

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, June 22, 2013.

Good afternoon beloved. This is good company we're in this afternoon. From the view of Holy Scripture, there is no conclusion to be drawn except that this is the place to be at this hour. These are the people to spend your life's energies and time upon at this hour. You are all a very great blessing to me and I love you all dearly.

The events that fall out unto us every day, taken in individual items or as unique sets of afflictions and trials, are known by us to be for our highest and best good as we walk in this pilgrim pathway.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Both as it pertains to the temporal lives of each of God's elect children, and as it pertains to the work of providence, there is great comfort to be had when you contemplate that each of these new waves of experience are perfectly fitted to answer not only to the next wave we will come upon, but more wonderfully to the final wrapping up of the human experiment. This causes beautiful wisdom to shine from the words of Peter, to wit:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

The text passage for this sermon is Isaiah 2:22 – easy to remember as you cement the significance of the amazing words contained therein, to wit:

"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22)

The context of these words is significant and, upon closer examination, we find them a common eschatological theme in Scripture. I will, Lord willing, open this passage up for your edification and enjoyment. To begin the exegesis, I want to follow the road map provided us by our blessed Savior when he spoke to His disciples about the end of days. Perhaps there we might find some good clues about what this passage (and some others of the same vein) are providing us ***"upon whom the ends of the world are come."*** (1 Corinthians 10:11)

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. (Luke 17:28-30)

Here we have a context in which to consider the words that follow. That context is clearly the return of Christ when the world's conditions reflect that of old Sodom and the cities round about. Now consider the words next spoken by Christ:

In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Luke 17:31-33)

Then, as if to put even more punch to the significance of this time ... this critical, litmus-test time ... Christ places a most sharp point to His warning:

"I tell you, in that night there shall be two ~~men~~ in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two ~~women~~ shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two ~~men~~ shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where [shall those be taken], Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." (Luke 17:34-37)

The words struck through ("men", "women", and "men") are interpolated, and I do not believe are edifying for the purposes of what Christ is instructing about His triumphant return.

Our Savior; He ***"that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy;"*** (Isaiah 57:15) is here speaking about what He is going to do about the matter of physically separating His blessed ones from the earth dwellers when he comes through the clouds. In some part of this earth there will be two sleeping people; one will be awakened to the glories of the rapture while the other is left reprobate in the bed. In some part -- the work day is in full swing and two working side by side will be instantly interrupted in their very labor; the one to bliss and the other to sorrow!

What is to be said of such words? Of what significance will we make of them? Can there be any diluting the force. If there were to be some capitulation about the message of this election, this reprobation ... in real time, with real and immediate consequences ... I must ask you here, why would Christ Himself begin the declaration with the imperative voice?

"I tell you..."! "I tell you"!

LISTEN TO ME, my friends! Consider the sight. The beloved apostles gazing into the face of our blessed Savior as he speaks with such utter finality about this doctrine we hold so dear. There is no careful weighing of the evidence in this place! He has not made a list and checked it twice to find out who has been naughty or nice. NO!

"I tell you... one shall be taken...."! "I tell you ... the other shall be left"!

Ahhh, the bliss! Ahhh, the horror! There is a solemn thing to be learned here. I believe that our beloved friend, the apostle Peter saw this point very, very clearly and posed the rhetorical question that will have to settle into the very core of every heart here ... that will have to ring out in every ear here!:

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:11-12)

Now with these initiating considerations, I wish to take your hands and guide you to another place where our Father has provided contextual wisdom. I say "contextual", meaning in the context of eschatology ... in the context of when this teetering, sin-drenched world slips its tracks and begins to fall to its cataclysmic conflagration. Let us consider the words of Isaiah elsewhere in his prophecies:

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Here again is the same context ... the work that this little, afflicted, precious in the eyes of the seething Avenger congregation is doing to usher in the amazing days just ahead of us by crying in this waste, howling wilderness. Same end of days time under consideration. So what is it that we must be crying about?

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isaiah 40:6-8)

Why are these words so critically important at that hour? Why, when ***"the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together"*** (Isaiah 40:5) ... the same time as ***"when the Son of man is revealed"*** (Luke 17:30) is it so necessary to cry out about the absolutely worthless nature of the creature man? We know the doctrine is sound, as the Psalmist speaks.

