

2,11,21 God With Us

I want to begin by reading some passages from Hebrews:

(Heb. 1:1) "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us in His Son, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through Whom also created the ages."

(Heb. 2:1-3) "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard lest we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

And (Heb. 12:2) "See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not when they refused Him that warned them on earth, much more shall we not escape who turn away from Him that warns from Heaven, whose voice then shook the earth. But now He hath promised saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not the earth only, but also the heavens.'"

Here are some thoughts on this letter by T. Austin Sparks from his book, "God Has Spoken", where he comments on the verses we just read;

"Those words, of course, sound very terrible. They're almost like holding a threat over people and you might feel that they are not too encouraging for a time like this. No one will question the solemnity of those words. When you hear them, you say, "Well, you cannot, you dare not fail to recognize that we are in the presence of something very serious". There's something very serious on hand when such words have to be spoken. We are not in the presence of some light, superficial, pleasant matter and interest. We're evidently in the presence of something momentous, something which, if on the one side can be put into such a language of fear: For it says, "let us fear." A warning. A solemn warning. The possibility of neglecting something. You don't talk like that about anything unless it's something of tremendous value, something of very glorious possibility and consequence (this "so great salvation"). Therefore, it must be something tremendously important. Now, I'm not exaggerating. I'm not making that up. And what happened in their

case? You have all these exhortations, entreaties, admonitions, warnings. What is it all about? Now therefore, friends, I suggest to you that this letter must be a very vital letter. If that's the nature of it, the realm of it, if that is the portent, it's something tremendous in view for Christians which can be missed. That's what it's all about.”

The other side of Hebrews, as we'll see in Heb. 12:18-24, has direct application to those in Christ who have their hearts set on moving forward in their pursuit of Him, whatever the personal cost.

Here's what those verses tell us;

“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

And in Heb. 13:5, the writer adds this:

“He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

So, Hebrews has several significant contrasts; warnings to those who don't take this life as seriously as they should, and encouragement for those who do.

The context of Hebrews is to warn and deliver Christians from reverting to a superficial religion and missing the real meaning and experience of the life of Christ in the new creation.

We've seen in previous studies why the enemy is so determined to keep this advance from happening and why it is the single most important imperative that the Lord gives us, to defeat the schemes of the enemy, but most importantly, for the glory and increase of Christ in His church.

When Christ is fully formed in us, both individually and corporately, God reaches His goal for the body of Christ.

These contrasts in Hebrews help us differentiate between what is contrary to God's thoughts and what is perfectly in sync with Him; as we saw in the "Sinai versus Zion" contrast in Chapter 12.

Being able to distinguish these, and knowing where we stand in relation to them, lays the foundation for a successful advance to maturity in spite of our struggles and failures. God has made provision for everything to be available to us in Christ, to move us into the fulfillment of His purpose for us.

As we saw in a previous study, when we look at the original language of Heb. 6:1, which in the English translation reads,

"Therefore, leaving the teachings of the elementary principles of Christ, let us move on to maturity."

"let us move on" should be translated "let us be carried on" to maturity.

Now, let me share a few more comments by Sparks on the overall message of Hebrews and its application to the end of the age;

"We know, of course, that this letter itself took its rise from a crisis, but it's impressive to realize that not only was it related to a historic crisis, but the Holy Spirit took hold of that and introduced the ultimate crisis. Perhaps you need that explained. The historic crisis was this: this letter was written approximately two years before that full scattering for the whole of this age of the Jewish people; the destruction of Jerusalem, which the Lord Jesus had foretold. The words you noticed in our reading which were in the first place spoken by the Lord Himself, "Give the more earnest heed" and some of the things which were spoken by Him, were related to this crisis. He said, "The day is coming when they will cast up around you their siege. They will leave not one stone upon another." That whole terrible twenty-fifth chapter of

Matthew's gospel spoken by the Lord was bearing upon the thing that was now within a year or two of actual fulfillment when the Roman legions besieged Jerusalem, brought it to starvation, destroyed its temple, so that literally, according to a Jewish historian, they did not leave one stone upon another. Now the Holy Spirit takes hold of the historic and superimposes upon that something bigger: the shaking of the heavens also. The heavenly things. This is, this is Christianity now, it's Christianity that will be shaken at the end. A time is coming when everything in Christianity will be shaken - shaken to its foundation. And this is where it comes to us with just as much force. It ought to come like this to us as it came to the Jews at that time, or was intended to do. The time will come - it is fixed in the counsels of God - when everything in this creation and in this universe is going to be subject to a tremendous shaking. It's going to happen."

