

Holy Ground: The Life of Worship After the Jordan

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August 17, 1958

Going on over into the book of Joshua, where the Lord said to Moses and Israel, "...and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. My angel shall go before thee, and I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. And thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless your bread and water. And I'll take sickness away from the midst of thee, and there shall nothing cast their young. And the number of thy days I will fulfill. And I will send my fear before thee, and destroy all those to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs."

We followed this, and we showed over in Joshua how this literally took place. And I said all the way through that while this was written to Israel as a nation on this earth, its spiritual principles apply to us now. And I believe this, and I have believed it for a long time. And I have seen God do some very wonderful things for people, for my own self. And now we followed Joshua across the river and into the land of promise. And two weeks ago, tonight I said that Israel had two things, there were two things, there were four that I wanted to mention, but I only got to mention two of them.

One was, Israel was circumcised after 40 years of wandering, and thus separation, which is always, always typical of separation in Scriptures. And then that there was the old corn of the land, and the manna ceased. The artificial manna, which came down from above, ceased, and they lived off the corn of the land. They became mature. I talked about maturity. And I said I would finish tonight and talk about this.

In the fifth chapter of Joshua, it came to pass, verse 13, when Joshua was by Jericho that he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries? And he said, I'm not a man on either side, I am here as captain of the host of the Lord. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? He knew he was talking to God. And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

Now this will conclude my little series. And we begin something new and fresh for next week. A little later, perhaps not until school begins and our people get back and this summer business is over. But when that is over and we start all over again in September, early September, I want to preach a new series.

Now, there are two things here that I want you to note. The Holy Spirit, the man with the sword, and the worship. There was the man with the sword. I think that we will agree that this was the Holy Spirit. I believe that this accords with most Bible teaching, spiritual Bible teaching. And this angel here, this prince, I think the margin says, Joshua went, and the man said, as captain, that's the word he used, prince, it says in margin, as prince of the host of the Lord am I come. And he had a sword in his hand. And it's called

the sword of the spirit in the book of Hebrews and of Ephesians. Now this angel, this comforter, was to go ahead and fight for them.

Now when we come to the New Testament, particularly in the gospel of John, we have the teaching of our Savior three chapters long about the Holy Spirit. My friends, this life in the land that I have preached about, you've listened to for these weeks, this life in the land, this crossed over life, this victorious life, is characterized by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Now you have heard me say this many times, and I say it not only here, but wherever I have the pleasure of speaking. If occasion arises, I say that the church of today is gravely wanting in the power and Presence of the Holy Spirit. We have grieved the Lord by our sins, and there has been a withdrawing of the Presence, the lifting of the Presence.

We sang here, the Comforter is come. Not the Comforter came, but the Comforter is come. And this I believe with everything in my heart, that when He came, He came to stay, and He is come, and He is here. But it's entirely possible to have the Comforter present in the church, present in a congregation, present on the earth, present in some measure in this church, and yet so grieve Him, so quench Him, so resist Him, and so ignore Him, that He cannot be to us the captain of the Lord's host. He cannot be. He wants to be, but He cannot be.

We're going to have to reverse ourselves in fundamental circles, and we're going to have to do some prayerful, penitential rethinking of this matter of the relation of the Holy Spirit to his church. The Spirit of the living God was given to His church. We are baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit, that is true. And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His, and that is true.

But it is one thing to be a member of the body of Christ, and to be baptized by that mystic union into the body of Christ, that regeneration. It is quite another thing to live in the fullness and in the friendly communion and friendship of the Holy Ghost. And my friends, I will simply have to say that this latter is something that we do not know very much about.

I am very deeply concerned, because we have brought up a generation of young people that know practically nothing about what I am saying now. We have brought up a generation, even some of them present here tonight, good, clean, young, converted people. There's no question about that, no question about it. But they have never crossed over.

There is not the separation that is meant here by circumcision. There is not the maturity that comes from the old corn of the land and the secession of the manna. There is not the conscious presence and power of the Holy Ghost. It just isn't, it's not here, it's not upon the people.

And I'd like to say, partly this is because it's impossible to isolate this church and separate it completely from the flow of quasi-evangelicalism that is abroad on the earth. It is impossible to escape the chilling influences of a teaching that denies that there is any such a thing as a fullness of the Holy Spirit.