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth." (Psalms 103:15)

And my dear friend, the Patriarch Job very well expresses the vanity of the human flesh, and it's certainty of failing:

"He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." (Job 14:2)

So my question is not whether the doctrine has solid footing in Scripture. My question is what unique character does this doctrine have at that most remarkable hour ... that it seems to take such a place in the prophets' preachments? In Christ's warnings? More critically, is there something to this that can help my beloved friends in this house ... in this called out body of believers ... while we journey where our Father has graciously placed us along the golden chain of providence?

A brief detour at this juncture might help to make this jewel the more glorious to your spirits. We are -- as is our duty to be, in accordance with many sermons that have been beautifully articulated from this pulpit by the beloved elders of this body for the past several weeks -- LOVING PEOPLE! Gracious people! Affectionate, peaceful, kind, charitable people! I challenge any bile-belching, filth-peddling, preacher, priest, or other pervert to make a credible case otherwise. We see (and reject) your sloppy-agape, unhinged, nonsensical notions of God's love, and raise you the blessed and pure principles of God's love for His Elect precious.

We do not own salvation. We cannot -- and dare not pretend to -- give the love of God to any man. After speaking the parable of the seed sown by the wayside, in stony places, among thorns, and into good ground, the disciples asked Christ why he spake in parables. His answer:

"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matthew 13:11-12)

Consider those underlined words for a moment. Interpolate "the gift of saving faith" after "for whosoever hath" and "but whosoever hath not" in verse 12, and tell me if that does not tell this sad tale? It matters not how much light, love, tender and careful upbringing the blessed parents of this church pour upon their children. If those children "hath not the gift of saving faith" -- put elsewhere in this passage "eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand" -- not only will they not have these glorious truths in "more abundance" ... they will in fact have taken away the words that they were given throughout their youth. Is it not so, in our experience?

For some years, we have seen the landscape of this amazing journey of ours include the Satanic use of these antichrists of which John spoke, to wit:

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us,

but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John 2:18-19)

As one of my dear friends here pointed out to me one day not long back, the word "they" at the start of verse 19 -- if we use the rules of grammar taught to every child -- must point back to the plural "antichrists" in the previous verse. That is, these with whom we walked -- these who made professions of faith and then showed themselves to be without grace -- are acutely vexatious to tender souls.

I submit that there is at least a twofold significance to this great exodus, about which scripture makes distinct reference to. Look at these words in the verse just referenced: "**Little children, it is the last time**" ... and "**whereby we know that it is the last time.**" (v. 18) Now, compare that to the words we have read many times from the second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, as well as the words of Christ, to wit:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

... and ...

"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (Matthew 24:10-12)

First, a specific expectation we should have -- as part of the wrapping up of this world's affairs -- is that we will deal with those for whom we have had great affection and who will show their absence of grace. Second, that their relationship to us will be expertly used by His Majesty the Devil to create great vexation in our spirits. There are many more passages with which those in this house could further anchor this point -- but those I have identified are sufficient here today.

The principle that God's servants will be required to experience the loss of our close relations for the cause of God and truth has been true and valid in every generation, but I submit acutely so and painfully so at that time when we are preparing to meet our King returning in power.

So, returning to the primary point of examination, let me draw into focus one more passage. A passage that has (as I trust many sitting here today have heard me express) given me some considerable vexation in the pursuit of its contextual significance. Tucked away in the heart -- or more precisely the very "heat" -- of the horrors expressed to be coming upon the inhabitants

of a dying world; this dying world ... John the Beloved is moved by the Holy Ghost to write two mystifying sentences, before he declares the presentation of the battle of Armageddon, to wit:

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." (Revelation 16:15)

We are flesh. We are, everyone of us, of that nature described in Isaiah's first chapter, to wit:

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Isaiah 1:6)

Is that not the description of our shame? Is that not what is our nakedness that we dare not allow to be uncovered? And what of this garment? I think Dr. Gill provides us with an appropriate view of the question:

Gill: "'and keepeth his garments': either his conversation garments, unspotted from the world, and whenever defiled washes them, and makes them white in the blood of the Lamb; and keeps them from being stripped of them, by those who would lead them into sinful ways; or that keeps and holds fast the robe of Christ's righteousness, and garments of his salvation, which are the righteousness of the saints, that fine linen clean and white, that white raiment which only can cover their nakedness, that the shame thereof does not appear".

That's good stuff, brother Gill. From the vantage point that was available to our learned friend, it is a clear articulation of what is that garment about which John speaks. However, there is a significance to the context of that language that I believe he misses. When those who have written expositions of the words of Scripture related to cataclysmic times and events -- are themselves too far removed from those upheavals, and who therefore are left with an imperfect view of the reality the words introduce -- we should temper our reliance on those words, considering the profound and eschatology-based message of Daniel, to wit:

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:4)

Even Joseph Caryl, for whom I have spent decades developing a great affection for in reading his comprehensive treatment of Job's words, I am convinced to my very core would have had many more glorious things to offer if he had lost his ten children suddenly! If he had lost all his wealth and all his health and sat numb in the very valley of the shadow of death, like the patriarch whose words he expounded had.