Remember the passage we just read in Heb. 12:2;

"See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not when they refused Him that warned them on earth, much more shall we not escape who turn away from Him that warns from Heaven, whose voice then shook the earth. But now He hath promised saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not the earth only, but also the heavens.'"

Israel's citizenship was on earth; the Church's citizenship is heaven. God shook the earth, the Jewish nation, in 70 A.D. and all that was left was a remnant of Jewish believers.

In this next year, God will be swiftly moving history to what Sparks called, "the ultimate crisis" as related to the Body of Christ. He will shake Christianity to its core, removing all that is not of Christ. And only a remnant will be left to be caught to meet the Lord in the air.

The overwhelming majority of Christians in our country are not only unprepared for this, they are complete unaware of the prophetic implications of this for our generation.

They will be eating and drinking and giving in marriage until the flood takes them away.

We can and we should warn people, but don't expect a great deal of positive response. What you will mostly get is everything from polite indifference to outright hostility.

Since these things are not easy to hear, most won't want to hear them. Laodicea is all about comfort, with no interest in either the cross or the real glory that comes to our Lord through our surrender to Him.

However, we've also discovered that in almost every church we've ever been in, there are people who have begun to realize that there must be more to Christianity than what they are experiencing, and that something is wrong in this world, which they desperately want to understand and be able to deal with.

So, we need to do all we can to reach them.

The fault of this lack of awareness among American believers lies squarely on the shoulders of pastors who neglect to teach them – to prepare them.

No matter how many wonderful things these pastors do in a generalized pastoral ministry, if they don't do what God is asking *all* shepherds to do at this time in history, because they're afraid of offending or losing people, they are in more danger than they realize.

As James 3:1 warns us, those who teach the word of God will receive a much stricter judgment.

In Matt. 7:24-27 we see this familiar simile;

“Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Our entire Christian life is a building project. We can't wait till the floods come to be ready for them. Christ is the rock and unless we know Him personally and deeply because of time spent in prayer, study and experience, our house will fall.

Sand is easy to build on. You just throw up a tent, drink Margaritas and enjoy the gentle trade winds that caress your tent.

That's contemporary Christianity. Put in as little effort as possible. Sunday sermonettes combined with a weekly social gathering sprinkled with devotional Bible applications, and your tent's up and ready to go.

But what's coming is not gentle trade winds. And a tent is not going to work.

I realize that we all realize that we're not ready. And we may feel that it would take another decade of 'getting serious' about all before we could even begin to be genuinely prepared.

Listen to this excerpt from an article regarding the fact that grace predominates the heavenlies.

“There is provision made for mistakes, even when you get to the heavenlies in Christ. It does not look like sinless perfection. It does not look as though all the faults and the mistakes and the blunders and the injuries have ended, even when you come into the heavenlies. It looks as though grace will still be necessary to bear with things that go wrong. There must be some wrong, then, even when we get spiritually to that position. The Lord says that there is grace for that.”

Remember, overcomers are far from perfect, they've just come to the place where they have an undivided heart toward God.

So, the Lord is aware of our weakness, He is more interested in our heart toward Him in the sense of our willingness to acknowledge our need for Him and our desire to allow Him to do whatever is needed in our lives to make sure we are prepared.

This is why we are going through so much mysterious pressure and suffering in the present. We don't understand why it has to be so intense or why it's happening; and why there's no relief. Things just keep piling on in spite of our prayers for a reprieve.

But as one of our brothers who survived under communism said,

“Truth can't be separated from tears. . . I don't want comfort; I want God.”

In the West, we want a Christianity without tears. In His book, "Live Not by Lies" the author writes this,

"The faith of the Christians who have endured communism is a far cry from the therapeutic religion of the middle-class suburbs, the sermonizing of politicized congregations of the Left and the Right, and the health-and-wealth message of prosperity gospel churches. These and other feeble forms of Western Christianity will be quickly burned away in the face of the slightest persecution. "

And the Romanian pastor, Richard Wurmbbrand wrote,

"(There are two kinds of Christians); those who sincerely believe God and those who, just as sincerely, *believe* that they believe."

Suffering immediately distinguishes them from one another.

Like we saw last time, our struggle with faith is not really a struggle with faith but with whether or not we believe that God is trustworthy. And our understanding and acceptance of suffering is not obtained by targeting a communist regime or even a progressive liberal state. The greatest totalitarian of all is us. If you want to battle someone, battle your flesh.

Suffering is not working against us; it's a severe mercy. And our spiritual and psychological survival depends on seeing it in that light.

The Lord looks ahead of us and He sees what we can't see. He's getting us ready for what He knows must come.

