



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“The Second Coming of Jesus Christ”

We are coming to the study of the second coming of Jesus Christ, and we’re turning for our Scripture reading to Zechariah chapter 14 verses 1-7. Zechariah chapter 14 verses 1-7. The prophet writes,

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”

Evidently, that last clause means that while half of the city shall go off into captivity, the other half shall remain in the city—a kind of remnant.

“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the

west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.”

The Tribulation, which we have called one of the monster subjects of the Bible, is followed by an even larger one, the doctrine of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. One commentator, in writing about the Second Advent has said that the most dramatic event in all history will be the visible appearing of Jesus Christ, and that is probably true. We certainly can say it is the most prophesied even in the Bible. There is no other even of holy Scripture that has so much of the divine revelation given to it as the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. And as you know, it was one of the subjects that the apostles particularly taught and emphasized.

Just today I was reading the passage in 2 Peter chapter 1, in which the apostle writes about the Second Advent in the light of the Transfiguration. He says in the 16th verse of 2 Peter chapter 1, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty, for he received from the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased,’ and this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him on the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until a day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts.”

Now you can see that Peter is exhorting his readers here with reference to the second coming, and he has said that we have told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus. We have also made known unto you the fact that the Transfiguration was a kind of fore-view of that Second Advent, for it is the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, and as a result of the Second Advent, we have the word of prophecy made more sure. Those prophecies of the Old Testament which were only prophecies before the time of the Transfiguration are now seen to be prophecies that have their fulfillment, for on the Mount of Transfiguration, we received an anticipation of that kingdom of our Lord Jesus. So, in the Second Advent that inaugurates it. So the word of prophecy has been made more sure.

And then he goes on to draw the natural application of it. If it is true that the great prophecies concerning the Second Advent are so certain a fulfillment that we have even anticipated them in the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration, then we can be so certain that they will come to pass that we ought to give heed to them as to a light that shineth in a dark place.

He goes to say that, “For, no prophecy of Scripture came at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” So these prophecies of the Old Testament, of which the preeminent one is the coming of our Lord Jesus, are prophecies that are given by men who were moved of the Holy Spirit. So Peter stresses here that we should pay particular attention to the passages of the word of God that deal with the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

Regardless of what we may say about the rapture of the church, all would agree that the great focus of the prophetic word is the Second Advent in judgment. The rapture is said in Scripture to be a kind of mystery or secret. But this is a public manifestation of the Lord Jesus.

One, the rapture is private, but this one is the public coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth. The rapture occurs in which we are caught up in the air, so it occurs relative to the air above us, but the Second Advent is an advent in which the Lord Jesus comes to the earth. One of these, the

rapture, is for deliverance. But the Second Advent is for the destruction and judgment of the rebellious upon the face of the earth and in the time of the future.

Griffith Thomas, in one of his books, *The Principles of Theology*, refers to a stranger who takes in his hand an Old Testament and begins to read it without any understanding of the Scriptures. He says that as he begins to understand how to read the Scriptures, that when he comes to the 3rd chapter of the Book of Genesis, he notices the promise of the Messianic king that is to come. And so he begins to notice these prophecies as he reads through the Old Testament, and these prophecies build up one upon the other, so that there are many of these prophecies. And finally, when he comes to the end of the Old Testament, Mr. Thomas says he has learned that it is a book of unfulfilled promises.

He said then he goes back and begins to read over again, and this time, instead of noticing all the promises with which he is now acquainted, he notices the ceremonies which are contained in the Old Testament, particularly the ceremonies of the Book of Leviticus, and all of those ceremonies in which offerings and sacrifices are made. He notices the priesthood and things like that.

As he reads on through the Old Testament, he notices the gathering revelation concerning these things, and finally, having finished his second reading of the Old Testament, Dr. Thomas says he has learned that the Old Testament is a book of unexplained ceremonies.

And he starts over again, Dr. Thomas says, and this time he notices the longings of the men of the Old Testament for the power and presence of God. He notices particularly the expressions of aspiration on the part of the psalmists and the prophets, and when he finished the third reading, he discovers that the Old Testament is a book of unsatisfied longings.

