



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Jewish People, Jesus Christ, and World History

Zechariah 12:1-14

"The Repentance and Conversion of Israel"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the opportunity that is again ours to study the Scriptures. We remember all of the things that is stated in Thy word concerning the power of the word of God and that it will not return unto Thee void but will accomplish that were unto Thou hast purposed it. And we thank Thee for the assurance of its sovereign power and that it will accomplish the purposes of our great triune God.

We thank Thee now for the portion to which we turn. We are grateful, Lord, for this magnificent revelation concerning the future. We thank Thee for the comfort that it gives us and for the hope as well. And Lord, we ask that as Thou hast promised throughout this age to teach us through the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Thyself and showing them unto us. We pray that Thou wilt accomplish Thy work in this hour and we make our prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Message] Returning to Zechariah chapter 12 tonight, this is the beginning of the second and last burden of the prophet in the latter part of this book. Remember, the book is very simply divided into a series of eight night visions and then a couple of chapters of primarily historical information, although there is prophetic truth there as well.

And then in chapter 9 through chapter 14 we have two rather lengthy burdens that the prophet gives us.

The first one taking us from chapter 9 through chapter 11, and then the second one from chapter 12 through chapter 14. And in chapter 12 we begin the consideration of the last of the burdens of this magnificent prophet, Zechariah, who wrote so fully near the end of the line of the prophets of the Old Testament. And so he relies upon Isaiah, he relies upon other parts of the word of God. He's a student of the Scriptures and then in addition is one to whom the Lord has given significant revelation.

The thing that he speaks about in this chapter is the repentance and conversion of the nation Israel, and so that is our topic tonight. It is one of the supreme miracles of history and it is portrayed here. And the national conversion, repentance and conversion of Israel is a repentance and conversion of Israel to the one whom we know as Jesus of Nazareth. The prophet, of course, speaks of him as Yahweh, or the Lord. And so we look forward on the basis of this chapter to the day when in a most touching scene reminiscent of the scene in which Joseph stands before his brethren and is so overcome when he sees Benjamin and hears the appeal that is given to him that he excuses himself and goes off into a private room and weeps aloud, so loud that the Egyptians and others hear him, and this scene is very reminiscent of that because Zechariah says that, "They shall look unto Yahweh whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Down through the years and this issue is still before us today, Israel has sought to divert the charge that Christians have made that they have been guilty of the crucifixion of the Messiah who is also the Lord. And so they have thought of themselves as being accused by the Christian church of deicide. That is, the murder of God. And so all along through the years they have sought to show that that charge is not valid.

Now of course many Christians have set this forth in a very, I think, a very one-sided way. They've laid stress upon the fact that Israel was guilty of the murder of the Messiah who is the Lord God, Jesus Christ, and they have forgotten to say along with it that the Gentiles were guilty as well. And in fact the whole human race is guilty of the crucifixion of the Lord, Jesus Christ. So they've probably, in some cases, over stressed Israel's responsibilities over against gentile responsibility. But nevertheless, Israel has sought to show that they didn't have any responsibility for the death of our Lord.

Oh, ten or fifteen years ago one of the leading legal authorities in the land of Israel, in fact one of the men who was the chief judge in Israel, wrote an article in the law review that was published in Israel to show that in reality the San Hedron did not want Jesus Christ put to death, that they actually tried to prevent him from being put to death. And there were a number of reasons that were offered but there was very little ground for what he was saying, but primarily he was saying that the reason that our Lord was put to death was that in spite of the attempt of the San Hedron to call in witnesses who would testify to the fact that he didn't deserve to be put to death, no one could be found and so he was put to death over really the objections of the San Hedron. And he suggested that the reason that the San Hedron was interested in our Lord not being put to death is because they thought that by doing that they would gain some favor with the people because Jesus was so highly regarded by the common people of the day.

So Israel even in the highest circles of Judaism has sought to disown any responsibility for the death of our Lord. But this passage is one of the passages which plainly sets forth in the Old Testament the fact that Israel has responsibility because there can hardly be any doubt that the person who is said here to be me is the one who has been giving this revelation and that is, of course, Yahweh. And it is he who is pierced through, and it is for him that they mourn when they look upon him who they have pierced and come to the realization of what they have done.

