

Dangers of Third Generation Religion

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon warns against the dangers of third generation religion, where a new generation fails to obey God and suffers the consequences, and emphasizes the importance of obedience to fulfill God's purpose in creating us.

Duration: 49:04

Scripture: Judges 2:10

Topics: "Compromise"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the dangers that the people of God face in their pursuit of worldly things and experiences. He emphasizes that the only thing the God of this world can offer in exchange for one's soul is material possessions. He also highlights the allure of forbidden experiences outside of God's will. The preacher then draws a parallel to the present time, stating that before finding Jesus, people were dead in their sins and served themselves as their own gods. The sermon references the Book of Judges to illustrate the consequences of straying from God's path.

Transcript

I turn to you to Judges chapter 2, one of the most pathetic chapters in the entire Old Testament. I'd like to read several verses, at least down to the 13th verse of this second chapter of the book of Judges. May I remind us that what we find here is for our instruction.

These things were written to be examples for our warning, for our teaching, for our encouragement. So find yourself in this portion. Do not allow the historical facts to cloud the personal application.

And an angel, a messenger of the Lord, came up from Gilgal to Barchim and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land.

Ye shall throw down their altars, but ye have not obeyed my voice. Why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your side, and their God shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept.

And they called the name of that place Barchim, and they sacrificed there unto the Lord. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children went of Israel, went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel.

And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance, in Timnah Heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Geash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers.

And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Balaam. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtoreth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them. And he sold them into the hands of their enemies around about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them. And they were greatly the tragedy of third generation religion. Joshua outlived a generation that had escaped from Egypt, but refused to be to God the vehicle of blessing that he intended.

You remember that God said to Abraham, who was residing in Ur of the Chaldees, an idolatrous nation, Get thee up from thy kindred, from thy father's house, and I will make of thee a great nation. God wanted to do a new thing. He wanted a witness.

He wanted a testimony. And that witness and testimony began with a man. A man who dared to believe him.

A man who dared to obey him. A man who counted all that he had possessed, all that he had achieved, all that he had acquired, as being of no value, in terms of that which God held before him as the prospect of his service for the Lord God. And we see Abraham as he journeyed from Ur of the Chaldees out into that unknown future, walking by faith, becoming thus the father of the faithful.

That new thing began with a baby. A baby that had been named years before his birth. A baby that had been promised.

A baby in which the whole hope of Abraham and all the purpose of Jehovah rested. You recall, at the age of seventeen, God said to Abraham, Take your son, and bring him up to the mount that I'll show you, and sacrifice him there. You remember that Abraham had resurrection faith.

The servant said to him, Where will you get the offering? The son said to him, He said, The Lord will provide. And then he turned to the servant and he said, We will come again. He knew what was expected of him.

He bound his son hand and foot and asked him to lie down upon that altar that he'd made. And I can see him as he looks down into the face of bound Isaac and said, Son, be not afraid. God gave you to your

mother and to me when we were as good as dead.

It is no harder for him to raise you from the dead after you've been slain and burned than it was for him to give you to us. And so relax, son. God has said that in Isaac my seed shall be caused.

And so I must. And the young man said, It's well, father. And he looks at his father with pity that only you can imagine.

Raises that right hand and would lift the knife. And he contends to it because his father believed God. And he had said to the servant, We will come again.

Well, you understand, then it was through death and resurrection of the promised son that God would acquire his nation. That would be his witness. We see the Israel that is.

The children of Jacob as they go down into Egypt and abide there for some 400 years. And the time comes when God is going to draw out of the womb where he's been forming this nation, that people which will be a witness for him. He does it by first causing them to lose confidence in the gods of Egypt.

They've labored in Egypt. They've been slaves in Egypt. They've had no testimony of himself.

And so there is a contest between Moses and the Egyptians. And in that contest, God proves his power superior to all of the ten major gods of Egypt. And leads them by his right arm and great hand of power out across the Red Sea into the wilderness.

You would say that a people so marvelously delivered would be prepared to go anywhere with God, would you not? But when they came up to Kadesh Barnea and saw their giants in the land, even though the land was filled with milk and honey, they drew back and refused to follow the Lord. They, in other words, would rather preserve their own skin than to give God the vehicle of blessing and witness that he asked for. And the consequence was that that generation was doomed to have no part with God in the new thing that he was then doing.