Then someone gives him a New Testament, and on the very first page of the New Testament, he runs across the expression, “that it might be fulfilled.” It’s almost as if the Old Testament and the New Testament are so bound together that the very first question of the New Testament, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” is related to the preeminent teaching of the Old Testament. So the stranger, as he reads the New Testament, learns that the promises are

fulfilled in the New Testament. Those ceremonies find their fulfillment in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and the longings of the Old Testament men are met and realized in this individual who comes as Savior and who will come again a second time as king.

So it is a remarkable thing that the Old Testament and the New Testament fit so beautifully together, and these two comings, the first and the second coming, are the great events of biblical prophecy, and I do think it is fair to say that the greatest focus of the prophetic word is the culmination of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. It may seem strange to many that the Second Advent should be the culmination, because it is a coming in judgment, whereas the first coming of the Lord Jesus is a coming in mercy.

I’m persuaded, I’m very much persuaded, that we do not understand, basically, the mood and disposition of our Lord Jesus or of the saints of the Old and New Testaments. I have said often to you, of course, that the modern man today likes to think of God as a God of love, and a God of mercy, and they do not like to think of God as a God of judgment, as a God of destruction, as a God of catastrophe. But I am quite sure that if you had grown up in the home of Joseph and the home of Mary, you would have better understood these things of the Scriptures which have to do with the judgment of God, because I think you can find that note in the life of Joseph and Mary.

In fact, I like to think – and I believe I’m right – I think that while there was a great deal of tenderness, a great deal of love, a great deal of appreciation for the grace and mercy of God in the family of our Lord, I am sure there was also a note of fierceness there, and also a note of astringency, and that we do not really understand our Lord, or the New Testament apostles or the Old Testament prophets until we have that note deep down in our hearts.

Let me read you something that Mary said in the *Magnificat*, and I think you’ll see something of the astringency, some of the fierceness that existed in our home in which our Lord was brought up. We read in the *Magnificat*, Mary of course in the Spirit expresses these things which are derived from the Scriptures almost entirely; they are words taken from the Scriptures which she had evidently read and pondered and had come to know so well that they were part of her. She says in praise of

God, “He hath shown strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” Now, people today would say, you’re being a little too tough if you were to say things like that. “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things”—now isn’t that a sweet thought? But then she says—“And the right he hath sent empty away. He hath helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to his fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.”

So you can notice, even in the *Magnificat*, this note of praise of the love and mercy of God, but also praise of the justice and righteousness and holiness and judgment of God, and that he executes his fierce thunderbolts of judgment upon the rebellious. That note is there, too. That is, of course, what we find preeminently in the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

There are three great passages which set forth the Second Advent in great detail, and these are the three that we want to look at for the remainder of our time. The first is the 14th chapter of Zechariah, the passage we have read in which we find the description of the final battle around the city of Jerusalem, and the blessed event of the advent of the Lord Jesus.

Now that title I have, blessed event, is not too good, because “blessed event” we associate with the birth of an infant, and I should have put there the battle and the advent. But nevertheless, that’s what’s there, and what I mean is the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus to the earth.

It’s an interesting thing, I think, to study the interpretations of the men who have written commentaries on the Old Testament, particularly in the light of these prophecies of the Second Advent. One of the great commentators on the Book of Zechariah is a man who does not believe in a future, literal Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. C. H. H. Wright has 100 pages in his volume – it’s a large volume – on the eschatology of the Book of Zechariah. And his 100 pages are really not an explanation of the eschatology of the Book of Zechariah, but actually an explaining away of the eschatology of the Book of Zechariah.

He has a phantomizing method of interpretation, by which he moves the literal sense of all of these prophecies by saying things like, why, if these prophecies were fulfilled, there would have to

be great topographical changes in the city of Jerusalem and in the area round about, and such a thing is absolutely inconceivable, and so we must spiritualize the prophecies of the Book of Zechariah.

It seems to me that what we have here is a kind of ignorance of the prophetic word that one may compare with the ignorance of the word of God in the days of our Lord. For remember, when our Lord came in his First Advent, the readers of the Old Testament, such as the scribes and the Pharisees, as they read the Old Testament, they noticed in their reading that there were prophecies of the sufferings and the glories of the Messiah. But for some reason, they overlooked entirely the sufferings of the Messiah, and concentrated their attention on the glories of Messiah.