There is an interesting book written a few years back by Arthur W. Kac, it's called the Spiritual Dilemma of the Jewish People. A new edition of it was issued last year, it's published by Baker incidentally and it's a very easy to read book and I think you would enjoy it because I think Mr. Kac is a very intelligent Jewish man and he is interested in Israel, he's a Christian man, a Christian Jew. He has written on the essence of present day Judaism, how did Judaism reach its present state, preparing the way for Israel's redemption, and he discusses the events from AD 70 down to modern times in this new edition of the work published last year. I had read the first one and enjoyed it very much but when I saw there was a new edition I looked at it carefully to see if he'd added anything and he's not only added sections to chapters but an entirely new chapter and so I bought it and I was reading part of it this afternoon. Speaking about the American Jewish community he says only six percent of American Jews identify themselves as Orthodox, while sixty-two percent describe them as conservative or reformed Jews, and thirty-two percent are considered secular Jews. Incidentally this is the result of a survey that was conducted by the Jewish intellectual magazine that I have referred to from time to time commentary. Only fifty-one percent of the Jews are affiliated with a synagogue.

I think Gentiles get the idea that all Jews are affiliated with the synagogue and at least they have an outward form of religion. But as you can see, it's not true. Twenty-two percent light Sabbath candles regularly, fifteen percent observe the dietary laws, two different sets of dishes of meat and dairy products, what we know as kosher principals. Five percent abstain from shopping and working on the Sabbath. In other words, ninety-five percent of them break the ancient Sabbath law constantly. Ask what predominant form of Jewish education their children had received, are receiving, or will receive, the respondents gave the following replies; twelve percent none, nine percent Bar Mitzvah instruction, eighteen percent Sunday school instruction, forty percent Hebrew school education, seven percent yeshiva Talmudic school and day school attendance, and incidentally reveal that there is a decline in Hebrew school attendance. They don't attend

the weekly Sabbath services and you might think, well the Israeli community they would be much more active religiously but even though in Israel we have the second largest Jewish community these were the findings. Forty-five percent of Israeli Jews consider themselves as non-religious, or secular. Slightly more than half of the respondents identified themselves as religious Jews, but only twenty-four point two percent regularly attend the weekly Sabbath services. Jews born in Israel are less religious and exposure to Israeli society lowers the level of religiosity. So we should remember that Israel really is largely a secular people today, just like the Gentiles, for that matter.

Well coming to our passage the first burden, chapters 9 through 11, emphasize the destruction of gentile world power. This one from chapter 12 through chapter 14 stresses the deliverance and transformation of the nation Israel, until finally in the last two verses of chapter 14 we have a situation described in which there is a return to the Lord God,

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts."

Well I want to spend most of the time on the key section, verse 10 and following, but let me say just a few words about the passages that, or the verses that, precede in verses 1 through 9.

Zechariah describes in the first three verses a conflict over the city of Jerusalem. And you'll notice that he locates it again in the Messianic days. He says in verse 3, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone." And in case you wonder what that day is, if you will turn to chapter 14, in verse 1, he identifies it as the day of the Lord, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee."

So that's the time when the promises set out in the Scriptures shall reach their climax and fulfillment in the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he will be very general in these verses, in chapter 14 he will be very specific. Well that's proper to begin with the general and move to the specific, and that is precisely what he does. But he describes the conflict now over Jerusalem in verse 1 through verse 3,

"The burden of the LORD for Israel," (or the word of the Lord for Israel), "saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."

You notice how he seeks to encourage the readers and those who heard the prophecy by pointing out that the one who is making this promise is a person who can fulfill the promises because he is described as the Lord and saith the Lord and then he is said to be the one who stretches forth the heavens who lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him. In other words, he's the creator of the universe and he also is responsible for the origin of man. So he's the creator of the universe, he's the creator of man, and thus you can be sure that the words that he utters will be fulfilled.

He describes Jerusalem as being, "A cup of trembling unto all the people round about." The Hebrew says simply, "A goblet of staggering." And of course the force of it is to show that the nations will greedily take the cup and they will hope to drink the cup in the figure of overthrowing Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem, but they will discover that what they've really got is a Bloody Mary of the worst kind. And they will discover that when they try to overthrow Jerusalem and Judah it will be something that they have never

imagined could come to pass. Jerusalem will be a cup of trembling unto all the people about when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and Jerusalem. And then in the third verse he says, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone."