And Joshua was the one that with Caleb had withstood the elders of Israel. And he and Caleb were the only two that survived of that generation. And were prepared to go across the Jordan River and into the promised land.

Now listen to the text again. They served the Lord all the days of Joshua. They served the Lord all the days of the elders that had served with and outlived Joshua.

That would be that company of people forty years younger than him that had gone across the Jordan River. What was God's purpose in this people? He wanted a people that would cling to him, that would love him, that would obey him, that would serve him, that would do that which he prescribed for them. In order that in this people Israel he could have his witness to the nations around about.

Now remember he said, ye shall be witnesses unto me. Even there through Abraham was that promise that in thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth. And of course in Abraham's mind were the nations that then existed.

Even as we would apply that promise to the nations that are alive today. Understand then that God's purpose in Israel would be to have a peculiar people, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood that should show forth his praises. By means of whom he could have a testimony to these that grovel before heathen

idols.

For even though they were wicked, were idolatrous, were immoral, were cruel, he loved them even as he loved you and me when we were equally vile. And God therefore wanted Israel to be his sermon in society. He wanted the way this people dressed, the food they ate, the kind of homes in which they lived, the manner in which they tilled their fields, as well as their worship on the Sabbath.

All to be a testimony to his holiness and to his wisdom, to his righteousness, to his justice, to his mercy, his grace and his love. And so he had this people as his witness. Now what were the religions in the land? There were three, and I think it will help you to understand the message of the evening and the burden of my heart if I give you a little background of the development of these three major religious systems.

The first is the worship of Baal, pardon me, the first is the worship of Ashtaroath. I think the first organized religious system in human history is this that is called here at this time the worship of Ashtaroath. If you read carefully the book of Genesis, you will discover a portion that says, And Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord.

But the word translated hunter actually means spearsman, or in this case means rebel. It pictures a man by the name of Nimrod that had unusual leadership qualities and ability who succeeded in organizing the people of his generation in open revolt against God as they had known him through the testimony conveyed by Noah. We would therefore conclude that the Tower of Babel was actually a temple that was erected for the worship as Hyslop tells us in his volume to Babylon, erected for the worship of Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod's father, not his own mother, but nevertheless this was an incestuous relationship.

It was apparently Satan's time to fulfill his promise to Eve. You remember he had said to her, Ye shall be as God. And at this time we find the introduction of that form of worship which was the deification of woman and of sex.

Now the worship of Semiramis and the Tower of Babel came to a sudden halt when God confused the languages of the people and broke down the temple of the Tower. But it did not exterminate the worship of woman. For we find very shortly thereafter in archaeological records the arising of this word Ashtaroath, Ashtarte in one of its forms.

And it is always associated with the worship of the female. And this then I would say is the first form of organized religious rebellion against God. It was for a twofold purpose.

First to ensure progeny, because in the agricultural economy of the day it was necessary to have a large family if one were to prosper in the tilling of the soil. And it was secondly to give a license for immorality, a religious license that would satisfy and quiet the disturbance of the conscience. And so the worship of Ashtaroath was for this twofold purpose, to ensure children and also to give a license to unbridled lust.

Now the second form of idolatry is that of the worship of Baal. This is an ancient Semitic word, Baal. It does not refer to any particular individual, but the word itself means owner.

I believe it refers to the evil spirit that was associated with a particular geographical area in which people resided or worked. Apparently there was an evil spirit for each community. We find such words as Baal-Kerjath and Baal-Pior.

The owner of Kerjath, the owner of Pior. Not referring to any particular personality, but the local evil spirit, evil personality that must be placated if there was to be prosperity in that area. For instance, every town had its Baal.

There would be an altar, some degree of similarity between them, but not enough to ensure that they had references to the same personality at all. But this was the place to which the owner of the place, namely that evil spirit, had to be served, had to be worshipped, had to be placated. Now, every farmer would have some little altar dedicated to the Baal of the area.

Before he would plant his field, he would take whatever offering was prescribed and kill it, sprinkle the blood, in order to satisfy the owner, so as to ensure a good crop. Now, remember, the worship of Ashtati had to do with license for immorality, and the worship of Baal had to do with the procuring of things or to ensure prosperity. Now we'll move on to the third type of idolatry of the period, which was the worship of Moloch.

