Paul never had a steady home, but Paul built that altar of Ramah in his life, an altar that he went to daily and got his instruction from God. Look at Acts. Let me just read it to you quickly because we don't have much time.

But Acts chapter 21, in verse 11, it says, And when He was coming to us, He took Paul's girdle, and bound his hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought Him not to go up to Jerusalem. When a man's walking in the ways of God, everyone who has built an altar in the high places will try to turn him aside.

I say that with love in my heart. Over the years, as I have sought God and wanted to serve God, wanted to live for God, there have been Christian people, unfortunately, that have tried to turn me back from the plans and purposes of God continuously. If you're living for God, if you're walking in the footsteps of God, it's those who have built altars in the high places.

They don't understand the principle of consecrating your life to God. They don't understand of going all the way to Jerusalem to be spit upon and have your face slapped and your back whipped and crucified and imprisoned or whatever happened to those that were living and serving for God. You see, because they've chosen to worship at a high place.

And anybody that goes beyond those high places becomes a reproach to their lifeless religion. And so they'll do everything they can to shut your voice down. They'll do everything they can to stop you.

Because you're passing by their altars and you're going to something a lot deeper that's birthed right in the heart of God. Then Paul answered and said, What mean you to weep and break my heart? I'm ready not to be bound only but to die at Jerusalem. For the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased saying, The will of the Lord be done. Paul would not be persuaded. And thank God that he did not listen to their voices and succumb to their voices.

There would be quite a substantial portion of the New Testament missing that Paul had not walked in the perfect plan of God for his life. The high places led Solomon to other wives. There was a mixture.

It was a seed of mixture in his life. Solomon loved God. Settle it.

In the beginning of his life, he loved God. And he set out to do what was right. But there was a mixture.

He was stopping short in his worship of God. And that high place in his life led him to other wives. He loved many women and eventually led him to other loves.

He turned to Egypt. He had been warned not to touch the things of Egypt, but he brought horses and other things out of Egypt and eventually turned him to other gods. An incredible thing.

You see Solomon in his latter day bypassing the temple of the Lord and going down to worship at some temple of a heathen god. What an incredible thing. Solomon that was given the book of Proverbs.

Solomon that was the wisest man that has ever lived in the face of the earth. Solomon. And he ends up worshipping in heathen temples because of this mixture that was in his early life.

The seeds of death were in him. He had a name, a reputation of being alive, but he was dead. The Queen of Sheba in 2 Chronicles.

Don't turn there, please. Chapter 9. The Queen of Sheba came in to him. Let me just read it to you.

And she was awestruck at the glory and the majesty of Solomon. An incredible thing. 2 Chronicles chapter 9. It says, And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem and with a very great company, and camels that bear spices and gold in abundance and precious stones.

When she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions. And there was nothing hidden from Solomon which he told her not.

When the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon and the house that he built and the meat of his table and the sitting of his servants and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, his cupbearers also and their apparel and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit left in her. In other words, she was awestruck. She was dumbfounded.

Here is Solomon. And the Queen of Sheba is standing in the temple of the Lord. And Solomon comes in.

There was such a glory of God that was upon his life. He really did at one point love the Lord. And Solomon is walking up the steps.

He's ascending in the temple up to the place of worship, up to offer sacrifice. And she's looking at him and saying, Solomon, it's awesome what God has done in your life. Solomon, it's an incredible thing.

Oh, I'm breathless looking at you, Solomon, at the blessing of God that's upon your life. But what they were not aware of is that there was another set of eyes in that temple looking down on that whole scenario with a whole different perspective, just like Jesus to the church of Sardis. And even though everyone around is talking about the majesty and the glory and everything that's upon Solomon's life, God is looking down and saying, Solomon, you're a dead man.

Solomon, you're a dead man. If you keep going in the way you're going, death has begun to work in your life. It's going to rob you.

You'll have no more heart. You're going to lose your discernment. You're a dead man, Solomon.

The high places are still alive in your heart. I hear the cry of God for Solomon. God loved Solomon.