Now, the burdensome stone is a reference to a weight-lifting stone. All of us have seen the Olympics and have seen the weight lifting and we've seen these gigantic men with all that fat and see them labor and struggle over the weights in order to lift four or five hundred pounds, or whatever it may be, and you cannot help but think if you've ever had a hernia how is it possible for these fellows to do that without being filled with hernias [Laughter]. Well you look at it and you say, "This is a rupturing, dislocating kind of thing that they are fooling with." And I'm sure that that happens. Well that's the precise point of the Hebrew word here, "In that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone," and it was a stone that was used for weight-lifting.

So Judah and Jerusalem are going to be a rupturing, dislocating stone for the Gentiles as they seek to take the city. Then in verse 4 through verse 9 he describes the conquest of the Gentiles, or the nations. Divine deliverance turns the enemy to madden riders on madden steeds while God's eye is upon his own. Marvelous these figures that I used.

"In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness," (so he is saying he's going to destroy those who seek to destroy Israel but at the same time his eye of protective care and concern is going to be upon Israel). "And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem," (incidentally

some of the commentators see in this passage, we don't have time to deal with the particular reasons pro and con, see in this that in the last days for a time Jerusalem is actually at odds with the rest of Judah but that they finally are united in these last days and some even see in these verses an evidence of that fact. Verse 7 continues). "The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God," (isn't that interesting, speaking of the way in which God is going to stand behind the Davidic throne and bring to fulfillment the promises of the Davidic Covenant in that day). "And the house of David shall be as God, and the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

When you read a passage like this I think you can see that the prophets believed in the fulfillment of these events in history. There's an old story which I've liked ever since I first read it of a Jewish man who was talking with a Christian, and he was a Christian minister actually. And taking the New Testament and opening it at Luke chapter 1, verse 32, the Jew asked, "Do you believe that what is here written shall literally be accomplished? 'The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.'" And the Christian minister said, "I do not, but I rather take it to be figurative language, descriptive of Christ's spiritual reign over the church." Well then the Jew said, somewhat triumphantly, "Neither do I believe literally the words preceding which say that this Son of David should be born of a virgin, but I'll just take them to be merely a figurative manner of describing the remarkable character for purity of him who is the subject of the prophecy." But then the Jew went on to say, "But why do you refuse to believe literally verses 32 and 33 about the Davidic throne and

reigning over the house of David forever? And that his kingdom will not have an end and yet at the same time you believe, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." The Christian minister fell into the trap, he said, "Well I believe that first statement because it's a fact." And the Jewish fella with an inexpressible air of scorn and triumph said, "You believe Scripture because it's a fact, I believe Scripture because it's the word of God." And in that little exchange the Jew got the best of the Christian minister.

When we read these things in the Book of Zechariah you get the distinct impression that Zechariah expects these things to be fulfilled in history. Robert Louis Stevenson, some of you may not know, was a person who grew up in relationship to the word of God and in his latter days he, according to a missionary friend, had a very, very clear understanding of the prophecies of the word of God and a great deal of kindly contempt for so many people who did not believe that they would be fulfilled. Mr. Whitmee, a missionary friend of Mr. Stevenson's, who knew the author during his last days when he was living in Samoa, speaks about him and quotes something that he has written. Mr. Stevenson has reported to have said, "I cannot understand how you theologians and preachers can apply to the church or multiplicity of church's Scripture promises, which, in their plain meaning apply to God's chosen people, Israel, and to Palestine; and which consequently must still be future. The prophetic books are full of teachings which, if they are interpreted literally, would be inspiring, and a magnificent assurance of a great and glorious future; but which, as they are spiritualized, become farcical...and applied to the church they are a comedy." And the missionary went on to say, "From his belief in the prophetic books of the Old Testament the teaching of Christ and the apocalyptic portions of the New Testament he," (that is Robert Louis Stevenson), "possessed the fullest and clearest conception of the second coming of Christ and of the establishment of his kingdom upon earth of all the men that I then knew." That's an interesting statement coming from a missionary on that island.

Now having said that, we're going to turn to verse 10 and here the prophet says, and he's giving, now, words from Yahweh, this is a word from the Lord, this is the burden of the message that the Lord has given him.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Beneath the robes of religion, Israel has had a barren, unfeeling heart of stone. Why should the Lord God wish to destroy her enemies?, someone might ask. Look at Israel, look at the things that I just read tonight. Look at the condition of the nation, look at the condition of the nation down through the centuries. Why should God wish to do something for this nation? That's a reasonable, I think, and a sensible question. Why would they be singled out for special attention in the light of their history? They are guilty of the crucifixion of our Lord, Gentiles too. But they are guilty. And they have had a great and glorious history having been given the revelation of the word of God. And now after so many centuries of unbelief and departure from the Lord and they are largely a hardened people, just like Gentiles let's not forget that, why should God have this glorious future for them? Well one cannot understand that anymore than you can understand your own salvation. Why should he save you? You don't have anything with which to commend yourself to the Lord. You spent your life in rebellion against him until the Holy Spirit worked in your heart. You do not have any good works, any sense of love for God naturally, any responsiveness of obedience to the word of God. None of that comes naturally to you. And every work that you have produced upon which God may say that is a good work, it has proceeded out of the enablement and power of our

God in heaven. As Hosea says right in the last chapter, remember, "From me is Thy fruit found."

