



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 19:28-7

“Death of the Son in History, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning tonight to John chapter 19 and verse 28 through verse 37, for the subject of “The Death of the Son in History.” We are studying the theology of the Apostle John, and we are taking up certain subjects that John discusses in his writings and last week we studied “The Death of the Son in Prophecy,” and dealt with two or three of the passages in which the Apostle John refers to the coming death of our Lord. And now we're going to look at the passage in which John records the death of our Lord, and then the Lord willing, next week we will take up points two and three of our outline, and deal with the death of Christ, as seen in the epistle. But, nevertheless, it will be “The Death of the Son in History.” John gives us a most full and revealing account of the death of Christ in the nineteenth chapter of his gospel, but he also gives us some theological interpretations of the death in his first epistle, so next week we'll look at the first epistle. Tonight in our time of study, we will look at the account of the death in the nineteen. So if you have found John chapter 19 and verse 28, let me begin reading there and I will read through verse 37.

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith; I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled

a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said; it is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit. The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and immediately came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bore witness, and his witness 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 who they pierced.”

It must have been a moment of supreme spiritual joy when the Lord Jesus Christ finished his work. The greater the care and labor that we expend upon a work, the greater is the sense of joy when that work is accomplished, and upon no work of man was there ever more care, and more labor expended, than in the work of the atonement by the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, back in the fourth chapter he says that, “he works, and the Father works.” In the fifth chapter, in the seventh chapter, in the tenth chapter, in the fourteenth chapter, in the fifteenth chapter, all of these chapters, he comments upon what he is attempting to do. In the seventeenth chapter he finally, speaking, because he knows the accomplishment of it will take place says, “I have finished the work that Thou didst give me to do.”

One can imagine, for example, a poet such as Dante completing one of his great works like “The Divine Comedy” or Milton’s “Paradise Lost.” And just imagine the poets after they have spent a great deal of time in the study of the subject that they’re going to write about and then have spent many years in the development of skills, finally finishing

their works, and being able to write “finis” at the end of them. It must have been a tremendous experience on the part of many of the poets who have been able to do just such a thing. Or think about Columbus in the discovery of the United States of America, think of the many, many months and years that he spent in raising the money to make the trip. Then think of the many months that they spent on the water having to deal with mutinous soldiers and then, finally, when his eyes resting upon the peak of Darien, you can imagine the joy that filled Columbus when he realized that the work was now accomplished.

Well, the Lord Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross finally, as the conclusion of this magnificent work, comes to its end upon the earth, cries out, “It is finished,” and it is doubtful that anyone could ever understand the joy that he himself had at that time. Now, we turn to this nineteenth chapter then to study Christ’s death in the Gospel of John, and our text is John 19, verse 28, and following. The twenty-eighth verse begins, “After these things,” or “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith; I thirst.” That word or expression, “after this,” is lengthy enough to include the interval of darkness and silence which continued for three hours. Remember, the Lord Jesus was on the cross for six hours, from what we would call six in the morning until twelve and then from nine in the morning until twelve, I’m sorry, and then from twelve until three. At twelve o’clock, remember, everything became dark and the Lord Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And then for three hours, there was darkness over the face of the earth, and reading here John writes, “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith; I thirst.” Now this statement then, comprehends those three hours that he spent in darkness. It refers to sequence, but indefinite sequence.

What is meant by the statement, “All things were now accomplished?” Well it’s likely that what is meant by this is the details of his redeeming work, necessarily limited, of course, by the one detail that is not yet fulfilled, which is now to be mentioned. That’s

the thirst of Jesus. That's a most interesting statement, “I thirst,” because we tend to read this as if it has only to do with the physical side of our Lord's life and ministry. “I thirst.” Well because he was spending so many hours on the cross and, of course, from the bodily standpoint that is likely to be true, but in view of the fact that just previous to this he has said, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” and that is a text that has to do with his spiritual death, it's likely that this “I thirst” is not only a statement that refers to the physical but also to the spiritual. In other words, the experience of the separation from God and the experience of the judgment of God is an experience that produces a physical response.