The word Moloch has the Semitic radicals that you find in the present Arabic word melek. When we were first in Africa, we landed at Port Said in Egypt, went to Cairo, and were there on the day of the opening of Parliament, visiting at the American University, when the then king of Egypt, Baruch, rode by in the beautiful state coach drawn by the magnificent Arabian horses, and as he passed so near to the fence inside of which we were standing, we could hear the throngs on every side crying out, Melek Kabir, great king! Well, these are the radicals, M-L-K, that are found in the word Moloch, and thus it has reference to king. Now here again we have certain archaeological remains that have been discovered that enable us to picture the general expression, the usual form of Moloch, as being a majestic figure of a king, usually in a seated position, with his hands folded on his knees in such a way that arms and legs and folded hands would make a basin.

Many times they would find an air tunnel back from the rear of the statue which would enable air to be forced through so as to cause the grating that was over the hole that held the charcoal to produce a fire of tremendously intense heat. Thus the worshipper would come, usually the father, often the father and the mother, would come with their child, if possible, a first-born son, though it's recorded that sometimes they would bring a daughter and call it a son, for Moloch wasn't too able to see, he was a little nearsighted. At any rate, they were desirous of having the end for which they made the sacrifice and anything would do in their need.

And so the parents would come with their child, and though there must have been some measure of parental love, nevertheless the vanity and the ambition and the desire in the hearts of the people was sufficient that they were willing to take their children and make the child pass through the fire. Can you see a father now moved with desire for honor, for position, for authority over his fellow? For this was the reason for the worship of Moloch, to achieve ascendancy over one's fellow. And so he would stand there, look into the face of his little first-born son, shall we say, and with whatever feelings a father should have, his ambition so much greater than his natural affection, that he would then petition the spirit represented by the statue, and calculating the degree of force necessary to project the little flailing-armed infant into the very center of the fire.

The father would calculate the arc, and then would, as carefully as he could, throw the child up so that it would land directly in the middle of that intense flame and fire. And thus the child would be given as an offering to Moloch. And the reason being that the beloved of the father, sacrificed, would ensure that the

father would secure the honor and the position for which his insatiable, lustful heart craved.

After all, there's only so much sexual experience and immoral experience that one can have, only so many things one can acquire, and after that, then what is there left? Well, we find a parallel to these three. John, writing in his first epistle in the second chapter, tells us that we are to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. And then he uses a strange statement.

For all, all, all that is in the world, and he has emphasized that all, Satan has only three tools in his kit, three weapons in his arsenal, and yet with those three weapons he has damned a race of men. There's only three. The first is the lust of the eye.

Things, things that soon break, things that soon rust, things that soon go out of fashion, things that soon pass away and you have to pay to have them dumped or carried off somewhere. The only thing that the God of this world can give are one of the three things he can give to men in exchange for their soul is pain. This we call a lust of the eye, the worship of veil.

Then the second thing that he can give is experience, illicit experience, illegal experience, forbidden experience, experience outside the will of God. And so he has said to Eve and to all the daughters and sons of Eve across the centuries, it is worth your soul to be free to have essential experience as you yourself choose. And can you imagine, therefore, the success of Satan in destroying a numbered millions of men and women simply by offering them sensual experience, glandular experience.

But this is what John said, all that is in the world is the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh. And then the third thing that he tells us about is associated with Moloch. The third thing that he has in his arsenal, the third weapon, the third tool in his kit is the pride of life, namely position of authority, of ascendancy over one's fellow.

And so by the clever intermingling of these three things, by the glamorizing of these three things, by the intensifying of the attraction of these three things, Satan is succeeding in damning generation after generation. And this is all he has, absolutely all that he has to work with, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, associated in our minds with the worship of Ashtaroath, the lust of the flesh, the worship of Dale, the lust of the eyes, and the worship of Moloch, the pride of life. Now, God made us for himself.

This is the primary principle of this book. And in making us for himself, he gave us a unique combination of appetites and urges. You have possessed them.

You came into the world with them. God made us finite spirits, and so because we were finite, we could exist in one place. In contrast with his infinity, for he is every place equally intense, we are in one place only, and so God gave us bodies that could be vehicles and houses for our spirits, and we could abide in that one place.

Now, joining spirit and soul to body, he gave us an appetite for food, because he intended these bodies to be nourished. He gave us taste buds, olfactory nerves, and eyes that distinguish color, in order that we might have a certain degree of pleasure in what we see, in what we smell, in what we taste. God not only gave us an appetite for food that there should be an inner urge that would drive us to replenish our bodies and keep them nourished, but he gave an abundance of means of satisfying this appetite properly, legitimately, in a good way.