I teach it here, I have taught it, and some have entered. But what I say can be neutralized by what you hear on the radio or what you read in your Sunday school lessons or what somebody says or what some friend talks with you about, and we level back to this chilly condition where we find ourselves.

But Joshua found this man, this invisible man. Now Joshua went forward after that, and we read no more about the man. But as long as Joshua kept his heels clean and walked with his God, he had victory. And Joshua conquered the land and gave it to Israel. And yet it was obvious here that Joshua wasn't doing it. It was done under the leadership of the man who appeared once to Joshua and then withdrew into invisibility but did not withdraw, who was no longer seen by Joshua but was present wherever there was obedience and faith and courage shown by Joshua and the children of Israel.

Now, my friends, we are reaping in this hour the result of a terrible misunderstanding. We are reaping in evangelical circles the result of a frightful and frightening misinterpretation of biblical truth regarding the Holy Ghost. We are forgetting that our denominational fathers, who once planted their great churches on this continent, believed as we do and as I'm trying to teach you here, and not as the modern spirit-denying evangelicals believe.

Although I'm an evangelical, a fundamentalist if you like, but our fathers believed that a man ought to be filled with the Holy Ghost and they didn't hesitate to say so. But there came up a group of teachers a generation or less ago that nullified that whole thing, and that by careful argumentation made it very difficult for anybody to push his way through.

They said, well, but you'll become a fanatic. Well, but look at so-and-so and he went off into wild fanaticism. And they put up a scarecrow in the middle of God Almighty's cornfield to scare away all of the children of the Lord. They put up a scarecrow in the clover field, so the children of God are frightened away. And so, we were forced to the necessity of two or three things. We were forced to go forward either by learning or by gadgetry.

And so, by learning and gadgetry we have tried to labor through, but we haven't gotten very far and we're so desperately in need of refreshing in the day in which we live. What the church of God needs to do, the whole evangelical church, is to call ten days of prayer and apologize to the Holy Ghost. We've wronged Him, we've retrenched Him, we've denied Him, we've interpreted Him away, we have resisted Him, we've been ashamed of Him, we've been afraid of Him.

And the result is, He has pulled the blinds down over the light and we are without much light. But instead of our saying, O God, we have sinned, we have sinned, the light has gone out, we look around for a way to get on without the light. We look around for eyes that aren't God's eyes, methods that aren't God's methods, ways that aren't God's ways.

So, the church is going on, stumbling forward and going on, but we're not going on with very much lift, nor very much buoyancy, nor very much blessing. I tell you that I would rather see a select number of the Lord's people filled with the Holy Spirit and living in

the sweet oil of the Holy Ghost than to see great religious movements. If you could see both, it would be very good. But you can have one without the other. You can have the second without the first.

We can promote great religious movements and not have the Holy Spirit at all. We can learn how to do it, my brethren. And if we do, we make a tragic mistake. What art thou? Who art thou? said Joshua to this man. Who art thou? And the man said, Nay, don't question me. As captain of the host of the Lord, I am come.

And so, I want to urgently, urgently press upon you that you, particularly you young people, search your own hearts and search your Bible and prepare to spend some time alone. You know, Christianity is a social religion. We are called sheep. We are not called wolves. Wolves travel mostly alone until they run to kill, and they travel in packs, but mostly they're alone or in twos. We are called sheep because sheep always travel together if they can.

So, Christianity is a social religion. That is, it's a social religion in this that we worship together. There is the assembly, the coming together of the people of God, whether it be half a dozen or half a dozen hundred. They are the people of God nevertheless, and they are together. And this is good. But it's also possible to get so that you're not spiritual, you have made your religion to mean that you've got to get somebody to talk with, somebody to lean on, somebody to chat with, and we do not meet God alone.

Some of you are leaving shortly to go to various schools of learning. And I want to say to you, if you accept the dead level of mediocrity that you find in your student body as the highest will of God for you, you will waste your time where you're going, and you will not go on with God. You're going to have to, by the grace of God, deliberately and purposefully and determinedly rise above those that are around about you. And when you rise above them, of course, they're not going to like it. They're going to call you holier than thou. They're going to have cute names for you. They're going to snub you. They're going to think you're queer or they're going to find some category to put you in and get rid of you. And they're going to dismiss you one way or another.