And we have all destroyed ourselves spiritually because of lack of knowledge of divine things. But look at verse 10, you will see first of all that this is the divine initiative that acts, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace." In other words, the divine initiative to the accompaniment of the Hallelujahs of Abraham and Moses and the prophets will accomplish this tremendous change in the nation Israel. It's God who will do it. It's God who will do it in sovereign grace.

And I cannot help but think that this is the most touching scene, this will be the most touching scene in all of human history when Jacob, I'm using the term in which it's used in the Old Testament, when Jacob finds his Lord. And they look upon him whom they've pierced and mourn for him. If Joseph wept aloud when he thought of the wrong that had been done to him and now he is going to be reconciled to his brethren. If he was so stirred over it, remember it's the same term that was used of the Lord God in Hosea chapter 11, where his heart was kindled together over his brother here in the future Israel responding in a work of divine grace will look unto him whom they've pierced and mourn for him.

Now we read here, "I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication," and if you are a student of the doctrines of the word of God you would see right here that there is no gracious thought, no act approved by God, ever originates in the free will of unregenerate man. The prophets warn, the prophets plead, but no one will respond until God through sovereign grace works in the hearts of men. God prevails. "I will pour", "they will look", I don't see how in reading the Scriptures you cannot see that in almost all of the pages in the Bible.

I knew one great Bible teacher who used to say he could find the resurrection on every page of the Bible. I often wondered how he could do it. Well I'm not sure you can

find the resurrection on every page of the Bible. Now of course he used the resurrection in the broad sense of God bringing life out of death and of course it is true on many of the pages of the Bible that is found. But I think you can find, if you will just observe the Scriptures carefully, you will find the working of divine grace all through the Scriptures from the beginning in the Book of Genesis chapter 3 on through the end of the divine revelation in the Book of Revelation. And I think it's true, no gracious thought, no act ever originates in the free will of unregenerate man. Do you know why? Because if our wills are free to act apart from divine grace they will never act favorably to God.

People often think that if you have a doctrine of the bondage of the will then how can you give an invitation to everybody? On the first place we give an invitation to everybody because God has commended us to give an invitation, it's very plain. Even if I didn't understand all of these things I would give the invitation. But I contend that the giving of an invitation by Calvinists, strike that. Now those who believe in sovereign grace is the only kind of invitation in which one may have any confidence for the simple reason that no one will respond to any invitation until God works in prevenient grace.

What's the use of giving an invitation of whosoever will to whosoever wants. Everyone will not respond. It's like rushing out to the cemetery and say arise from the dead if you will. It's an impossibility. But we believe in sovereign grace and we believe that God does work through the word of God and he works in his own sovereign way and through the work he will cause some people to rise up when the word of God is preached. He's not going to do everybody, he has his own divine elective program. How can you read the Bible and miss that? That puzzles me. Well it doesn't puzzle me, I know how sinful we are. How blind we are. And I also know how easy it is for us to become entangled in human reason.

And I also know, as Thomas Erskine used to like to say that Arminianism is - or rather he would start with Calvinism. He would say Calvinism is a sheep in wolf's clothing, but Arminianism is a wolf in sheep's clothing. So anyway you can see here is

efficacious grace, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look." Now it says, "They shall look unto me," and if you'll go back in this context and look carefully at the 'me' you will discover it's Jehovah or Yahweh or the Lord God. So, "They will look unto me." I think that Thomas's experiences are parallel, "They shall look unto me."

Some years ago I read an interesting story about an Englishman and he was walking around with Harold Wildish who was a wonderful evangelist among the brethren in Jamaica. And you know, whenever I go to Canada, I usually go up there a couple times a year and preach in Toronto, there are lots of black people that come to the meetings of the assemblies there. But when you begin to talk with them they have English accents, and many of them have been converted through Mr. Wildish who died about ten or fifteen years ago.