God loved him. The Scripture says so. God loved him.

And in the midst of that whole scenario with the musicians playing, the trumpeters trumpeting, and the people in absolute awe of the glory of God that was upon this man, I hear a pleading heart of God. Solomon! Solomon! Solomon! Solomon, you're worshipping at the wrong altar. Solomon, you're going to

die a spiritual death.

Solomon, I can hear the cry. There's a cry of God going out to some of your lives this morning. You've come into this house.

You've walked in with an appearance of life. Your children or the people around you may look at you and you might be dressed in a way that you weren't dressed before. You may speak in a way you never spoke before.

You worship like you never worshipped. There's an appearance of prosperity has come upon your life. And people around you look and say, hasn't God blessed him or hasn't God blessed her? But there's another voice that's crying your name this day.

Solomon, you've built an altar in a high place. Solomon, you've chosen a convenient place of worship. You've not come to the appointed places.

And it's causing a spiritual death to creep into your life, which is going to take your heart. It's going to take your discernment. You're a dead man, Solomon, if you don't turn from this thing.

Revelation, Jesus said to the church of Sardis, you have a name that you live but are dead. Look at Proverbs chapter 5, please. Proverbs chapter 5, Solomon almost eerily prophesying his own end.

That's an incredible thing. It's like the Spirit of God is speaking through him and about him. And he's penning his own departure from the heart of God.

Proverbs 5, 7 says, Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not to the door of her house, lest thou give thine honor to others in thy years unto the cruel. Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors be in the house of a stranger.

And thou mourn at the last, and didn't Solomon mourn at the end when he said, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. When thy flesh and thy body are consumed. And say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof.

And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me. I was almost in all evil, or ruin is another word for that word evil. I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and the assembly.

There's Solomon looking back now in retrospect at what the Queen of Sheba saw. But God saw it a different way. I hated instruction.

I obeyed not the voice of my teachers. Here's Solomon writing all these proverbs out. But he's not obeying them himself.

He's not listening to what God's speaking to his heart. And finally, when he gets to Revelation, he understands that he was almost in all ruin in the midst of the congregation and the assembly. Oh, it would be to God that throughout North America people would have the courage to face Jesus at Shiloh once again.

And find out that what has had an appearance of life in the sight of God, much of it has been ruined. Ruin in the sight of God. Hating and despising the Word of God.

Proverbs 21, please. Turn there very quickly. Proverbs 21, verse 16.

The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead. The man that wanders out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead. Jesus said to the church of Sardis in Revelation 3.3, Go there, please.

Go back to the book of Revelation, please. Chapter 3. There are some of you this morning that are heading on that road. You're beginning to build an altar in a high place.

And God's reaching out to you. There are some that are going to hear this message by tape in the future. And you have already well built your altar in high places.

And you're worshipping at houses that have built their altars in high places. But Jesus is saying these words now to the church of Sardis. In verse 3, He says, Remember therefore how you have received and heard.

And hold fast and repent. Remember, He says, Remember how you once received the Word of God. Remember how the Word of God was once the most precious thing that was in your life.

Remember that you heard and you repented and you turned. You came to that place. There were many in the house of God today who are worshipping at high places who at one time came to Shiloh.

At one time confessed their barrenness. At one time were broken before God. At one time were begging God to birth something within their heart and in their lives so that they could consecrate their lives fully to God.

And God's saying to Sardis, Remember how you received and heard. Remember there was a day when no sacrifice was too great. No task was too hard.

You'd go anywhere. You'd do anything. For you loved Me with all of your heart.

My heart was beating within you. You discerned. You knew the difference between good and evil.

What happened? All of a sudden now you're building in a high place. Now the third place where Solomon came to is Gibeon. In 1 Kings chapter 3, please go back there.

1 Kings chapter 3. Gibeon is a place of dedication. It's a place where God's blessing is. It was the Gibeonites that came out and helped Nehemiah rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and destroyed.