One of the reasons that we rather think that this is so is because David when he committed his great sin, remember, did not confess it for a year, and he describes his feelings in words that are very similar to this. In Psalm 32, is the description of David's feelings as he gives it after his sin. He says, “Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” So the statement here, “I thirst,” on the part of our Lord, is not simply a physical statement, but probably is an expression of the fact that the fires of divine judgment were working in his spirit and this produced the feeling of “I thirst.”

Now, we read in verse 21, “Now there was,” verse 29, “Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar.” That was the sour wine that was drunk by the people in the land of Palestine, particularly the workmen every day. “Full of vinegar. And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon a hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had finished the vinegar he said; it is finished.” You know, at one time in our Lord's crucifixion, he refused to take strong drink, wine mingled with strong drink. The reasons why we have him drinking the sour wine here and not drinking it earlier in his time on the Cross is simply that when the wine was mixed with the gall, it was designed to be a stupefying kind of thing. It was supposed to dull his senses in order that he could bear the pain better. Well our Lord refused that because, of course, he would bear the pain to

its fullest. But then when it came to near the end of his sufferings, when he needed strengthening, then he did take the sour wine in order to remain with his senses in full command of his senses, so he would experience to the full the sufferings of the Cross. And this is why in the accounts that apparent contradiction is found in our English text, “When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar he said; it is finished.” Now, having finished then the *pasca* or the sour wine that the workers drank he said, “It is finished.”

Now, in this thirtieth verse, we have the third of John’s statements that our Lord made on the Cross. He said above, “Woman, behold thy son,” and then he said to the disciple, “Behold, thy mother.” Then he said, “I thirst.” And now, here is the third one, “It is finished.” This triumphant cry is a triumphant cry that has dogmatic significance. It’s not the “last gasp of a worn out life,” as Arthur Pink has put it. He does not say, “I am finished,” but he says, “It is finished.”

J.H. Bernard, who has written a two-volume commentary on the Greek text of the Gospel of John, says, *Totelestai* for that’s the Greek expression for, “It is finished.” *Totelestai* is not a cry of relief that all is over. It’s a shout of victory. According to the synoptics, this utterance was made with a loud shout, so our Lord cried out with a loud voice, *totelestai*, and it was spoken, no doubt, in order to advertise the victory that he was accomplishing. This wine was taken to enable him to speak and to speak in this loud voice with his parched throat.” Now he says that, “It is finished,” and what a majestic word that “It is finished” is. It was so majestic. It is the thing that impressed the centurion more than anything else, and Mark tells us that in the light of what our Lord had suffered, and in the light of this almost final cry that our Lord uttered, he said, “Truly, this was the Son of God.”

But what is meant by “It is finished?” Now, a great deal of discussion has taken place over this. Some have pointed out that we have here in the context, a reference to the prophecies. For example, in verse 28, “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished.” That, by the way, is the same word in the original text. “All things

were finished.” They’ve suggested, since that’s a reference to the prophecies in their mind that this too must be a reference to the prophecies, and so it probably could be rendered to get the meaning over, “They are finished”; that is, all the prophecies of the Old Testament that pointed forward to the coming of the redeemer. They have reached their fulfillment in the death of the Son of God. The whole prophetic image of all of the passages now has reached its climax in the death of the Son.