Mr. Wildish was a wonderful Bible teacher and a fine evangelist and I was in several conferences with him as a fellow speaker with him and he did a tremendous work in that land over a lengthy period of time. And many of those Jamaicans have been converted through his ministry. And you can go up to them and say, "Did you know Mr. Wildish?" "Yes, he's the one that led me to the Lord." They're scattered everywhere but particularly in Toronto, there are a lot of them up there.

Mr. Wildish told a story once of, it was recorded in a book of biblical illustrations about walking over the fields with an Englishman who was an old farmer, he said he was a fine man, had a cheerful face and twinkling eyes. He was proud of his land, he kept pointing out the cows and crops, and suddenly he said he turned to me and he said, "You know, I was saved by my good looks." And Mr. Wildish laughed and he said, "Well you've got to tell me how you were saved by your good looks." He said, "Well it was like this," he said, "you know, you can see my farm and my cattle and everything else," he said, "an evangelist came to town some years ago and asked if he could use my barn. And I wasn't using it at the time and so I agreed to let him use the barn and after he had

been using it for a few days my wife said to me, 'Why don't you go down and take a look and see what's happening down in the barn, you haven't been down there.'" And so he thought, well I'll go down there and look at the barn. And so when he got down there, he went in, the said the barn was full of people, they were singing heartily. As the singing finished the preacher gave out his first text as Isaiah chapter 45, verse 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

He told Mr. Wildish that he talked about the cross, he talked about the blood that was shed, he caused me to look at Christ hanging on the cross, and caused me to understand what was transpired. And he said, "I looked to Jesus on the cross and I proved for myself the truth of that saying, 'Look unto me and be ye saved.'" He said, "But then he turned to another verse and the next verse was Hebrews 12:2, 'Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'" And so he pictured a risen savior, able to save unto the uttermost, those that come unto God by him. And he said, "I'll learn to look to Jesus on the throne for all of my daily needs in my Christian life." And finally the old man went on, "Before the preacher closed his talk that night he gave us one more wonderful verse in Titus 2:13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.'" And he said, "What a thrill it was to hear about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and I learned to look for the second coming of the Lord Jesus." He said, when the farmer finished, Mr. Wildish said, "I just put my arms around him and I said, 'Bravo, that's wonderful, now I understand how you were saved by your very good looks,' looking into the face of Jesus and tasting of his great salvation."

I saw that story in a book of biblical illustrations so shortly after I was with Mr. Wildish in a meeting and so I went up to him and said, "Mr. Wildish, is that a true story that I read?" and I told him something about it. He said, "Yes, it's a true story." He said, "The man's name was Mr. Wyatt and he lived near Chichester in Sussex and he was

marvelously converted and he was the one who really told me, 'I was saved by my good looks.'"

Well, Israel shall be converted in the last day by a good look too. "They shall look unto me and they will realize that they have pierced me and they shall mourn for me." This settles the question of the national guilt of Israel. They themselves will acknowledge their guilt. They will confess that they are guilty of the crucifixion of the Messiah and I'm sure that in the final days those who do look and are converted they will say, "Yes, we are guilty in a sense of deicide." "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son."

Many attempts have been made by Jewish people to avoid this so obvious text. It's interesting to read them. Some say this is a reference to historical character who lived about 150 to 200 years before the time of our Lord. Strikingly even John Calvin felt that this was a text used metaphorically. That the text is not really a text that speaks of Jesus, of Messiah, and that Israel has crucified him, but rather that Israel's disobedience is like that. Shame on John Calvin, he knows better now, of course [Laughter].

I have a book of Jewish interpretations of passages like this and in this book they seek to explain it this way, they shall look unto me because they, the nations, the nations, the Gentiles, because they have thrust him through. But the him is not Yahweh, the him is Messiah ben Joseph. Now Jews believed in two messiahs; Messiah ben David, Messiah ben Joseph. And Messiah ben Joseph is the suffering messiah who dies. Messiah ben David is the one who will reign on the throne, that's one way they sought to harmonize these passages that speak of a suffering messiah and a glorious messiah who shall rule and reign forever. And so they thought that there must be two messiahs; Messiah ben David, Messiah ben Joseph.