The Gibeonites were dedicated people. There was an appointed place by God in Gibeon. It was a place where we lay our lives down as a living sacrifice, as Pastor Dave said this morning, for the purposes of God.

Ultimately, brothers and sisters in Christ, if you didn't hear anything this morning, hear this. Your walk with God and my walk with God either brings us to a place where we lay our lives down as a living sacrifice for the purposes of God, or we begin to worship at the high places. There is nothing in the middle.

You need to understand that. Where we lay our lives down for God. Where we say, Lord, if it's in my job or my home, my community, whatever you call me to do, whatever you send me, God, I'm yours.

My life is yours. If you birth something in me, I'll give it back to you, God. And I'll use it for your glory.

That's what Gibeon is all about. A place of dedication. In 1 Kings chapter 3, verse 5, it says, In Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

You see, it's in that place of dedication that you can ask, and God is willing to bless. And Solomon said, You've showed unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with thee. And thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David, my father. And I am but a little child, and I know not how to go out or come in. Thy servant's in the midst of thy people, which thou hast chosen a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad. You see the cry of Solomon there. God, give me a heart that I can discern the difference between good and bad.

So sad that Solomon lost that. For who is able to judge this, thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but you have asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment.

Behold, I have done according to thy words. Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did, then I will lengthen thy days. And Solomon awoke, verse 15, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem.

There was a season where Solomon was meeting in the appointed places. He came to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. That's where David had worshipped God.

That's in the place of meeting God face to face. It's in a place of consecration and dedication to the purposes of God. Solomon was asking for wisdom and understanding to be able to see the plan and purpose of God go forth in such a great multitude of people that God had put under his hand.

And it was there he offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings and made a feast to all of his servants. So sad, so sad that he did not stay in that place. So sad that he left the Ark and began to worship again in high places.

High places that took the very seed of the heart of God out of his life. Took away the discernment that God had given him and ended up a heathen worshipper in the last part of his life. Gibeon was a great high place and should have been the only one because it was there that the tabernacle and the brazen altar

were.

Solomon offered great sacrifices and there God owned him more than in any other place. Where God records his name, the Scripture says, there he will meet and he will bless us. Where God records his name, in Shiloh, in Ramah, and in Gibeon.

Brokenness, confession, consecration, and dedication to the purposes of God. You'd be here this morning, I don't want anybody falling under duress because of this message and saying, oh, I better find the will of God or I'm going to be crushed. No! You begin to meet with God in the appointed places and you're already in the will of God.

You're already walking in His will when you're meeting Him at those places. And all of a sudden you begin to walk on a path which just becomes a natural extension of the relationship of Jesus Christ in your life. You don't have to go home and bang your head on the counter saying, what's the will of God? What's the will of God? When you're meeting in the appointed places, the Holy Spirit will naturally birth it in your life.

You'll find yourself going places, doing things that you never even had to think about because you're just walking in that river of God. He's leading you. He's moving your life.

Hallelujah! So many people struggle with this thing about knowing the will, knowing the will. I'll tell you why it's such a struggle for so many years. Because you're worshipping in the high places.

God doesn't speak in the high places. God speaks in the appointed places. Brokenness.

That's where Hannah was. I'm barren, oh God. I'm barren.

There's nothing within me that's any good. Jesus, birth something in me and I'll give it back to you. And out of that prayer comes Samuel.

And Samuel dedicates his life and builds an altar at Ramah and worships God there. Hallelujah! And out of that comes the Gibeonite altar. Dedication to the purposes of God.

It was the Gibeonites that came out of their places of work and everything else and rebuilt the altar. Not the altar, but the wall of Jerusalem with Nehemiah. Hallelujah! Jesus says to the church in Sardis, He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.

And I will not blot his name out of the book of life. And I will confess his name before my father and his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying unto the churches.

He that has an ear. Would you please stand? Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I'm going to give an altar call this morning. Let's suppose that this altar is a place of brokenness confession.