I'm suggesting to you who are in this house with me today -- who walk this journey at a time that appears to be the very cusp of this world's horrific and glorious end -- that there is a significance to John's warning in Revelation 16:15. I am suggesting that it is tantamount to the

warning of Christ in Luke 17. I am maintaining that it is the same warning of that in Isaiah chapter 40, and brings us sharply back to the clarion, imperative exhortation of our text verse of Isaiah 2:22:

"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"
(Isaiah 2:22)

Listen! We know -- as was simply examined by an elder here some weeks ago -- that we have no business avenging ourselves against our enemies; and in fact have the affirmative duty to love them and pray for them. We know -- as was beautifully articulated by another elder recently -- that we have no business rejoicing, in a petty and childish manner, about the horrors our God drops upon our enemies; yet we will joyfully praise our God for His righteous, condign earth judgments! We know -- as we have examined time and again -- that charity is the perfection of the beauty of this body of believers! This we all know!

We will learn to pour our souls into ministering to each other with great love and affection. We will learn to put the proper face on our duty to love our neighbor as ourselves. We will show proper affection for the apostate man -- even our enemy -- as is required of a spiritually mature servant of God! We will do it with fear and trembling!

But when the world is on fire. When we see plainly that the Lord our God is preparing the earth for His triumphant return. When we are watching a thousand fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand -- and see that the death and destruction is yet not coming nigh us! (Psalm 91:7) When the sun refuses to give forth her light, and the moon is as sackcloth and the stars seem to have lost their assigned course and commence to decreate and fall headlong through the heavens above. When the earth's very atmosphere stops providing any shielding, breaks apart and God shakes terribly the earth!

I say when these things come upon this world -- this rotten, suffering, doomed and dying world -- and all of the wisdom of this world blindly offers up praise to the great whore; the beast, the false prophet, to Antichrist and betakes his seal ... and rages with deadly wrath against this little flock of slaughter. We had better be prepared to see the danger in having any affection for or reliance upon any one of these relationships!

We had better understand what Isaiah means when he says: ***"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it"*** (Isaiah 40:7) It's all gone! They're all doomed!

We had better understand Christ's warning -- grounded in that bone-chilling historical example of Sodom -- ***"Remember Lot's wife"*** (Luke 17:32) Sodom's all gone! They're all doomed!

We had better remember where -- and only where -- we can walk clothed and without shame, when the men of the earth are being scorched with great heat, with only the blood of dead

men to drink for relief, and bound in the gross darkness and pain of the wrath of God, headed mercilessly toward Armageddon! It is only the garment of Christ's salvation -- unmixed with the flesh -- that will cover us!

My dear friends, look at the context of our text passage:

***"Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."* (Isaiah 2:10-21)**

All the warnings are over. All the opportunities for these antichrists who have gone out from here ... together with those with whom they join to mock and afflict and vex the righteous souls day by day with their unrighteous deeds ... to repent and return are gone. The question is what will we do? The question is, where will our hearts be? The question is, what disposition will each tender heart here have toward these earth-dwellers who have prattled on about their will-worshipping notions of love (even for us) -- while sinning proudly?

***"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"*
(Isaiah 2:22)**

That's our duty, friends. That's the disposition we must have about the flesh, and all parts of it.

I love you all, and desire to walk with you to the day our God takes us.

Amen.

Closing Song from Isaac Watts -- "Absent From Flesh" (to the #142 in Blue Tune Book)

Absent from flesh! O blissful thought!
What unknown joys this moment brings!
Freed from the mischiefs sin has brought
From pains, and fears, and all their springs.

Absent from flesh! Illustrious day!
Surprising scene! Triumphant stroke
that rends the prison of my clay;
And I can feel my fetters broke.

Absent from flesh! To heav'n mine eyes!
Gaze not on friends' nor hearts' deceits.
But cease from man, as doomed man dies;
When righteous, condign wrath he meets.

Absent from flesh! Then rise, my soul
Where feet nor wings could never climb,
Beyond the heav'ns, where planets roll,
Meas'ring the cares and joys of time.

I go where God and glory shine,
His presence makes eternal day:
My all that's mortal I resign,
For angels wait and point my way.