If we would just let Him do what He's doing without having major controversies with Him and resisting His work in our lives, we will be much more ready for this next year than if we fight Him every step of the way.

Another author's quote on this;

"You cannot settle that matter when the storm breaks. If you have ever been in a storm, a real storm, you know very well that that's not the time to get things settled. If you haven't got them settled before then, forces will be just too much to cope with, far too much to cope with. You'll be thrown all over the place. An emergency is not the time to quietly get down to our

foundations. We're caught up in things too much. It's like that. If it's not all settled beforehand, if you don't know where you are beforehand, when this thing breaks, you'll not be able to see to it then. That's important to recognize. In the light of testings which will come, in view of that which is bound to break upon us at some time, now's the time to make sure that our position is an absolutely sound one, a true one, that there's nothing doubtful about our position, no question about it. We know where we are. We're not at the mercy of other people's judgments and ideas. We know the Lord for ourselves, we know where we are. Let everything go to pieces, we know where we are with the Lord. That is the thing that has got to be settled, and it cannot be settled when everything's going to pieces. In any such experience the question arises: what have I got of the Lord that's going to get me through this? What have I really got now of the Lord that will uphold me in this crisis? It may be something in everyday life - a family matter, a business matter, a church matter, a personal matter - something that is most testing, unsettling, and upsetting. It comes like a shock or a blow to knock you to pieces. What have you got of the Lord that's going to see you through it? So that you'll not be carried away in this hour of trial that's coming upon us. You will stand. You will remain."

Remember the verse we read at the beginning in Heb. 2:1-3.

"Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard lest we drift away from them."

"Give more earnest heed to the thing what were heard" is much more important than we may have realized in light of where we are in history.

In the first century, the recipients of these exhortations didn't take them seriously, and at the time of that historical crisis, when God shook the earth, they were carried away.

Now, we're at the "ultimate crisis" of this age and God's going to shake the heavens, and we don't want to be among those who are unaware and unprepared.

Our spiritual roots need to go down deep into the rock we've been building our lives on. Like the writer to the Hebrews said, "How shall we escape" if our roots are shallow or non-existent?

(Jer. 12:5) “If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?”

Because of His great love for us, this is what “God hath spoken”. It’s not meant as a threat to His enemies, but as a foretelling to those He loves of that which must come upon this earth in the final generation, to purify us, to separate Laodicea, and to glorify the Lord in His overcoming remnant.

This is not simply another season of things continuing as they have since the beginning of time.

This is the summation of human history leading to the destruction of the Antichrist kingdom and the 1000-year binding of Satan.

There has never been a time when it has been more important to know what’s happening and be in the center of God’s will than now.

Another quote to emphasize this with better wording than I could come up with;

“That is why He allows us to have difficulties, trials and adversities. We have to secure a position where, without any kind of interference, of arguments and circumstances, or what the consequences would be, we are with the Lord, at any cost, for all that He ever meant when He called us into fellowship with His Son. An attitude like that will make tremendous things possible for us. Get right into line with all the purpose of God concerning His Son at this time in history and you will be a different kind of Christian, and you yourself will count for very much more. The Lord will be with you and will commit Himself to you (in ways not seen before).”

Like armchair quarterbacks, many believers do stand against popular, watered-down Christianity, but they don’t actively stand *into* true Christianity. It's not the hearers, but the doers, of the Word that will be vindicated.

Western Christianity has presented the Word of God in such a way as to create admirers rather than followers.

Soren Kierkegaard put it this way,

“Christ understood that being a disciple was in deepest harmony with what He said about Himself. . . For this reason, He could never be satisfied with adherents who accepted His teaching – especially with those who, in their lives, ignored it or let things take their usual course. His whole life on earth was destined solely to have followers and to make admirers impossible. . . The admirer never makes any true sacrifices. He plays it safe. Though in words, phrases, choruses, he is inexhaustible about how highly he prizes Christ, he renounces nothing; he gives up nothing; he will not reconstruct his life. “

I want to share some excerpts from a book called “Live Not by Lies” by Rob Dreher, that documents our brothers’ and sisters’ experiences under Eastern-bloc communism who survived what is now coming to the West. You will easily be able to identify the ‘signs of our times’ related to what has come to our nation with the election of President Biden.