It's a place where God wants to birth something in your life. It's a place where you'll give it back to God. It's a place where you will determine to build an altar in your own heart, your own life.

Not running around looking to somebody else to get direction, but you get your direction from God. It's a place where you'll consecrate yourself to the purposes of God. It's a place where you will go on and be dedicated in good times and in bad times.

When it's in season or out of season, it won't stop you because you're dedicated to the purposes of God. That's what this altar represents. But I want to ask you a question as I call you to come.

Yet not I, but I feel the Spirit of God calling my heart this morning. Where is your altar? As you look at this altar of being a place where you fully lay your life down for the purposes of God, where is your altar in this aisle this morning? Where have you built your altar? Up in the balcony. You're going to be leaving and coming down the sides and down the stairway.

Is it possible you're going to meet your altar on the way today? You may have built an altar somewhere between where you are and where a place of perfect dedication to God is, the place where God blesses and the place where God speaks, the place where God empowers and uses people, the place where you come to know Him in the fullness of relationship He's bought for you. Where is your altar? If you meet that altar today on the way to this altar, I'm going to ask you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, like that young prophet did, you curse that altar. God will give you revelation of that altar by the Holy Spirit.

And as you come up to that altar, I want you to curse it and watch it break in two and the ashes fall on the ground. I want you to walk through that altar and say, Lord, I'm not setting up an altar of personal convenience anymore. I'm not just going to serve you because it's good for me, O God.

I'm going to serve you even if it's bad for me and hard for me. I'm leaving all of the high places and I'm coming to the appointed place to meet with you, O God. Not just today, but for the rest of my life.

I'm meeting you in the appointed places. Hallelujah. Out from the balcony, would you come? As God's Holy Spirit speaks to you and leads you, would you come? Would you come? This altar today will represent a place of dedication and consecration to the purposes of God.

Hallelujah. There are some of you that are here today, you've served the Lord, you've loved the Lord, but you've never ever even considered going to the mission field. You've never ever even considered us just saying, God, you've never even prayed that prayer.

God, you can have my whole life. You can have everything I am. You can have my job.

You can have my business. You're holding to this. And because you won't let it go, you've got to build an altar now in the high places and seek out some priest of the lower class of the people that will minister to your altar.

But today, God is speaking to His church and building a house for Himself. God wants to raise up Samuels and Hannas in this house today. Young men and women that will let their lives be used for His glory.

Would you come? If you're lost today, a sinner without God, you can come and God will touch your life. Today, if you can hear His voice, harden not your heart. If you can hear His voice, He's calling to you.

Solomon, Solomon, it looks good on the outside, but I see something else in your life. Solomon, you're worshiping in the wrong place. You've built your own altar.

It's halfway to where I am, Solomon. Solomon, curse that altar. The number of times God must have spoken to him and pleaded with him.

Solomon, curse it. Curse it, Solomon. Leave it behind and meet me in the appointed place.

Solomon, go back to Gibeon. Go back to that place where David was. Stand before the ark, Solomon, and hear from me.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Just keep coming.

We'll wait for you as God speaks to you in the balcony. I am not trying to coerce you to come to an altar. I'm provoking you to give your life to God in entirety.

In absolute entirety. There is no victory apart from that. There's no peace of mind and heart apart from that.

There's no purpose apart from that. You can look good for many years, but over and over and over and over and over and over again, I have seen men and women who have served God all their life and in the very pinnacle of their life, at the very place where they should be bearing the most fruit in their life, all of a sudden they die. They fall.

They just, they die spiritually. And you wonder why. But I know why today because they have built an altar in a high place.

Solomon did it and there came a point where it was just enough and he was given over to his delusion. Oh God. Oh God.

Those that have come to this altar this morning, would you lift up your voice to God like Hannah did? Tell him where you have built. He already knows, but confess that altar that you have built. Confess it before the Lord.

And I want you to curse it today. Curse it this morning. Curse it.

Curse it and say, nobody's going to stop me like the Apostle Paul. Nobody is going to stop me from going to Jerusalem.

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