

## Occupy

Over the last several messages, we have reflected on the church and its mission—evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship. But the mission Christ gave was never left as an open-ended assignment. From the prophets, and especially from Daniel, rabbinical Judaism understood that history was moving toward a definite timetable: the restoration of David's kingdom through the Messiah.

So, when Christ ascended after giving the Great Commission, His disciples were asking if the kingdom was the very next event to expect. His reply was clear.

Acts 1:7,8 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Their calling was to bear witness to the ends of the earth. Yes, they were to build churches, but they were also assured that history had an end.

As He ascended into heaven, angels appeared to confirm it.

Acts 1:9-11 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, **why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen**

## **him go into heaven.**

From that moment, the New Testament letters urged the churches to carry out its mission faithfully. The apostle John was even given a vision of the future which was the last book of Scripture, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is not "Revelations," as though John were given many scattered visions, but rather the climactic unveiling of Christ in His second coming.

Through the centuries, believers wrestled with the length of this waiting. Some began to spiritualize Revelation, as if the church itself were setting up the kingdom indefinitely. In our own generation, with technology and geopolitics accelerating at a pace unseen before, we are confronted with how real and literal the scenes of Revelation truly are.

So today, having looked at the theology of the church, we turn the page to a new chapter. We move from Ecclesiology to Eschatology—the theology of the last things. We will see that just as the church's mission was clearly defined, so too is its conclusion. And the hope of every believer is this: the same Jesus who ascended is coming again in power and glory.

### **1. God's Current Timetable -**

The book of the Revelation is a book about the future, not just about the very end of the world, but the future from the perspective of the early church. When the apostle John wrote Christ's messages to the seven churches in Revelation 1-3, he was referencing the future leading up to the return of Christ. As believers read those three chapters, they probably wondered about exactly what those prophecies meant. We, however, have the benefit of looking *back* on church history and seeing how they have been fulfilled so far as ages of the church.

In the Ephesus era from 30-100 AD, churches were losing their love as heresies quickly set in.

In the Smyrna era from 100-300 AD, the churches went through a period of

persecutions.

In the Pergamos era from 300-450 AD, churches were compromised with the introduction of the seat of Satan.

In the Thyatira era from 450-1500 AD, churches labored under the burden of the Mystery Religions that were tolerated.

In the Sardis era from 1500-1700 AD, the state church that tried to be the universal church was then being broken up into smaller copies of itself.

In the Philadelphia era that followed. This was the church of the open door that no man could shut. They experienced great revivals, mission outreach exploded, as did church growth around the world.

The Laodicean era is next in line and marks a time that you would not expect. You would think that after the limitations were taken off churches in the previous age that we would just keep growing. Unfortunately, success is often followed by complacency. Churches are inhabited by people and with the complacency heresy and apostasy sets abounds and Satan gets ready to raise up his antichrist. We are blessed to know that Christ is ready to set all things right as only He can do as we are launched into the Millennial Kingdom and then eternity.

## 2. In the Mean Time...Occupy -

We have had about 2000 years of history. From a human standpoint where we live about 70 years or so, it seems like history is taking forever. There is an interesting parable that covers this problem. After giving the mission in Luke 19:10 that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, the Jews speculated that maybe this was the time that He was going to set up His kingdom.

A nobleman went to a distant country to receive royal authority and told his ten servants who had each been given a pound: "Occupy till I come." While he was gone, his citizens rejected him.

When the nobleman returned as king, he summoned the servants to settle accounts. The first two had invested and multiplied their sums — one tenfold, the

other fivefold — and were commended and promoted to rule over cities. The third servant, however, had hidden his pound and returned only the original, excusing himself out of fear of his master's harshness. The master condemned him for sloth and unbelief, took the pound away, and gave it to the one who had ten. Jesus closes with a warning based on the principle of increase, "to him that hath shall be given," and a judgment on those who openly rejected the ruler.

There will be a judgement in the final reckoning, but we want to focus on what we are to do now according to this parable. Jesus was going up to Jerusalem where He was about to be crucified and cautioned them to *occupy* until He *would* come in His kingdom.

Luke 19:11-13 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

The Greek word translated as *occupy* here is: to be occupied in anything or carry on a business.

There is no doubt as to what the Lord expects from each of us while He is away preparing to receive His kingdom. We are to be gainfully occupied in His service. Those who are faithful to work wisely and further that which has been entrusted to him will be rewarded in like manner in the future kingdom. Those who do not work for the name of Christ, and the furthering of His Gospel will also be rewarded according to what they do with what the Lord has given them.

We should also notice that we are talking of rewards and not salvation. Each one of the servants in this parable

were already servants of the master, no matter how they used the gifts of the master they were still his servants in the end. Each of us who are truly servants of the Lord Jesus Christ are indeed His servants and what we do here will not change that.

For us, what does the word *occupy* mean?

- To take up space Matt 25:23

This interpretation applies to those Christians who choose to simply get along on this path of Christianity rather than living the life to it's fullest. It applies to the last steward in the parable.

Luke 19:20-24 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds.

Rather than use what talents the Lord has given to His children, we hide them away as we wait for Christ to return. The response of Jesus to this wicked and slothful servant is very plain and direct.

Someone might come to your table at a conference and ask if the seat next to you is "occupied." Or, you might request a particular room at a hotel and be told that the room is already "occupied." We are not supposed to occupy until Jesus comes in that way. We are not just

squatters in the world who just exist with nothing invested. There are a lot of Christians who are doing nothing, but there are no Christians who have nothing to do.

Some people look at their job as something to put up with. They find as many things to dawdle over trying to kill the time. They are enduring, merely taking up space.

- To be employed

The next definition of occupy is *to be employed*.

Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a landowner who hires laborers at different hours of the day but pays them all the same wage. Those hired early agreed to work for a penny and labored through the heat, while others were called in the third, sixth, ninth, and even the eleventh hour; yet at evening the owner begins with the last and gives each the full agreed wage. The early workers grumble, thinking justice demands greater pay for longer toil, but the master replies that he has done them no wrong—he is free to be generous with his own resources.

Matt 20:8-14 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no

wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

One of the reasons this parable makes sense is not just that the employer is free to pay what they agreed to, but that our work in Christ is not done by our own effort.

Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

It is a wonderful thing to have an occupation and we will enjoy the same heaven that every other believer will enjoy in the end. We grumble and complain many times of having to work for a living, but in reality we are blessed to have the ability to work and provide a way of life for our families. We must first realize that we should be grateful to our employers who allow us the opportunity to work for them. After all, we did not force them to hire us. They found something in us that would help them about their business. The same is true in the business of the Lord. We did not force Jesus to hire us into his vineyard. He, in grace and mercy, found us in our time of need and hired us into His service by paying our sin debt. We often forget that little point, we are working for Him and not that Jesus is working for us. We place demands on the Lord as an ungrateful worker places demands on his employer. We forget the working conditions when we were enslaved to sin. We all work in the same harvest field and have the same loving Master. Let us be gainfully *occupied* in His service till He comes.

- To take up time, like a hobby that occupies our free time

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was asked the secret of his amazing Christian life. Booth answered, "I told the Lord that he could have all that there is of William Booth."

Nehemiah knew what it was to be fully occupied with the Lord's work. As cupbearer to King Artaxerxes he heard of Jerusalem's ruin and was so burdened he could not carry on his court duties. God moved both his heart and the king's, supplying Nehemiah with the desire and means to rebuild the city walls. Nothing stopped him — not the long journey, the size of the task, the people's laziness, the naysayers inside, or the accusers outside. He pressed on, wholly consumed by the call God had given him. God had placed the desire and the means for Nehemiah to rebuild the walls and Nehemiah would not let anything or anyone take him away from his job, he was completely occupied in the service of the Lord.

Phil 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,  
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

- Take or hold possession or control of

Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe, acting commander of the 101st Airborne at Bastogne during the German Ardennes offensive, famously replied "Nuts!" on December 22, 1944 when German envoys demanded the garrison's surrender. The curt, almost incredulous answer captured a spirit of stubborn defiance; surrounded, outnumbered, low on food and medicine, and enduring a brutal winter, McAuliffe refused to yield. His leadership helped stiffen his troops' morale, and the 101st held the town until General Patton's Third Army broke through and relieved Bastogne four days later.

We should stand and face the enemy, Satan, and not back down or give up one inch of ground. We do fight the fight. It is a war. Territory is not the prize, in this case, to be won, but rather the souls of man.

Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

1Pet 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

We also fight with our flesh, the natural man. We have to take control of the high ground of our heart.

Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

1Pet 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Our fight is also against the world:

1John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

### 3. Don't be misled -

The knowledge from the Bible that Jesus will return is very exciting, but it must be tempered with the sobering thought that we should focus on occupying until then. This was the message Paul preached to the Thessalonians because they thought they missed the Rapture. He affirmed that they had not missed it and that they should get back to work.

2Thess 2:1-4 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,  
2 That ye be not soon shaken in

mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first [**some think this is apostasy, but this is understood to be the rapture**], and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

2Thess 3:5-13 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and **into the patient waiting for Christ.**

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that **walketh disorderly**, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for **we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;**

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 **For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.**

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own

bread.

**13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.**

Those who are not believers might look at the last 2000 years not realizing that God has been gracious to mankind as world comes to its complete judgment. They might think that it doesn't matter, everything will just go on as it has. In another message to come we are going to take note of how things have been accelerating to the end and no one should be lulled into complacency. Peter warned about this attitude:

2Pet 3:3-10 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? **for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.**

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

**8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but **is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

**10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night;** in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the

elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

To those who do not yet know Christ: do not be complacent. The world spins on, but God's clock is not slow to love; it is long-suffering that men might repent. The Bible says we are sinners in need of a Savior. Christ died for sinners and rose again that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life. If you hear His call, come now. Turn from trusting yourself and trust Jesus alone. Come and confess your sin, believe in Christ, and begin to follow Him. Don't wait to be merely a spectator or to "occupy" a seat in the world. If you trust Christ as your Savior you will be seated in heavenly places and will be guaranteed a mansion in heaven to come.

2Cor 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

To those who already belong to Christ: be occupied with the work He gave us. The Lord told us, We are not called to take up space, to hide our talents, or to grumble at the vineyard. We are called to labor: to evangelize, disciple, and gather in faithful fellowship. Are you filling a pew or are you occupied with the business of the Lord. Use what the Master has entrusted to you. Serve, give, teach, go, pray, and stand firm against the enemy. Don't fall into complacency as if you have all the time in the world. Press toward the prize of God's calling. Don't let your heart be occupied with sin but let God take His place there.

Let us pray together: Lord Jesus, have mercy. For those who are lost, bring repentance and new life. For Your servants, rekindle zeal and make us faithful until You come. Amen.

Acts 1:7,8, Acts 1:9-11

1. God's Current Timetable
2. In the Mean Time...Occupy - Luke 19:11-13, Luke 19:20-24, Matt 20:8-14, Phil 2:13, Phil 3:13-14, Eph 6:12, 1Pet 5:8 , Rom 7:23, 1Pet 2:11, 1John 5:4
3. Don't be misled 2Thess 2:1-4, 2Thess 3:5-13, 2Pet 3:3-10, 2Cor 6:2