And with this abundance of supply, he gave a variety of odors and a variety of tastes, so that there should be pleasure in the eating. God, likewise, wanted to complete this family of his by means of natural reproduction, and so he gave to man not only reproductive abilities, but a reproductive urge. The sexual urge was given of God, it was given to the first pair, and God would pronounce it good.

There's nothing wrong with sex. There's nothing wrong with sex. God made us, and God gave the proper, legitimate way by which this, as every need, was to be satisfied.

God gave to us an appetite for knowledge. For we were finite, and we learned in sequence. God is our mission, he knows everything simultaneously.

We have to learn, so God gave us an inner urge, an inner pressure, an inner hunger, an inner incentive to learn. And this you are now experiencing, many of you, as students. You're learning, you're studying, you have a desire to explore and learn more and further.

And this is good. One of the tragedies of our existence is this, that our brains are so much greater than our body's ability to sustain them. The wisest man that's ever lived has only used 3% of his brain power, and most of us limp along at about 9 tenths of 1%, up to about 1.6%. This is the average.

And so here are our brains with unlimited capacity. Do you realize that the human brain has been likened to an electronic brain? Someone said, and I don't know whether he's right or not, but he said that if the human brain were put together on the basis of an IBM electronic brain, it would take seven buildings the size of the Empire State Building to house it. It would take all of the water of the Niagara River to cool it, and all of the power generated by the Niagara River to operate it.

The human brain is a magnificently intricate thing. God has established it with apparently intending us to go on indefinitely. But here we reach the age of 60 or 70, and then the body begins to become frail, and our forms fade, and soon the great potential of every human personality is stopped by death.

So it was that God gave to us brains and the capacity to learn, and he put to that, you see, they feared all of the machines. You still were hungry, you still had sexual whispers and backbites. That's why God says the lasciviousness and the evil imagination are the worship of Adam.

And so you were tempted to not see. Oh, if he put up some grotesque title, that'd be for weird caricatures. Oh, no, he's far too subtle for that.

He won't do that with a little thing. Some little thing, some little possession, some little position. And then comes, oh, my dear, whoever, you will be.

But if you can come to the place that you deal with the temptation, as though it were in the direction of Baal, Ashtaroth, or Moloch, in all that you'll ever be tempted, it'll be one of these three. And you'll see it, and you'll deal with it at that place is what it is. But what is God's method of keeping us from the tragedy that's set forth here, the third generation? What is his method? Well, his method is always the same.

And so it was that the reason that the third generation in Israel failed God was because they had failed to go through the Jordan. Remember God said, I'm going to put a pile of stones in the bottom of the river, and then we're going to put a pile of stones in the bank of the river, and I want you to bring your children down, and I want you to explain to your children that those twelve stones in the bottom of the river are a people that have died, that have been crucified and buried. And those twelve stones in the banks of the

river are a people that have been raised to walk in newness of life.

And I want you to bring your children down here, that they'll learn the testimony of death and resurrection. What was it? Why? Because they thought that their father's and their grandfather's experience was enough for them. And dear heart, I'm looking at some of you tonight, and you are allowing that because you've learned the words of the crucified life, and the words of sanctified life, and the words of identification, and you've emotionally consented to it and intellectually adopted it, that this is enough, and it isn't enough.

You've got to go down into the river if you're to ever come up on the other side in victory. It's to go down in death that you can live in resurrection life. And I fear for every movement, for that third generation is the generation to whom the words are sufficient and take the place of the reality.

So I speak to someone tonight who's learned the words of our crucifixion with Christ, and our burial with Christ, and our resurrection with Christ, and you've let the words substitute for the vitality and the reality of your union with Christ in death. If that's the case, then you may walk as your fathers have walked, but your spiritual children will follow the gods of the land, Baal and Ashtaroth. What does it mean to you? God wants a witness.

The only ones that can carry the ark are the ones that have known the cross. The only ones that can witness for him are the ones that have gone into the Jordan of death to self and resurrection with Christ. And unless you've done that, somehow in the secret part of your life, you've already begun to serve Baal and Ashtaroth and Moloch.

Nobody knows it, perhaps only you. But you realize that there's an hour of unreality, and it can't be there any longer. What about it? What are you going to do?

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