Others have seen this as a reference simply to his passion or simply to his sufferings. “It is finished”; that is, “My sufferings are over.” Of course, in verse 28, we read, “Knowing that all things were now accomplished,” and it would seem that it’s probably best not to limit the statement to some aspect of the things that were happening. Still others and probably the great majority of the interpreters have said, “The absence of any definite subject forces the reader to call up each work that was now brought to an end.” And it appears to me that this is probably what our Lord means. When he says, “It is finished,” he means all of those things that have to do with the accomplishment of the redemption of men. “It is finished. The redemption of men, man is finished; all that I’ve come to do, I’ve come to finish the work that the Father gave me to do and the climax of it is the death. For it’s upon the basis of the death that the children of God receive their sonship and their membership in the family of God.” So “It is finished” is probably a reference to the full extent of the atoning ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, before we look on, will you notice those last words of verse 30, “And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” That participle “to bow the head,” is an active participle. “He bowed his head.” Literally, it’s “Having bowed his head, he gave up the ghost,” but it’s active. Now that’s strange, isn’t it? “He bowed his head.” Even in death our Lord is the master of his destiny. As we have often pointed out in Believers Chapel, the Lord Jesus does not die like men die. When men give up the spirit, they give up the spirit first, and then their head falls, but in our Lord’s case, he bows his head and then gives up the spirit. In all of the descriptions of the death of our Lord, stress is laid upon

the voluntary character of our Lord's death, and it's beautifully seen here. “He bowed his head, and then he gave up the ghost.” We give up the spirit then bow the head. There's one other rather interesting thing about this. This expression, “to bow the head,” is an expression that does occur elsewhere. It means “to lay the head down,” to bow the head in that sense, and in two places it occurs with reference to our Lord. He's the speaker. He says, “The Son of Man.”

Well let's turn to one of the passages. Matthew chapter 8 in verse 20. The other passage is the parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke chapter 9 in verse 58. But Matthew chapter 8 in verse 20, reads this way, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” Two times in the parallel account the Lord says, well, one time he says it, two times it's recorded, “The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” The only place that he can lay his head is upon a cross, in effect. In other words, we have vividly presented to us in the use of this expression the fact that our Lord had no rest whatsoever until finally, he rested in the death of Calvary's cross having accomplished redemption.

Well, the curtain might have seemed to have fallen on unrelieved tragedy, but there is more to be said about the death and now in verse 31 through verse 34, we read of the soldiers and the spear. “The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation that the body should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear, pierced his side, and immediately came there out blood and water.” Now, John is going to describe a further indignity, deriving from it some additional evidence of the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Now, first of all, he comments on the soldiers and the spear. Now, he said it was Friday, the day of preparation. That was a doubly important day because it coincided

with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a great day, so when the Passover occurred at the same time; that is, when the Sabbath was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in addition to being a Sabbath day, it was a great day. Isn't it striking here that we read the Jews insisted that the body should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day, because that Sabbath was a high day, “and they besought Pilate that the legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

Now, I'll tell you why I find this so striking. Here are Jewish people who are very, very scrupulous about the fulfillment of the Law of Moses. They are so anxious that the Law of Moses be not broken and that those bodies not be on the cross when the Sabbath begins at sundown that they beseech Pilate to have the legs broken in order that the bodies might be taken down from cross and placed in a grave before the Sabbath begins because that would defile land according to the teaching of the Old Testament. So here are Jewish individuals so scrupulous, so anxious to fulfill the Law, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel while at the same time in something that is almost hideously ironic, they are actually crucifying the Messiah, through whom the whole Law of Moses and all of the blessings of God have come to them. Isn't that an amazing thing? So anxious to fulfill the little details of the law that they've lost the total picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, Moses is vindicated, but Moses' antitype is humiliated.

Well, we also read here of the custom of the *crurifragium*. “And the soldiers do come, and they break the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ.” Usually, the breaking of the legs did not, of course, produce death, but it did produce gangrene, and death was usually the result of that. This custom of the breaking of the legs was performed by means of heavy blows from an iron mallet; very, very cruel form of torture which, ultimately, led to death, but did not itself kill. In the thirty-fourth verse, John describes the piercing of the side; traditionally, by a centurion whose name was Longinus, probably because the Greek word for spear is the word *logche*, and *longinus* is the Latin equivalent, and so that is the traditional name that was

given with him. So we read that, “His side was pierced, and immediately there came out blood and water.”

