

## The Talking Blood

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I am going to begin this sermon in Matthew 24:1.

**Matthew 24:1-12** Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

I chose to begin my sermon subject on this specific scriptural platform with (what is probably very high on the list of potential church member's interests), "When will He return?"

However, that question, in reality, is so unimportant at this point in time. Jesus almost bluntly slammed the door shut on more specific discussion on that specific point before the apostles.

Now Jesus' first admonition to the apostles already believing and following Him was direct. Already believing and following Him is you and me. He said to them, "You make sure when that time arrives that no one deceives you."

Apparently, the wind of deception at that time is going to be even worse than it is right now, and worse than it was at the time that Jesus said that. And so Jesus' thought was: Do not get deceived about His return.

He then focused a little more directly. He basically said, "I am the Christ," inferring without directly saying it, "I'm the one that you need to be paying attention to. These events that are going to be going on the world are going to be tragic indeed. They're going to be frightening, and they are going to be very hurtful to many people. But to those of you are already following Me, I am the Christ." That was His focus.

And it is still the focus at this time, and is really the subject of my sermon, saying, "I am the Captain of your salvation. I am your Leader and Savior; and the world at that time will be filled with terrible testing, and distractions. Focus the use of your faith in Me." He did not need to say that directly, but that is what He was certainly implying to them.

A secondary admonition appears in verse 12, and that is, "That because lawlessness abounds, the love of many will grow cold." Ask yourself, "Are you living in a time in which there is ever-increasing lawlessness?" We are certainly headed in that direction. We have not reached a peak such as Jesus is describing here in Matthew 24. But the admonition is clear; increasing lawlessness generates even more lawlessness. He is saying, "Be careful who you choose to associate with."

That is our warning. That is my warning in this time in which we now exist. We have not yet hit in our lifetimes that period of time in which Jesus was describing. But it is certainly headed in that direction.

The title of this sermon does not seem to fit, but by the time I get to the end of the sermon, I think you will see that it does fit. You will see why I gave it on this occasion; the occasion being at the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. The title comes from the Bible, because in several places in the

Bible, blood figuratively speaks and God hears and interprets what it said as a teaching lesson for our benefit. Sometimes, though, the benefit is not obvious.

On those occasions that blood speaks, what is given to a large degree is given as though the blood is revealing its biblical prominence and huge importance to us.

One of the books in which blood figuratively speaks is Hebrews.

A secondary reason for my speaking on this specific subject is the tag end of Jesus' instruction here in Matthew 24. He tells them:

**Matthew 24:42-44** “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore [this is the teaching for you and me] you also be ready. . .

We are undoubtedly heading for a time in which things are going to grow not just increasingly lawless, but increasing in terms of bad things, bad news, to a greater and greater intensity.

**Matthew 24:44** “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

When do you expect His return? You are probably 100% wrong, just like everybody has been to this period of time.

Now, this particular subject that I am speaking of—blood—is in regard to the importance Christ's death is for our sins.

Timeliness was considered good practice regarding subject material in the Worldwide Church of God, and I am in agreement with it. This practice was an occasion considered in Worldwide Church of God as preaching a subject in due season.

Now there is nothing wrong with that practice. But brethren, Christ's death is of such great importance—payment for our sins—that it touches every aspect of God's purpose for the converted, because that *one specific death* makes possible every aspect of our calling. And therefore, speaking on this subject within the realm of it being a suitable season for speaking on it, and that is that it is *always* in season for the subject of preaching on Jesus' death. And thus, the elements pertaining to our future, such as the true understanding of what life is about; for answered prayers in time of need; to salvation into God's Kingdom; to eternity and what lies within eternity that God desires for us to share (as Richard so visibly taught on the Day of Atonement).

Do not the Scriptures say that, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13)? That is what Jesus did. A proverb also says that there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

Death epitomizes perhaps the greatest of all things that Jesus gives us following life itself, and the power to enable choosing so that we can set our course to make life one of positive accomplishment. Without Christ's death, brethren, there is no future. Everything hinges on it.

Elements are in motion within our American culture, and in fact, even worldwide, that began long ago on a steady course of destructive ends that do not forecast that prosperous and happy times lie just ahead for the church. Actually, the opposite is far more likely to occur.

Now, I began this series of subjects that I am currently on because I was so impressed by verse 5 of John 15. I want you to turn there because I want you to be impressed by what Jesus said too.

**John 15:5** "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

Now, He does not mean that we could not just go out here on the road and build a house, or cut the grass, or whatever; He is talking about God's

purpose. And without Him, everything that God promises that He will give to us is a possibility.

He is the keystone of our salvation. He is the keystone of all the wonderful gifts that God wants to share with us in the Kingdom of God.

