

Groundhog Day

By Matthew Lilley

It was Groundhog Day. February 2, 2007. The band Public Radio had come to our Friday night 6:22 meeting to lead worship. Earlier that day I had checked the news online and noticed that the groundhog did not see his shadow. According to German folk-lore this meant that the winter would be over soon. Immediately I thought of the Public Radio song "Close To You" which says

*Arise my love
Winter is over and gone
The time for dancing and singing has come*

This is based on Song of Solomon 2:10-14 where the bridegroom (Jesus) is calling the bride (the Church) into a new season.

I'll come back to the Groundhog Day story, but this bridal paradigm is important. The first time this concept is found in the New Testament is in Matthew 9. Jesus says that the bride will fast for the bridegroom when he is gone. The chapter continues

While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples.

Then when he arrived...

When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land.

This is an amazing story in itself, but I do not believe it was coincidence that it fell right after the first New Testament revelation of Jesus as the bridegroom! I believe God is trying to paint a picture for us of His slumbering bride. Many people believe the Church is dead, but Jesus sees it another way. He knows we are only asleep. He sees the dry bones as an army. (Ezekiel 37) When Jesus walks in the room He tells the people to "make room." Get out of the way and see what Jesus does! Get your pride, opinions, agendas, ego, doubt, complaints, criticism, judgment, confusion OUT OF THE WAY. Make room for the rising bride. We do this because we love Jesus. He said the reason we fast is because the bridegroom is gone. We fast for the return of Jesus. It is time to crave Jesus. It is time for an emphasis on fasting and prayer – that we would cry out for the return of Jesus. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'" (Revelation 22:17). In verse 26 of the Matthew 9 story, it says the news about the resurrection of this girl spread all over the region. When the bride of Christ arises – get ready! All will see and all will know!

Back to Groundhog Day. That evening before we started 6:22 the leaders were praying in the back and there were some prophetic words given that involved the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. In the story, the evil witch has Narnia in a spell where it is always winter but never Christmas. God was promising to us that night to break the cycle of perpetual “winter” in some people’s lives. He was also telling us that He would break the cycle of the Groundhog Day movie. (If you’ve ever seen the movie, the main character keeps waking up every day and it is the exact same day again – Groundhog Day.) When I heard these words come forth, I shared the fact that it was Groundhog Day and the groundhog did not see his shadow. No one even knew about it! God was obviously trying to speak to us clearly.

In the story of Narnia, Aslan is the lion who is symbolic of Jesus Christ. As Aslan returned to Narnia, the spell of winter began to be broken. The snow started melting. It is also significant that in Narnia it was never Christmas. Christmas is a day where the coming of Christ is celebrated. We give gifts to remind ourselves of the gift of Jesus to the earth. Jesus came to earth as a child thousands of years ago but it was only a shadow of His second return when He would finish what He started. He is coming again! We will have another reason to celebrate Christmas. I believe God is really bringing us into the last days where He is breaking off the spell of perpetual winter and no Christmas. Jesus is coming again! The ice is melting and things are thawing out. You can feel it in the air.

Just as Jesus’ first coming required some crazy forerunners, I believe His second coming will require even greater cooperation on the earth. He is looking for Nazirites like John the Baptist (Isaiah 40, Numbers 16, Luke 1:15-17, Malachi 4:5-6), Fasting Intercessors like Anna (Luke 2:36-38) and spiritual fathers and mothers like Joseph & Mary or Zacharias & Elizabeth (Luke 1:26-38). Will you help prepare the way?

It is interesting that the groundhog did not see his shadow. Remember that everything God has done up to this point has been a shadow of what is coming. When the shadow begins to fade then what is TRUE is here. We are moving out of the shadow season and into the season of reality. When the light shines and the shadow fades, that which is true is able to come. (Matthew 4:16, Isaiah 9:1-2, James 1:17)

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:17)

The phrase “shadow of death” is found in the Bible and is interesting when discussing shadows. Remember that a shadow is an illusion. It is not real! Peter Pan was fooled into chasing his own shadow. So the shadow of death is not truly death. It is the smoke and mirrors of the enemy trying to bring us into a place of discouragement and disillusionment. For those who see with the mind of Christ, we will not be fooled. Remember Jesus raising the young girl from the dead. He said “*The girl is not dead but asleep.*” Death is an illusion! As we walk through the “valley of the shadow” we can be assured that as we see the piles of bones, God sees an army of love and justice. He is just waiting for us to

prophesy to those bones. He is looking for those who see past circumstances and see beyond the physical realm into the things of the spirit. Where are those who will prophesy over the Church?

*Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me. See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.*

You are not dead, you are only sleeping!

Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!