I think the reason for that is that they did not have any sense of their own sin, and because they did not have any sense of their sin, they were not looking for an expiation of their sin, and consequently the idea of a suffering Messiah seemed to have no relevance to them, just as men today do not find any relevance in a crucified Christ. They do not see any relationship between the crucifixion and their need of expiation. And consequently, the sufferings of Christ make no sense to them.

I’ve been conducting a home Bible class, teaching the Book of Galatians, and in this particular Epistle, it’s startling how the apostle so relates everything to the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and in the first two chapters, you’ll remember he finally reaches the end of the 2nd chapter and says, “If righteousness should come by the law, then Christ has died in vain.” His point is simply this: if it were possible for men to have salvation by virtue of what they do, then there is no point in the sacrifice of Christ. And of course, that’s what we find. We find today, in the Protestant church, men preaching a kind of salvation which has no relationship to a crucified Messiah.

Now if we could be righteous by what we do, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice has no significance. That’s the greatest blunder that has ever been committed, because it has been committed by God, because he allowed the Son of God to be crucified, if that has no relationship to our salvation.

Now when the Lord Jesus came at his first advent, the scribes and the Pharisees, they read the passages that you and I read. They knew about these passages in which the sufferings had been

set forth. But since they had no relevance to them, they thought – they were confused about them, misunderstood them, and finally just passed them by – there were some who saw them, and so they manufactured a doctrine of two Messiahs. Messiah Ben-Joseph and a Messiah Ben-David, [where] Messiah Ben-Joseph is the suffering Messiah and Messiah Ben-David is a reigning Messiah. So they tried to put them together, but not having any sense of their sin, not having any sense of need of expiation, not having any sense of need of the forgiveness of sins, they didn’t appreciate the sufferings of Christ. They loved the passages that had to do with the glories, but the sufferings they practically omitted.

Now what do we have? We have a large body of genuine Christians who are greatly impressed by the passages that have to do with sufferings, and they talk a great deal about the death of Christ, but being amillennialists, and not taking the Scriptures of the Old Testament in normal fashion, they tell us there’s not going to be any kingdom of God upon the earth. These great glorious passages, or passages of glory, are not going to be fulfilled. So they’re making the same kind of error that the Jews made, except that it’s over a different subject. The Jews were in error over the sufferings; they are in error over the glories.

So you see, to put it together, we must put together both the sufferings and the glories, for the sufferings have to do primarily with the First Advent, when the redemption is accomplished. The glories have to do with the future when he comes to carry out the judgment that is to rest upon the Gentiles and rejecting Jews in order that he might establish that for which it all pointed, the kingdom of God upon the earth. So, when we come to Zechariah chapter 14, we are to take these things as being literally fulfilled.

Now, this passage here presupposes a number of things about which we have been talking about. It presupposes that Israel has been regathered in the land in unbelief. In Ezekiel chapter 37 verse 1 through verse 14, we have one of the great prophecies of the Old Testament in which Israel’s regathering in the land in unbelief is set before us. David Ben-Gurion, in 1948, just before announcing the official establishment of the State of Israel, read Ezekiel chapter 37 verse 1 through

verse 14 and pronounced that it was fulfilled. What was striking about his statement, that it is fulfilled, is that in the 8th verse we read, “And I when I beheld, lo, the sinews, and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them.” So what he is talking about here is a regathering into the land, but a regathering in unbelief. But Ben-Gurion, of course, did not notice that.

Now this passage presupposes the gathering of Israel in unbelief in the land. It presupposes the rise of a world ruler, as we’ve been talking about in our messages on the Tribulation. It presupposes the covenant that anti-Christ makes with Israel at the beginning of the 70th Week. It presupposes the breaking of the covenant which occurs in the middle of the Week, when the [indistinct], according to Daniel 9:27. It presupposes the Great Tribulation, the period of the last half of the 70th Week. It presupposes the struggle of the kings of the earth for power, which ultimately will rest in the hands of one man who will be a world ruler – the anti-Christ or the Beast – which is set forth for us in Daniel chapter 11 verse 36 and following. It presupposes a great coalition against the city of Jerusalem, and presupposes the apparent victory of the Beast as his armies are gathered around the city of Jerusalem; the situation is apparently hopeless for those who are within the city.