But brethren, you can't dismiss a man full of the Holy Ghost. Now, I want to warn you. You can't dismiss a man full of the Holy Ghost. And you can't frighten him, and you can't quench him and you can't squelch him and you can't stop him and you can't block him. For God says, I'll go before you and the angel shall go ahead of you, and I will drive out the enemy. But he didn't mention this captain. But when the time came, the captain was there. The prince was there with his sword in his hand, the Word of God.

And so I say to you that if you accept the common level, if you pray a little and read a little and sing a little and then chatter a little and yak a little and joke a little and then the next week pray a little more and talk a little more, pretty soon you have equated spiritual Christianity with fun and amusement and all that. And the result will be that you will grow up and go on and mature physically and mentally, but not mature spiritually.

We are not a mature people spiritually, not even in this church where I have struggled and prayed and preached so hard and brought men who could help and supplement and

teach as well or better than myself to help us along. But we'll lean on each other, and we'll look at each other as samples and Charles looks at Bob and Bob looks at John and John looks at Harry and each one says, well, I'm about like the other. And we accept each other as a sample of what a Christian ought to be.

Read the lives of the holy men of God. Read the lives of those who even in their youth and some even in their teens refused absolutely to accept the chilly Christianity of their day as normal. And they pressed themselves through and they were accused of being fanatical and they were even some of them deserted and some of them shown the door, but they went on with God, nevertheless. And now we write their biographies and sing their hymns and tell their anecdotes and build their sepulchers, but we're careful not to follow them and live as they lived.

There is a land, my brethren. The Holy Ghost said, I'll take you across into that land and it'll be your land, and I'll lead you. And I'll send an angel before you and he shall go before you and he'll drive out the enemy from before you. And the very things that are there to hinder you will become steppingstones for you to rise on your dead selves to better things. And that's what God said, and He said it to His church, and He said it to His people.

Five years ago, ten years ago, as long ago as fifteen years ago, I saw a little turn for the better in spiritual things here and there. I'm speaking not only about church, I'm speaking about God's people wherever I find them. I saw a little turn for the better, but now I see a little swing in the other direction. I see those churches, who at one time had very high standards for membership are now throwing the doors open and saying, while we sing number 39, the door is open for members. And so they come and join. This is a spiritual tragedy.

The plane that went down with 99 aboard, we were all horror stricken. But to open the church of Jesus Christ without discrimination to anybody that wants to walk down the aisle, and join is a tragedy infinitely worse than if all the airplanes in the sky tonight were suddenly to crash together. Because the worst the airplane crash can do is to kill the body. But when a church gets corrupt, it ruins the souls of men.

Now the second thing is, Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship. And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoes from off thy foot. We would say now, take your hat off, bow your head. The place where thou standest is holy.

The land of crossing over is the land of worship. In Genesis 12:7 and 8, the Lord appeared unto Abram and said unto Abram, In the land, he said unto Abram, Now look around you. This land I will give to you and to your seed. And Abraham built an altar unto the Lord who had appeared unto him.

And then later, Jacob, a grandson of Abraham, after he had sinned and was driven from his home, that is driven by a bad conscience and fear of his brother, driven from his home, he went out from Padanaram, or toward Padanaram, and he traveled to the middle of the night. And in the middle of the night, he came to a place and lay down in that place and took of the stones of that place for his pillow.

And it came to pass that while he slept, behold, a vision appeared, and a ladder was set up on the earth and its top reached to heaven. And the angels ascended and descended upon it and God stood above it and Jacob said, this is holy ground. Why didn't he know that that was holy ground? Had not God said it to Abraham, but Jacob found it out. And so he awoke and he anointed the pillar and said, This is the house of God. And we got the beautiful word Bethel, the house of God.

Later on, after various skirmishes and backslidings and restorations, Jacob appeared at Genesis 35. And in the 35th chapter, when he returned to the land, one of the first things he did was to build an altar unto the Lord. The land of promise is a land of worship.

And in Joshua 5, we have the same thing. They had been out of the land a long time. Now they come back into the land again, the land where Abraham had built the altar, the land where Jacob had built it and anointed or had raised and anointed the pillar, and the land where Jacob had built the altar again after returning to the land. And then now they're back in it. And one of the first things they do is to bow and worship. And this strange prince from heaven says, Loose the shoe off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. This is holy land.