I want to read this again, “ *Without me, you can do nothing* .” Zilch, nada, zero! Brethren, we are either in Christ, or we are not in Christ. There is no middle ground. There will be nobody partially in and partially out, of God's Family. We are either truly Christian, or we are not, even as a woman is either pregnant, or she is not. To be in something is an expression of inclusion. One inclusion, one might say, is that they are in the Army. They might say they are in the band, or they are in the church, or they are in the family. “In” is an expression of a position within a space, a time, a circumstance, or spiritually in a Being. And thus to be in Christ is expressing an inclusion within what Christ is, or is in the process of doing, or will receive. Note especially, “or will receive.”

Now, previous to those two factors that I gave already, as to why I am giving this particular subject, a third element that truly impressed me was what the apostle Paul wrote about the qualifications of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1 and 2, when they are tightly tied together with what God revealed to King David in Psalm 2 and Psalm 8. What an awesome future lies before those who die in Christ. I do not want any of us to lose out, failing to share in those conclusions Paul wrote 2,000 years ago to impress the minds of the Jews who were converting, but had some sticky questions that needed true answers.

Adding to that is a fourth salient fact. I am no spring chicken. In about three weeks I will turn 88. And, recent family history tells me that except for one other direct male member of my grandfather Ritenbaugh's clan, has lived as long as I have, and he died just about five or six months ago. He was my favorite cousin. And like most men, I want to leave something behind of value to those that I love.

A fifth reason, and most certainly included in motivational factors, are the experiences that Evelyn and I are sharing as she is continuing to experience the loss of much of her memory. In other words, I am also being at least

partially motivated because I can see that the sands of time are draining from both of our lives.

Now some of these thoughts began drifting through my mind before Pentecost, and they somewhat led to parts of my Pentecost sermon in which I stressed the terms “admiration” and “appreciation” aimed toward perceiving Jesus Christ with an ever-stronger outward show of His importance for His labors of love in our behalf.

But a motivation was there, building even before Pentecost, to move me in that direction. A significant push was supplied when I read a portion of a small booklet published by World Net Daily in 2017. It was authored by a Baptist minister, and one of his concerns at the beginning of his booklet was because of the tragic decline of attendance of people in the United States claiming to be Christian.

He listed a number of book titles appearing for public reading with clever titles such as *Truth Decay* and *If God Disappears*. Those booklets chronicle the decline of personal righteousness, as well as the fact that major religious organizations are turning away from biblical doctrinal righteousness, and boldly proceeding into accepting the world standards.

Now remember that because this man's book was published in 2017, his latest statistical facts, therefore, are from around 2013 and even before. Therefore, they are at least seven years old.

But he reported at that time that 70% of children and teens in the Christian Church will leave it by the age of 22. That statistic was based on what was happening back in that period just before 2013.

Another statistic that he gave that is reported by one David Sanford, who was the author of that book, *If God Disappears*, that in 2008, based on an analysis published by the United States Census Bureau, that 31 million professing Christians had already left the Christian organizations, and by 2015 that figure had risen to 42 million. The figure as to when that was measured from was not given, but I got the impression that it was within about 25 years of that statistic.

One more statistical batch, and perhaps it will help you see that it is no mystery why American cities are burning, and there are so many murders going on. The Institute of Church Leadership, which is a group of men who are committed to somehow building and bolstering church leadership development, found that presently 2.7 million members (their statistic) fall into inactivity from Christianity in a year. This was about 2017. That would be about 3,500, who have declared themselves as Christian, departing each day!

You think there is not concern out there as to what is going on in the world? Why cities are burning? That is a lot of people.

Now, I want to go back to the book of Isaiah, which Richard read on the Day of Atonement, and I want to read just a brief part of Isaiah 1:1-9 again, to review with you of what God sees in the people that He has raised up and taught about Christianity, who had the Son, who gave His life so that we could live.

**Isaiah 1:1-3** The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider."

That is God's own estimate in Isaiah's day. Is it any different today than it was then? We are the same Israelitish people in the sense that we are descended from those who committed the sins, at the time of Isaiah. We have not changed one iota! God raises up people to teach, and He teaches them through His own servants. And then we constantly turn our back. That is the history of the Israelitish people, and most of you are Israelitish. We have a proclivity for doing what our ancestors did. Thirty-five hundred people a day, leaving the Christian Church in America with a population of about 320 million people.

One of those statistics which I did not read, but was in that little booklet, was that, would you not think that if 91 million people were running away from

your business, you would wonder why? That figure he was using at that time was 91 million people had departed from the Christian Church.

Now why am I giving this sermon? *There is no blood that has ever lived on earth that is more important than what you have covering your sins.*

Do you appreciate it? Do you joyfully rejoice that it is covering your sin? And what are you doing about developing the relationship that you have with the One who sacrificed His life? What do you think He feels like about people accepting His blood, and then turning away from it in order to have fun, or whatever it was? Was that “fun” for Him to go through that death?