And now we read the battle, the story of the battle in verses 1 and 2, “Behold, the Day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle”—this is the Battle of Armageddon—“and the cities shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished,” and so on. So, plunder, rape, captivity for all but a remnant. It is all accomplished. The city is practically destroyed, and the situation is hopeless, until we read in verse 3, “Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle.”

Now this coming, which is referred to here, is a coming which is also referred to in Acts chapter 1 verse 11. Remember in Acts chapter 1 verse 11, at the ascension of the Lord Jesus we read, “While they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in

white apparel, who also said, ‘Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.’”

Now you would think this prophecy which is made here as our Lord went up and which is repeated in a section of the Book of Acts which is an historical book in which we have literal events described throughout, you would think that to the writer of this that it would not be a very startling thing to read in the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus was going to come again a second time, and his feet are going to be planted upon the Mount of Olives.

Now that is what we read in the 4th verse of this prophecy of Zechariah 14: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.” That would seem to us to be just as clear a prophecy as you could find, that the Lord Jesus is really, literally, going to come back just as Zechariah and just as Acts prophesies, and that he will stand, one day, on the Mount of Olives.

Now I fully believe if you could live long enough, for we don’t know when the Lord is coming, if you want to be where our Lord is when he comes back, I advise you to buy a little piece of real estate on the top of the Mount of Olives and put up a little hut there and stay there, because he is going to come. [Laughter]

Now in the light of this, which seems so plain and clear, let me read to what a minister of a church in Boston has to say about this in a commentary on the passage in Zechariah. This is what he says, “They watch the skies for his return. They forgot, or perhaps they never knew, that things seldom come back the way they go. History never repeats itself quite. When Aristotle came back through Aquinas, it was not exactly the same man who tutored Alexander”—what in the world that has got to do with Jesus Christ [laughter] coming back to the earth, only this minister knows [more laughter]—“The people we love always come back to us, but seldom do they always come back to us in the same way that they left us. In the glance of a young daughter’s eye, a wife lost early may come back to her husband. Across a page of poetry years after, a friend comes back to his comrade. Those, therefore, who have watched the sky for Jesus have been disappointed, and so will they

always be. He will never come that way. He will come in the need of this dreadful hour. He will stand crucified about the debris of our wrecked cathedrals, pointing to our shame and promising our help. He will come in the closed rooms of our secret lives to quiet our hurried breath and steady our rapid pulse”—this is very sweet [laughter]

“With him will come all good and true things, not just as they left will they return, but purer, stronger and more real.” Now that is the prophecy of a modern preacher, but it seems to me that we have far greater reason for believing these things that are found in the word of God.

So we read, “Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as he did in the day of battle.” Human insolence, which always like to take credit for the great victories that are accomplished in military warfare, will have no reason whatsoever to claim any part of this victory, because our Lord waits until there’s no hope, and then he comes.

“And his feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst towards the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley, and half of the mount shall remove toward the north, and half toward the south.” These are these great topographical changes which we referred to earlier. There is a great fissure from the east to the west, as at the Red Sea deliverance, and this change, the topographical change is evidently related to the deliverance of that remnant which is left within the city, and also a way of escape is made for them. For we read, “And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” So amidst the tumult, amidst the flight, we read the fulfillment of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, and furthermore, there come with him all the holy ones.

The identity of the holy ones is a little bit of a problem. Many of the commentators affirm that the holy ones is a reference, simply, to the angels that are the company of our Lord. Perhaps that’s true.

I like to think, however, that in the light of other passages of the word of God, that all the saints, all the holy ones, are not only the angelic beings – for they shall come; we are taught that in the New Testament – but also those saints of God who have gone to be with our Lord and whose spirits are with him now. So that I would like to believe we have here is a reference to the coming of the saved Israelites of the Old Testament period, who receive their resurrection bodies—we’ll talk about that later on in our resurrection study—and also the saints of the church who have received their resurrection bodies but who come to rule and reign with the Lord Jesus. So, those who come are those who come to know him. And all of the saints shall be there; those of us who are saints and all the church which are the body of Christ, inclusive of those that you have had a part in bringing to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

One of the great joys of the time of the gathering of the saints is the joy of having had a part in the salvation of some of the saints. I read a story of John Broadus some time ago in which Mr. Broadus, who was one of the outstanding teachers in the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville when it was a bastion fundamental teaching, told about a friend of his. Mr. Broadus was just an old, ordinary person. He grew up in a small, rural area, and when he was just a young person, he was listening to a gospel message, I presume it was in his Baptist church, and he received Jesus Christ as his Savior.