My friends, there is a place, a land here on earth for God's people, a land where the soul anoints its pillar. There is a land where God appears to the soul. There is a place right here in the twentieth century amid Sputniks and automobiles and burning fumes and noise and confusion. There is a place where we can enter, where the soul anoints its pillar and where the heart takes off its shoes and where we worship as Abraham worshiped.

Let me take you back to this wondrous, mysterious passage. After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, saying, I go childless? And Abraham said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed. And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, this shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bough shall be thine heir, the promise of Isaac. And he brought him forth abroad and said, look now toward heaven and tell the stars, that is, count the stars, if thou be able to number them.

And he said, so shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? Here is one of the most wonderful mixtures of sharp reasoning and awestruck worship possible to imagine.

Here was a man who was using his head. He remembered the promise God had made. He remembered that things weren't working out the way God seemed to say they would be. And he wasn't going to give way to his feelings, and he was going to stick by the text. And he said, Lord God, but wait, you promised me, whereby shall I know? And God said, Take a heifer of three years old and a she-goat of three years old and a ram of three years old and a turtledove and a young pigeon. He took unto him all these and divided them in the midst and laid each piece one against another.

This was Abraham seeing Jesus' day. This was Abraham by faith looking down the years and seeing a cross. Only he did only what he could do. He slew young animals and birds. And when the fowls came down upon the carcass, Abraham drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham. And lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abraham, that is, God said unto Abraham, know of a surety, Abraham, know of a surety.

Even here in the deep sleep of ecstasy, even here in the horror of great darkness, even here when your reasoning is staggering, reason is staggering because of the mystery and wonder of it, know of a surety, Abraham. I'll make good in my promise, thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them and afflict them four hundred years, and also the nation whom they shall serve will I judge. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again. And it came to pass that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. And in the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying unto thy seed will I give this land.

Now here was the wonder, the mystery, the mystery of it. I don't claim to understand this, I do not know. But here was God appearing to the man, here it was all interlaced with good hard promises, no visionary dreaming of things. Here were good hard promises, the word of God was there, and the promises were there, and Abraham was insisting on them. And yet there was an overtone of the mysterious and the divine and the wonderful and the heavenly and the beautiful. And Abraham went into a deep sleep and Abraham woke from his sleep and here was the fire moving among the pieces.

Oh, this was God, my brethren, this was God. And I say that it's this sense of the otherness of Christianity that is missing now. Everything can be explained, everything. We've got it all worked out on charts. Busy young fellows who've studied Christian education. They're busy telling us how to do the work of the Holy Ghost.

Ah, my brethren, there is a land where in this life, down here now, right in the middle of this generation of worldliness, while we're salty believers in the Word and where we will insist that God keep his Word and where we stand by the Book and refuse to have anything that doesn't check with the Book.

And yet at the same time, there comes down upon the soul that enters that land, there comes down a sense of something wonderful and something mysterious. It's only God, it is God, why should I say only God? But it is God, and the soul anoints her altar, the soul anoints her pillar.

Now, where are we? What kind of Christianity is yours? There are several kinds I want to mention briefly. There's the social Christianity of which I've already spoken. There are tens of thousands of Christians who couldn't stay Christian one month. If they were cast by themselves, they have to have the support of others, those round about them. They haven't pressed through. Abraham, all alone. Jacob, all alone. And it was in those lonely times that the Spirit opened heavens and revealed wonders.

And I have no hesitation in saying that what Abraham and Jacob learned in those brief, beautiful, bright times of visionary, glorious insight, I have no hesitation in saying that what they learned there was more to them than six years in a seminary could ever be to a man today. Social Christianity.

Then we have formal Christianity. I won't talk much about that because I don't think you're guilty of that and I don't think that you're going to hide behind formality unless it is the ugly formality of the gospel churches. The Episcopalians have their formality, the Lutherans have their formality, and the Presbyterians and Baptists in some areas have gone pretty formal, but they have a beautiful form. They've worked it out. They know what to do. It's lovely. It's at least lovely. But in our gospel churches, we're likely to become formal, but have an ugly formality that doesn't have the ripe beauty of age on it.