What’s the explanation of that, the coming out of the blood and water? The significance of it has been debated a good bit, and the doctors who practice differ as much in their explanations of the physical phenomena as the doctors who preach over the spiritual meaning. It probably is to be traced to water around the pericardium. Some, however, have suggested that the reason we have blood and water is because the resurrection had already begun, and that accounts for the fact that not simply blood came out but blood and water. Still others have suggested that the Lord Jesus Christ really died of a broken heart. Both of these explanations are inadequate it seems to me. The Lord Jesus did not die of a broken heart. One might say, “He died of a broken heart in a figurative sense perhaps,” but not in the true sense. He died a violent death as a sacrifice. That’s the death that he died. From the natural standpoint, these elements come from the pericardium, but what is the meaning of “forthwith there came out blood and water.”

Well, we know that the Apostle John was probably anxious to refute some of the Docetics. The Docetics, who were not too prominent at this time, but did become very prominent in the early Church and in its history after the time of the gospels, believed that the Lord Jesus Christ was really a divine being who only appeared to be a human being. And there were various forms which the Docetic heresy took, but it was generally believed that Jesus Christ did not possess a true human nature. And so some think and there seems to be some support for this that John had in mind that kind of false teaching, and he wanted to point out that the Lord Jesus had a true human nature. He understood, of course, if the Lord Jesus did not have a true human nature, he could not be our substitute; could not be our sacrifice. He had to be one of us in order to be qualified to die for us, just as much as he has to be one with God, in order that he may lay his hand upon God, in order that his sacrifice may have the infinite value sufficient to cover sins of those who have infinite guilt. So it’s perhaps possible that John had that in mind when he

wrote, “Forthwith there came out blood and water.” He wanted to stress the fact that he had a true human body.

In his first epistle, in the fourth chapter, and in the second and third verses he comments upon this too and the significance of the incarnation. In the fifth chapter and the sixth verse of his first epistle, he does too. Irenaeus, who wrote in the second century and was a pupil of Polycarp, who also heard the Apostle John, saw in this the evidence of his true humanity as well. I think that perhaps there is more to it than that though. In fact, it seems to me that the evidence of John’s anti-docetic tendencies is not nearly so strong in the Gospel as some tend to think, but I’m prepared to grant that there is some. On the other hand, notice what John says in connection with it. He says in the thirty-fourth verse that, “One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and immediately there came out blood and water.” But he adds, “And he that saw it bore witness, and his witness is true; and he knoweth that he saith true that ye might believe.” Now, it seems to me that that’s a very important statement, “that you might believe.” In other words, he said, “I’ve described this event, in order that you might believe.” Well, the belief is just as absolute as it can be expressed. He says, “That you may believe,” or “that you also may believe.”

And, further, this belief is the intended issue of the signs of the Gospel, is it not? Doesn’t John say in the twentieth chapter, “Many other signs truly did Jesus than these that I’ve described in this book, but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through his name.” So the signs were given that men might believe. It appears to me that it’s likely in the light of this statement, “I’ve written this that you might believe,” that he regards this as something of a sign. He regards this as something of a miraculous sign that in the piercing of his side, there should come out blood and water.

Now, not so much in the physical fact that there should come out blood and water but John tends to see symbolism in the things that happen. He gives us the signs, and

then he speaks about the symbolism represented by the signs. For example, in the sixth chapter he will give us the great discourse on Christ as the bread of life, but he's thinking well, at first of all, he gives us the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and they are given bread. Then the Lord gives the sermon on the bread of life. In other words, we are to look beyond the miraculous feeding of the five thousand by the physical bread, to the sense in which our Lord is the spiritual bread of life. So in the signs that John records in his Gospel, we are to go beyond the physical, to the spiritual sense that lies back of them. When he turns the water into wine, we're not simply to think of this as being a miracle, but it's a miracle with spiritual significance. When Lazarus is raised from the dead, we're not simply to think that Christ is all-powerful, but rather, as he himself says to Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." In other words, the miracles are designed to be pictures of spiritual truth.