So they shall look upon me because they, the Gentiles, the nations, have thrust him, Messiah ben Joseph, through. But there isn't a thing in this context about Messiah ben Joseph. You look at the antecedents of these words and 'I' is Yahweh in the context

and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, is Yahweh. If you'll look at the Hebrew text that expression, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced," that whom is a very emphatic expression designed to carefully and clearly identify the one who is called me. It's the one whom they have pierced. Et asher is designed to lay stress upon that. And as I say, when you turn to the New Testament what do we read in the New Testament?

Well if I don't expect a Jewish man to follow this interpretation but I would expect a believing member of the Christian church to follow it. When our Lord Jesus is hanging on the cross as John is describing the scene in John chapter 19 one of the soldiers with a spear pierces his side and forthwith it comes out blood and water. And John says in chapter 19, and verse 35,

"And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

And isn't it also interesting that in two other passages in the New Testament this passage from Zechariah is cited, Mathew chapter 24, Revelation chapter 1, and again this text in both of those places is referred to our Lord Jesus Christ. So the apostles, Matthew, John, identify the one who is the me whom they have pierced as the Lord Jesus Christ. He died a real death, it was a Messianic death.

Now read, "They shall mourn for him," this is the soft mellow fruit of the Holy Spirit. It fixes its eye upon the wrong that is done to the Lord and looking upon him the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to see what they have really done. Alas, and did my savior bleed and did my sovereign die, would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I! They will understand as perhaps as no other group of people have ever understood.

It's interesting to take a look at Isaiah 52:13 in the light of this, 52:13 through 53:12, that great Messianic passage. The characteristic thing about that passage is that the verbs of the first nine verses of the 53rd chapter are in the past tense. In other words it is the reflection of a group of people in the future who look back upon what they have done in the past. Now you wouldn't get that from the Authorized Version but I'm happy to say that most of the more modern versions have made that correction, the New American Standard Bible. And what it becomes in Isaiah 52 and 53 is a penitential confession on the part of the Nation Israel, which they will make in the future of how they misunderstood the message that came to them. How they rebelled against the Lord God, and how they put him to death.

It has been suggested, and it may well be true, that when they mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and are in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for the first born, the thing that they will say then will be Isaiah chapter 52:13 through chapter 53, and verse 12. Oh for such tenderness of heart to realize how we have wronged our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How can one have such tenderness of heart? Well it arises from a divine operation. Only God can make the stony heart like wax. Only God can melt the icebergs of the soul.

Bunyan has some good words somewhere, I'm not sure I can find them on the spur of the moment. But he comments about the fact that this is something that must be done by the Lord God, it is something wrought by faith, look at the pierced Son of God. There is an old Puritan who used to say, "Look at the cross, till everything on the cross is in your heart." That's why we stress the necessity of meditating upon the death of our Lord. That's one of the greatest benefits that comes from observing the Lord's Supper every week. It is characteristic in my experience, it is characteristic of people who observe the Lord's Supper. I'm talking about believing Christians, of course, I'm not talking about the Roman Catholic Church and its Mass. Although in some ways they too have a depth that many Protestants don't have.

But I have observed people who observe the Lord's Supper Sunday after Sunday. And I'm not talking about legalistic things. That is, missing a Sunday. That's to be expected. But as a general practice sit at the Lord's table and reflect upon the bread and the wine and the significance of it. There is a deepening in the spiritual life given by God the Holy Spirit that you cannot find anywhere else. It's one of the great benefits conferred by the Holy Spirit upon those who observe the Lord's Supper.

You know, the old reform teachers used to say that sanctification comes from the word of God and from the ordinances. Well they had hit upon something. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a sanctifying ordinance and the experience of sitting at the Lord's table and reflecting upon what Christ has done is deepening because ultimately the whole of the Christian faith goes back to the blood and the body of our Lord given for us on the cross. And that tenderness of heart is seen in the mourning for sin of an intense kind. One of the old preachers said, "Eyes have been given to us for two purposes; one, to see with and second, to weep with." And this is using the eyes for weeping.

May the Holy Spirit help us to understand the significance of that and we look forward to the day when Israel and this magnificent experience produced by God the Holy Spirit shall recognize their Lord and see what they have done and weep. May God help us to look unto him constantly and may the repentance, that constant repentance, that we need to have be our experience as Christians. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent words from the prophets of the Old Testament. We can understand why these words have been preserved for centuries. We see how significant they are, how they minister to us. Oh God, give us by Thy grace, a constantly repenting heart. And give us not only dedication but perseverance and dedication in looking into the Scriptures and meditating upon our Lord Jesus Christ and in serving him while we have the opportunity. We thank Thee for this time together. In Jesus' name. Amen.