When a Lutheran or an Episcopalian turns around twice and bows, everybody knows what he's doing. Symbolism. He taps a bell or lights a candle; everybody knows what it is. There's beauty in it at any rate. But we have a formalism that isn't beautiful. It's an ugly formality. Ugly formalism. Always we go the same way. Always we do the same thing. And because it isn't beautiful, we think it's spiritual. That's what I call the cult of ugliness.

Well, then there's a Christianity which is pure entertainment and nothing else. Oh, I wouldn't say it's nothing else. But I would say that it is so mixed up. It has to have an entertaining value, or you can't sell it. You just have to have an entertaining value. Most all, most all of the churches have gone that way. Most all the colleges, most all. Most all have gone that way.

I'm not saying a word about Wheaton or Nyack, or Moody's, but I'm saying that practically all, some people want to murder me because I don't come out and name names, but I'm not going to name names if you don't, if I lay the principle down and if I rub the lens real good and say, now look, and you can't see it.

As the fellow said, if you have to ask, you don't know anyhow. And you never would know. So, if you can't see what I'm talking about, if the Spirit of God has not honored you by letting you see, then there's no use to ask me. But everything has to have its entertainment value these days.

Then, of course, there's theological Christianity. It's purely theological, nothing else. Then there's escapist Christianity. That's the Christianity of the red-hot evangelists and the missions. It's just escapist. Jesus Christ provides an escape hatch, some way to get out and rescue ourselves. And we never quit talking about the fact we were rescued.

Brethren, Christianity does make a way of escape. It is theological, and it is social, but it is also worshipful. And this is what's missing in this hour in which we live. There is such a thing as divine rapture. We sing about it. Fanny Crosby taught us to sing it, and we sing it, but we don't have any idea what we mean when we're singing it. We sing it in our hymns and don't know what we're saying.

But there is a place where we worship, and the Church must find that place again. The Church must find it again. We must find it. We here must find it. We here must put away

every sin until we find that place, so that when you wake in the night, a sense of His presence is there, that when by chance you hear a bar of music, a bit of a hymn on the radio, or sometimes when you're not expecting it, tears come to your eyes, and when you hear vast spaces and all they're talking about now, a sense of blazing wonder comes to your heart. This is my Father's world.

Worship, brethren, is what we need. Worship. We should meet to worship. We should meet to worship. We should meet always to worship. Worship should be part of everything that a Christian does. If it's a street meeting, he ought to go there in the spirit of worship. If it's a mission meeting, he should be there in the spirit of worship. If it's a meeting to sew a sheet for a missionary, it should be done in the spirit of worship. And it can be done. But it can't be done unless we're in the land, unless we've pushed across and gotten in. There is a place where the child of God can get in.

You say, is that what the Alliance teaches? Yes, it's what the Alliance teaches, but it's what 97 percent of us don't have. But it's also that which some people who aren't in the Alliance have. I meet them here and there. I told you about one this morning, a pastor I heard pray. That man is in. And I have met a few like that. They come from the North and the South and the East and the West and they're Arminian or they're Calvinist or they're post-millennialist or they're pre-tribulation or they're post-tribulation or their eschatology is all mixed up. But they've gotten in. They've gotten in. And you'll always tell them. You can always tell them. You can tell them by their faces. There's a timber in their voice that tells they're in.

We've put rapture over to the coming of Christ and we've made an eschatological historical event out of it. And we have explained it as downrightly as you would explain just exactly what the Lord is going to do. And we've got the Bible to prove it. But the saints talked about rapture, and they didn't mean the second coming of Christ. We push rapture to the coming of the Lord Jesus.

But it said here, take your shoes off your feet. And by an instinct the man went down on his face. The fact that we can enter the church of God and joke with each other. The fact that we can enter the church of God and sit down and look around to see who has the sack dress on. The fact that we can enter the church of God and begin to criticize in our hearts. I don't like that song. Why'd they sing that one? There's that old man again with the same old stuff. All right, maybe there's a fault to be found. But the very fact that you can find it indicates something's wrong or indicates there's something wrong with all of us.

My brethren, God is in this place. Lo, God is here. Let us adore and own how dreadful is this place. I tell you; I tell you that I would shake hands with every friend and say goodbye to them all. Rather than give up even a little bit of this that I personally experience. This, this land of worship. This land where the Father is all. Shall we not obey God and go on to perfection? I believe you'll want to, or I wouldn't be preaching to you.

May God grant that together we may press on out into the deep waters, waters to swim in. All right.