Now, if that is true, and if John says, "I've recorded this that you might believe," we may be justified in seeing some spiritual truth here in the fact that when the soldier pierced his side, there came out blood and water, well what might that be? Well, of course, I think, that it's clear that he intends this to be understood as a miracle, and he intends it to be understood, I think, perhaps in a symbolic way. Notice what follows. They are following messianic citations. Verse 36, "These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken." Do you remember that text? Well that's a text from Exodus chapter 12, in connection with the Passover lamb. In effect, John is saying, "He's the Passover lamb." And then in verse 37, "And again another Scripture saith; They shall look on him whom they pierced." Do you remember that? Well that comes from Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, where Zechariah describes the second advent of the Messiah.

So it would appear that what John is saying is that when the Roman centurion pierced his side and there came out blood and water that that has spiritual significance. It

was something that had to do with the messianic ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died a real death. That's true because he had a real human nature, but it had messianic significance, and one aspect of it is that he's the Passover lamb. And then, the fact that it is blood and water is interesting. I'm just going to make this as a suggestion because I don't know that one can prove this. I suggest to you that the blood and the water are designed to represent the twin streams of remission of sins through the shedding of blood and regeneration by the washing of water. Now, the blood suggestive of the covering of the guilt, for without shedding of blood there is no remission, and the water suggestive of the cleansing that flows from regeneration, as Paul puts it in Titus chapter 3 in verse 5, when he talks about the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. And in fact, in John chapter 3, we have, “He that is born of water and spirit.” So the idea of deliverance from the penalty of sin and deliverance from the filth of sin is found in the blood and in the water, and it appears to me in the light of what John says in the other aspects of his writing that that's what he's talking about.

Now, we sing a hymn written by Isaac Watts, in which Isaac Watts has drawn upon this. He has a stanza in that hymn that reads, “My Savior's pierced side, poured out a double flood. By water we are purified and pardoned by the blood.” I think that's exactly what John intends for us to understand. The soldier pierced his side, and there came out blood and water. That itself is a sign of messianic significance; the water and the blood. He is the Messiah, and he performs a two-fold work. He washes with the water of regeneration, and he also covers the guilt of sin by the blood that was shed. Now John says in verse 35, “And he that saw it bore witness, and his witness is true.” He's talking about himself there.

Now, he concludes the section then with two texts from Scripture and I've already referred to them, but I'd like to notice particularly this last one. After we read in verse 36, “For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken.” That's just John's way of saying, “He's the Messiah,” in the sense that he is

the Lamb of God referred to in the Exodus account. He’s the Passover lamb. But now in verse 37, “They shall look on him whom they pierced.” And that, of course, is a reference to Zechariah chapter 12 in verse 10 and verse 14. I don’t know whether you remember this or not, but this text Zechariah 12, verse 10, which goes something like this. Perhaps it would be good for us to turn to that passage so you can see it for yourselves, so turn with me to the Book of Zechariah chapter 12 in verse 10. We’ll have a brief intermission while you find the Book of Zechariah. You can use your index, of course.

Zechariah chapter 12 in verse 10. This is one of the great texts of the Old Testament on the doctrine of the effectual grace of God and the salvation of individuals. Notice, the tenth verse, now Zechariah.

“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 mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first born.” Then in the fourteenth verse we read. “All the families that remain, every family apart and their wives apart.”