Toward the end of this sermon, I am going to try to make you think about the way God looks upon that death. I do not think we will get to that this day.

**Isaiah 1:3-5** “The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? . . .

“What good,” God says, “is it going to give Me to give you another spanking? The previous one didn't do that much good. History tells us you will revolt.”

**Isaiah 1:5-9** . . . You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head [Let us honestly ask ourselves, “Are we any better today than those people were then?”], there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment. Your country is desolate [Now, here is one of the things that I really took note of when Richard read it on the Day of Atonement.], your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small



remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.

It was right about that same time that I gave that sermon (this was July 25th of this year) that I titled, *Five Easily Neglected Doctrines*. There was nothing difficult about any of those five subjects. They are basic to living by faith. But there is nothing of mind-bending importance in any of them, compared to what God spells out in Hebrews 1 and 2, combined with Psalms 2 and 8, of what lies ahead for us if we hang in there to the very end. What God spells out in those four chapters is mind bending, those four chapters in Hebrews and Psalms. But it became a certainty to me at that time that one cannot live by faith in Jesus Christ without keeping those five very basic doctrines.

I am going to give you those five again. There is nothing complex about any of them.

1): It is a certainty that *we* must labor to develop a relationship with Christ.

Now God calls, and we have no control whatever regarding that. But *we*, with the emphasis on *we*, must act on our calling.

Very simply, it is up to us. Nobody can do it for you—N O B O D Y.

2): Jesus cares about us continuously; rely on it; cry out to Him continuously; He understands our needs. And nobody—nobody!—can rely on Jesus through a third party. Just like the first doctrine, we have to do it ourselves.

3): The screws are definitely tightening on the church in the American culture. And those who are truly Christians are also truly becoming rarer, and more easily noticed and blamed for the world's faults. The American culture from the Pilgrims right on up to this day, is being blamed for all of America's ills. What a shame!

It has gotten so bad that even this world's false Christianity is being blamed, because people are so ignorant of the knowledge of God. True Christianity is gradually coming into the cross hairs. We are moving toward it. We are not there yet, but we are moving towards it.

4): God is indeed assembling His Family, and seemingly, one by one. He individually calls and is in absolute control of what is going on. He did not make a mistake regarding you and your calling. Do not make the mistake of neglecting your calling, because you do not feel as though you have the time for it. You may become a victim of sheer neglect.

I want you to turn back to Hebrews because this is the way chapter 2 begins. After giving chapter 1, Paul opens chapter 2 by saying:

**Hebrews 2:1** Therefore [because of all this wonderful information] we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

Notice: Drift away! That is what is happening to people in this world's Christian churches; they are drifting away!

**Hebrews 2:2-4** For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

5): (Maybe this will surprise you a little bit) Just as surely as God created Adam and Eve, we are not creating ourselves. Do you get that? We talk about creating character. Who is the Creator? Is it God or us? Answer that for yourself. We cannot leave this up to somebody else, either. The Bible clearly shows that God Himself is heading up the creative process. God is creating! He said to His Companion in the creation, "Let *Us* make man in our image." He not only created Adam and Eve, He is creating us in His image right now. It is not us. He is doing the creating.

Are you giving yourself over to Him so He can do that? Are you following the instructions that He gives us in His Word as to what He wants us to do so that we will be conformed to what He has created? *He does it*. We are not creators of anything spiritually, but we can follow what He tells us, the

exercises and so forth that He tells us we must do so. Let us get that one straight. God is Creator, not us.

Just a little bit of logic I will throw in right at this point, is that no man has ever seen God at any time in order to know precisely where God is headed, except as a generality.

What did Jesus do? “He declared Him,” is what it says in the English Bible. He has not handed the job off to anybody in the entire universe. Our responsibility is merely to respond to what He orders us to do.

Okay, brethren, that was my introduction. I am not kidding you. That is what it was. I have hardly said a word about blood yet, but it is coming; I certainly will not finish it today. In fact, I told Richard, alerted him that I may just stop rather abruptly, and go back to my seat, and we will call off services for this morning.

I want you to turn to I John, because I am going to continue a bit further.

**I John 5:6-9** This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

A key word in this is in verse six. It is the two-letter word “by,” where it says, “This is He who came BY water and blood.”

Now, understanding the Greek term within its context is helpful. “By” is not wrong as a translation, but it could perhaps better be translated into English as “through,” or “with.” And this is because the apostle John is describing what he was accompanied by with or when he did what he did during his ministry. And it is as though these elements—the water and the blood—were living witnesses of what He said and did.

The water refers to His baptism at the beginning of His ministry when He declared His purpose to fulfill all righteousness.

The blood refers to His bloody death on the stake to pay for the sins of the world.