“Today’s left-wing totalitarianism appeals to an internal hunger, specifically the hunger for a just society, one that vindicates and liberates the historical victims of oppression. It masquerades as kindness, demonizing dissenters and disfavored demographic groups to protect the feelings of so-called victims in order to bring about social justice. The contemporary cult of social justice identifies members of certain social groups as victimizers and calls for their suppression as a matter of righteousness. They embrace an aggressive and punitive politic that resembles Bolshevism, as the Soviet style of communism was first called. . . The vast majority of Eastern Europeans did not make a pact with the devil or sell their soul to become informers but rather succumbed to the constant, all-encompassing, everyday psychological and economic pressure. . . (the entrance of communism) came in through the gradual marginalizing and eventual destruction of any institutions that were independent of the state. It meant the politicizing of all aspects of life. It meant the shaming, ostracizing and eventual persecution of religious believers, the suppression of free speech and the erasure, the cancellation, of historical and cultural memory. . . Mussolini defined totalitarianism as ‘Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.’ A disillusioned Czech communist wrote, ‘It is not hard for a totalitarian regime to keep people ignorant. Once you relinquish your

freedom for the sake of personal necessity . . . you cede your claim to the truth. Slowly, drop by drop, your life begins to ooze away just as surely as if you had slashed your wrists; you have voluntarily condemned yourself to helplessness, (the state is now your savior).”

One current example of “the politicizing of all aspects of life” is the recent decision by the Pentagon to examine and remove soldiers from our military those do not fully support the left’s agenda.

The government can’t fully trust the military to ‘round up’ insurrectionists (conservatives, libertarians & Christians) until they make sure the military is comprised of those who support the leftist regime now in charge. I’ll include a link to this in the notes.

<https://news.yahoo.com/breaking-down-bidens-plan-purge-042330733.html>

A Christian from Budapest wrote;

“You have to suffer for the truth because that’s what makes you authentic. That’s what makes the truth credible. If I’m not willing to suffer, my truth might as well be nothing more than an ideology. You have to serve Christ in such a way that people can see that this world is a lie.”

And author Rod Dreher adds this;

“The days to come are going to force American Christians to confront personal suffering for their faith in ways most never have done before. . . without being willing to suffer, even die for Christ, it’s just hypocrisy. It’s just a search for religious comfort.”

Even though the signs are obvious to anyone paying attention, when you talk to most people, including Christians (maybe especially Christians), if you even start a sentence with “Have you noticed that our country has moved into a totalitarian system of government?” Before you get past the word “totalitarian” their brain is registering you as a conspiracy theorist and they tune out anything you say after that.

To them, all that’s happened is that we moved from Republican to Democrat leadership. It’s happened before; it’ll happen again, so relax.

When Christians hear of communist coups in other countries and read the incredible stories of Christians suffering under those regimes, to American Christians those stories seem surreal, distant and foreign. It's worse than the "it'll never happen here" mentality; it's also indifference, and passes away as soon as the excitement of the story wears off.

I'm going shift into something else as we wrap up.

Ever wonder why the believers in the underground church in other countries with much less theological knowledge than us seem so much more spiritually mature?

Listen to this verse in Rom. 11:27-33;

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins. Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

This wasn't just Paul's amazement at God's plan; it was his amazement of Who God is.

Like the mystery doctrines we've studied in Paul's letters, they aren't just to allow us to know that they exist and what they are, they are meant to allow us to see the wisdom of God and His grace and His commitment to His Son and to the incredible destiny He has determined for the Church, so we can *know Him*.

(1 Cor. 2:9) "Eye has not seen, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

He doesn't even list those things in this passage. What's His point? The entire Bible from cover to cover is not just to give us theological and historical information about this religion we've adopted, and what the God of this religion expects from us.

This is where seminaries have it wrong.

Everything we learn in the Bible is meant to acquaint us with a Person, not a creed.

(John 5:39-40) "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."

Life isn't found in knowledge alone; it found in the One Who said, "I am the way, truth and *life*."

So, if you ever wonder why some believers have less knowledge than others, but seem to have a much greater love for God, now you know.

Knowledge, or so-called spiritual experiences, were never ends-in-themselves for these Christians. It wasn't Bible knowledge or ecstasies that were their goals; it was knowing the sovereign God of history on as personal a level as possible. And God honored that, because that's His goal for us.

Once that's achieved, God's personal goal for us is finished.

(Gen. 5:21-24) "Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So, all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

Enoch walked with God and God took him.

(Gen. 3:8-9) "Then the man . . . heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and . . . the Lord God called out to the man, "Where are you?"

This is why God wrote the Bible; to restore the relationship for all of us that He once had with Adam before the fall – when "first love" held them together and they could walk in the garden in the cool of the day, thoroughly enjoying one another.

(Ezek. 37:26-27) “And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

(Isa. 25:8) “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.”

Death is separation from Life and there will be no separation in eternity. Tears are, at least in part, the result of the feeling inside of us, of not being in intimacy with the One we love. Of not being home.

Finally,

(Rev. 21:1-4) “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’”