So what Zechariah says is that in connection with the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes, “He will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look onto be whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.” Now, you can just see the operation of the effectual grace of God through the Holy Spirit. The spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon Israel as our Lord comes. Their eyes are illumined. They look upon him whom they have pierced. They realize, by the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit that he is the Messiah after all; the one whom they’ve crucified. And then they mourn in repentance over what they have done as a nation; hundreds, thousands of years

previously. What they will say is told us in Isaiah chapter 53, for that is the song of mourning that they will give out at the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, notice the statement, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” Now that statement occurs in three places in the New Testament at least, and I’d like for you to turn now to Matthew chapter 24, for the first. We’ll just do it in the order of the books in which they occur. Matthew chapter 24. I think I put the Scripture here. It’s Matthew 24 in verse 30. Now, the description is given in the Olivet Discourse here of the second advent of our Lord and we read verse 29, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Now notice, “They shall look upon him whom they pierced and they shall mourn.” Matthew describes the mourning as taking place at the Second Advent, so the mourning found in that prophecy is going to take place at the second advent.

Now, the Johannine account that we are just reading is a description of our Lord hanging upon the Cross, the soldiers piercing his side, and John says in the light of that historic event of the soldiers piercing his side, “Again another Scripture saith,” verse 37, John chapter 19, “They shall look on him whom they pierced.” Now, what aspect of the prophecy is stressed here? “They shall look upon him whom they pierced, and they shall mourn.” The mourning is stressed by the description in Matthew 24. Well, here is an account in which the piercing is described, and so that’s the thing that is stressed here. “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced.” But now, the piercing occurs at which advent? The First Advent or the Second Advent? Well, the piercing occurs at the First Advent. Anybody knows that. We’re just reading the account. So the piercing occurs at the First Advent. The mourning, Matthew tells us, occurs at the Second Advent. When does the “looking” occur? Well, of course, in one sense, “They shall look upon him

whom they have pierced,” is true of the first advent, for John says, “We looked at him. We saw the soldiers pierce his side.” But the thing he’s stressing there is not the looking. The thing he’s stressing is the piercing.

There is a text in the Bible in which this prophecy is found and there the stress clearly rests upon the looking, and it’s Revelation chapter 1. And I’ll ask you to turn there if you will to Revelation chapter 1 in verse 4, and we just read a few verses beginning with Revelation 1, verse 4. And while you’re finding it, I’ll begin with the fourth verse.

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia; grace be unto you, and peace from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

That’s a reference to his first coming, of course.

“And hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

So in this text, John cites the passage again from Zechariah, and he says he’s going to come with clouds, and we’re going to look at him. As he says here, “All the tribes of the earth shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” So the piercing occurred at the first coming. The wailing and the looking upon him, as one who has been pierced, will be a world-wide experience that will take place at his second coming. So in the application of these prophecies from the

Old Testament, you can see that John the Apostle has recognized that that prophecy from Zechariah chapter 12, verse 10, records two things; piercing, and then the looking and the wailing; three things I guess we should say. Piercing and the looking and the wailing, but we know now that almost two thousand years separates the piercing and the looking and the wailing. But in John, he’s stressing, of course, the piercing.

Well, let me just sum up what I’d like to say in connection with this because next week we want to, the Lord willing, take up the 1 John 2:1 and 2 and 4:10 passage. What shall we say then about the relationship of this account to the atonement? Well, first of all, as Calvin comments on the, “It is finished,” he says, “Now this word of Christ is most memorable, for it teaches us that the whole accomplishment of our salvation and all parts of it are contained in his death.” When our Lord said, “It is finished,” he was saying in effect that atonement is accomplished by my death. Now Calvin also suggests that there may be an implied antithesis between his death, and the ancient sacrifices, and all the figures of the Old Testament. In other words, not only was the atonement accomplished by our Lord in his death, but the Law was utterly impotent to accomplish atonement. That is a biblical truth, and John does, in more than one place, stress the fact that while the Law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Law could command us and make demands of us, but it is only grace that gives us the free salvation, and enables us to please the Lord in our life.