These two are pointed out here as witnesses because they were significant occasions at the beginning of His work, setting His purpose. At the end, when He said “It is finished,” He had accomplished what He set out to do. And in a major way, each testified of His total immersion, of His devotion, and dedication to His labors of love on our behalf.

Now a witness is one who is usually associated by us with a court of law, or perhaps in news items reported in a newspaper or electronic broadcast. A witness is a person who sees or hears an event and tells others of what the person said or had seen or had heard—what the witness had seen or heard. They are a person who has evidence because they have personal, and usually, direct knowledge of something that has taken place. Thus, they are called upon to give an attestation, evidence, or proof of the event or events they saw or heard. Witnesses certify that something is true or false.

With that explanation, do you understand what I said there? The water of Jesus Christ’s baptism is called upon to give a testimony of what it saw, or heard. The same is true of the blood. But this is what I am going to be speaking on: the blood of Jesus Christ. What does the blood of Jesus Christ say within the Bible in the testimony that it gives regarding this One who died for our sins?

That is what is happening here. The apostle John is explaining that these objects—the water and the blood—are giving their testimony of what they witnessed of the life of Jesus Christ.

So what does the witness do? A witness certifies that something is true or false. That is what they are called upon in a trial to do. They are to certify—to testify—that something is true or false.

Now, as you can begin to see these events—these witnesses—are expressed as being much more than they might have appeared on the surface of everyday events. But these events were not just events, but because the Person at the center of these witnesses was the Creator God. And it was His blood that was shed.

Overall, what John is saying is that these witnesses agree as one. They are in perfect harmony with each other and they did this through His entire ministry. So their testimony is pretty substantial.

Another way of saying this is that they all converge upon one truth, or they all contribute to one and the same result, namely the truth that Jesus Christ, the Creator God, has come in the flesh, and that we, those listening to the witnesses, have life because of Him—not just any old life, but eternal life. Because of Him, the One person alive besides the Father, who can stand up and honestly and truthfully declare that, “You have life because of Me.” Another way of saying this is that they—all the witnesses—converge upon one truth, or they all contribute to one and the same result, namely, that the truth that Jesus Christ, the Creator God, is coming in the flesh; and that we, those listening to the witnesses, have life in Him.

In addition, these verses are written in such a way to give a reader of the Bible understanding that they, the witnesses—the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit—are (listen to this!) constantly bearing witness to us. It is almost as though God is saying, “I’m not going to let you forget what My Son did for you,” that is, to those of faith it is being said to.

The witnesses are always in the present tense for you and me. God does that because He will not let us forget the blood of His Son was shed, so that we can live.

Now, for the purposes of this sermon, we are going to be concentrating on the testimony of the witness of the blood. These verses say that blood is a teaching witness for God of Jesus Christ, His Son.

For quite a period of time during the historical period of sailing ships, Britain ruled the seas, even as America does today. But they were plying the waters

with sailing ships. And I remember reading once that there was a saying that if you found a hemp rope that had a red center cord, you knew the rope had been made by the British Navy because that red cord was their trademark identifying who had done the work.

In like manner, the Bible has a similarity to that. I know that you know that life is in the blood. And there is nobody more associated with life than God Himself, because He is life's author.

Now, Jesus said of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” But there are people who have seemingly counted just about everything in the Bible, looking for something that He did during His ministry. At any rate, doing so led to this saying that someone devised, that anywhere in the Bible that one looks, you will find a red ribbon, not a red cord, but a red ribbon running through it, from Genesis 4, all the way through Revelation. I read that somewhere once, and it stuck in my mind.

Figuratively, what this person was saying is, that if you cut the Bible anyplace, anywhere in the Book, it is going to bleed. Now, he did not mean literally. He meant that blood is that important to the movement of the story through the Bible, and even as our life is in the blood, it is as though the Bible is a living book filled with blood of all who died. And that figure, even if it is within the Bible, is a huge figure.

Listen to this figure that I am going to tell you that these researchers found regarding something that we just celebrated or observed. A great deal of sin has occurred, as we just saw a small witness of there in the book of Isaiah. But according to these researchers who did this research that I am going to give you, there are an astounding 427 times in the Scripture stated in a variety of ways that we have reference to *blood atonement*—remember that word—that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Without the shedding of blood, there is no covering, no blotting out of sins.

We sometimes say that if God says something once, it ought to be enough for us and we should obey. If He says something three times, that is fairly serious, because three indicates a finality. But if He says something seven

times, seven is the number of perfection, and is super, super serious. How about 427 times that in so many different ways blood covers sin? That is 61 times seven. That is impressive.

I think God does not want us to forget what His Son did as an act of love.

That is how many times God hammers it into our consciousness the seriousness of sin and its consequence—death. Death is the only means by which sin can be covered, paid for, atoned for.

Brethren, is God serious about sin or what? Death is not something we relish thinking about, but we must, and God forces it.