He said he had a very close friend whose name was Sandy Jones. And he said, “When I was saved that night, I walked right across the auditorium to where Sandy was sitting, and I said to him, Sandy I wish you would respond and believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved, too. He said Sandy didn’t do anything about it, but a few weeks later he came to John Broadus and he told him he had received Jesus Christ as his Savior as a result of his testimony, and he said to me, thank you, John.”

He said, “As the years went by, I went off to college. I went off to theological school, and I was come back, every year I would come back and Sandy had become a farmer, said, wherever I went in that little community, I would run into Sandy Jones and he would walk up to me and he would say, Howdy, John. Thank you, John, I want to thank you.” And Mr. Broadus on his death

bed said that one of the joys of heaven he knew because Sandy was already in heaven. One of the joys of heaven was going to be when he met Sandy again and he said I know exactly what he’s going to say. He’s going to say, Howdy, John. Thank you. I’ve never forgotten, thank you.

One of the joys of being a Christian is to have a part in the salvation of others. And when the whole church is gathered together, one of the thrills is going to be, well, I had a little bit to do with the salvation of this person, and then there is going to be someone or two or three that we’re going to thank, just as he did.

Now we also read in verse 6 and 7, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark.” Actually, what the Hebrew text says is that there shall not be light; the bright ones shall withdraw themselves; and the reference is to, evidently, the withdrawal of the stars so that this is pictured as a kind of unique day of human history, a preternatural or kind of eerie light is going to be characteristic of that time, because it is a supernatural time in which the Lord Jesus comes back to the earth to establish his kingdom.

Well, let’s turn back over to a passage in the Book of Matthew. This also is a passage that deals with the Second Advent. It is the second of these three great passages on the Second Advent. Matthew chapter 24 verse 29 through verse 31, “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 all of the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven which power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The final, crashing crescendo of civilization’s last hour is accomplished in these three verses of Matthew chapter 24, in these three sweeping movements. Someone has described this passage right here as nature gone mad.

What we have here is severe gravitational disturbance in the solar system. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give its light, the stars

shall fall from heaven, the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. Evidently, accompanying our Lord’s Second Advent to the earth are these gigantic transformations and agitations in the solar system about us. This is going to be a terrifying time for those who do not know the God of heaven. And the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light, the stars falling from heaven, the powers of the heavens being shaken will send fear into the hearts of all men.

We had, a few years ago, a blackout in the East. That is nothing in comparison with the kind of thing that shall happen immediately after the tribulation. In 1780, there was a kind of unexplained dark day in New England. For a number of hours, all of New England was in darkness. That is only a partial foreshadowing of what is to happen in these last days when the Lord Jesus is to come.

Then, we read in the 30th verse of the kingly advent in glory. 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. I’ve wondered about this verse, then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. Remember, the apostles had asked questions back in verse 3. They had said, tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age? Well this is the answer to those questions which they ask: then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven.

Some have said that all we have here is the coming of the Son man, and his coming is the sign. That’s possible. On the other hand, in the light of the fact that we are told in this passage that he comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, it surely suggests to us that perhaps the sign of the coming of the Son of man is the fact that there is associated with him again something that resembled the shekinah glory of the Old Testament.

Remember, the shekinah glory of the Old Testament God gave Israel to guide them through the wilderness, so that in the day time, they had a cloud above them, and in the night time they had a pillar of fire. And then, of course, when the temple was established, the shekinah glory came to abide over the temple. It was the symbol of the presence of God, and evidently a visible symbol.

So perhaps we have in here in our Lord’s statement in Matthew 24 a reference to the fact that in those days of the Second Advent, there will be that characteristic sign, that supernatural cloud that will mark this out as the event which the true, genuine Son of man will come. He’s just spoken about false Christs, false prophets who will show great signs and wonders. Well, here is the sign of the coming of the Son of man: the reappearance of the shekinah glory of the Old Testament. It’s the last, great triumph of the Son over Jewish unbelief when he comes in the shekinah glory with power and great glory.