So the first thing that this statement, “It is finished” testifies to is that the whole accomplishment of our salvation is in our Lord’s death. A second thing that appears from this account is the voluntary nature of our Lord’s death. He delivered over his spirit. “He bowed his head, and he gave up the ghost.” Now that is the uniform testimony of all of the accounts of our Lord’s death. He died in voluntary fashion. There’s one other thing that I’d like to mention. J. H. Bernard, to whom I made reference earlier, has a very interesting suggestion, which, I think, is worth pondering. He suggests that the statement, “When Jesus therefore received the vinegar he said; It is finished. And he bowed his

head, and he handed over his spirit,” may be an illusion to the statement made in Isaiah 53, in the last verse of that great chapter on the suffering servant because there we read in Isaiah 53:12, “because he has poured out his soul to death.” That statement is very similar to this statement, “He gave over his spirit.” And, of course, it’s a giving over of his spirit to his death. And also, the Greek translation of Isaiah 53, says, “he handed over unto death, his spirit,” which is very close to, “He bowed his head, and he handed over his spirit.”

So the fact that the wording is very close to the wording of Isaiah 53, these descriptions of our Lord’s death led Bernard to say and he did not have any fundamentalist kind of viewpoints to grind, he said, “It appears that John here, is telling us that he regards the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as the Passover sacrifice, but also as the suffering servant of Jehovah.” And if it is true that this is designed to be an illusion to Isaiah 53:12, and he’s really the suffering servant of Jehovah, then we can add some other things to what he says about his death, because the suffering servant of Jehovah is said to die a death of an expiatory character; that is, his death is the death that covers sin. He pours out his blood as a covering for sin, so his death is expiatory. And, further, it was substitutionary, for over and over in Isaiah 53, the suffering servant of Jehovah is said to die a substitutionary death. So if by this statement, John is suggesting that he regards the Lord Jesus as the suffering servant of Jehovah, then we can say, “Not only is the suffering servant of Jehovah the one who accomplishes the atonement, all of it, not only is his death voluntary, but his death is a penal substitutionary death. It’s an outpoured life to cover the penalty of sin, and it is an outpoured life in the place, and in the stead of the people of God. So his death in that case is atoning, it’s voluntary, it’s penal, in the sense that he bears the penalty of sin, and it’s substitutionary. He takes the place of the saints of God so that the saints of God do not have to bear the judgment of their sin.

Well, is there anything else in this gospel that might suggest that John the Apostle regarded the Lord Jesus Christ as the suffering servant of Jehovah, as described in Isaiah

53? Well, if you'll turn back to chapter 12, for a moment as we close, I'd like to remind you again of the verses that John writes after he's presented the seven signs. He says in verse 37, "But though," John 12, now, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. That they saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke; Lord who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Why that's a citation from Isaiah 53. That's a citation about the suffering servant of Jehovah, and John says that the unbelief of the nation Israel is the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the suffering servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53. In other words, he identifies our Lord with the one of whom Isaiah speaks in chapter 53. In that case, John's treatment of the death of our Lord in John chapter 19, is an expression of a death that is redeeming, atoning. It's voluntary. It's penal. It's substitutionary. These are the things that John sets forth concerning the death of Christ. It's through this death that we have redemption.

If you are tonight, in possession of the redemption that the Lord has accomplished through his saving work on the cross, well it is because he has done it all. Our salvation is not based upon things that we do. It is based entirely upon what he has done, and when he said, "It is finished," he meant that he had accomplished it all. And even the faith by which we believe, we learn from other Scriptures is itself, the gift of God. So that we truly say, do we not, salvation is of the Lord. Isn't it wonderful to be able to say that? I never, frankly, I never get over the thrill of being able to say, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the proclamation of Thy word. We thank Thee for the Apostle John, who so faithfully presented to us the testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for this great utterance, "It is finished." We rejoice in what it has meant to us, and we rejoice in what it must have meant to our Lord. We look forward to the full accomplishment of all of the redeeming

work and its influences. We look forward to that day when he shall come, and men shall look upon him who has been pierced for sinners, and we look forward to the mourning; the mourning of repentance for the nation that is born again in a day. Go with us now.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.