Now we read here that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn. That is a reference, it would seem, to the nation Israel. That’s not a reference to Gentiles. We don’t have any tribes. It’s most natural to take this as a reference to Israel. It’s most natural, it seems to me, to be a reference to Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, for there in that prophecy Zechariah said, “I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon him (or upon me) whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only Son.” And here we read, “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven.”

Zechariah tells us that Israel, the nation, shall be born again in a day. He says that in an earlier chapter in the book. This is the time when the nation is born again in a day. They shall look upon him who they’ve pierced, and they shall realize what they have done. And then, having come to the knowledge of the fact that they have crucified their own Messiah, they shall mourn as one mourns for an only son.

And did you notice in that passage in Zechariah chapter 12 verse 10 that it all comes about by virtue of the great doctrine of effectual grace? Did you notice that? Effectual grace, infallible grace – that which is necessary for our salvation. God must work in the heart first, for there’s not that seeketh after God. That is an Old Testament doctrine, too. Did you know that? That’s a biblical doctrine. That’s a doctrine of the Old and New Testaments.

Did you notice chapter 12 verse 10 of Zechariah? “Before they look unto him whom they’ve pierced,” seeing what has really happened and mourned, the prophet says, “I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication.” So you see, their seeing, their understanding is the result of the application of the spirit of grace and supplication, which is poured out upon them. Now, I don’t want to say anything more than that, because that happens to be one of my favorite doctrines [loud, sudden laughter]. But I just commend you to that text to commend you to what it has to say.

Finally, verse 31 of Matthew 24 we read of the final assembling of Israel into the land. “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Now this regathering is a regathering in belief. As Isaiah chapter 27 verse 12 and verse 13 indicates.

Let’s turn over to Isaiah chapter 27. There in the little apocalypse in the Book of Isaiah he gives us some of the details of how Israel shall be gathered back into the land. You see, there are two movements back into the land of Israel. One movement in unbelief; we may have seen that already, for we have an Israel today, and it is Israel in which the inhabitants are in unbelief. But there is also going to be, after our Lord’s Second Advent, a gathering of Jews back into the land in belief.

Listen to what he says in Isaiah chapter 27 and verse 13, “And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river”—some of you are still looking. Did I say Isaiah chapter 27 verse 12 and verse 13?—“ 12And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, (and notice) and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown (now it so happens that in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 31 we read, “and he shall send his angels with a loud trumpet, and he shall gather together his elect from the four winds, so we turn back here to verse [sic., 14]) that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” And there is no need to phantomize that

particular prophecy. It is a literal prophecy of the restoration of the Nation Israel in belief after the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

Now this reference to the elect should not confuse us. This is not a reference to the church of the Lord Jesus. It is a reference to the elect in Israel. In Isaiah chapter 65, he speaks of this group of elect ones: “They shall not build, and another inhabit. They shall not plant, and another eat. For like the days of a tree are the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” He is describing the millennial days. So, the elect here is a reference to the Nation Israel.

So what we have, then, here is cosmic agitation, the second coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth, then the gathering by means of the angels at the sound of the trumpet of the elect of Israel from the four corners of the earth. So, just as Israel was brought out of Egypt into the Promised Land, so a second time will God bring them out. But this time not from Egypt, but from the whole of the countries to which he has sent them, they shall be brought back into the land again at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

Now we turn to our last passage in Revelation chapter 19 in which we have advent and Armageddon. Revelation chapter 19. Again, we are talking about a literal event. Let’s read it, verse 11 through verse 21:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. (And notice as we read along, I won’t say anything about this in the exposition, but notice the three names that our Lord is given here, and this one is a name that suggests his essential being, for only he knows his essential being. He is, by virtue of himself, a self-existent being, and no one knows his essential being but he himself, so he has a

name that no one knew but he himself.) And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God (that’s another name). And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (he’s not such a loving Savior, now, is he?) And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, (the third name) KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great. (This repetition of the eating of the flesh seems to be a kind of unearthly joy the Spirit has in describing the carnage of those days.) And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

This is the picture of advent and of Armageddon, and this is a literal historical event. It is set forth in symbolical language. Now, a literal, historical may be set forth in symbolic language. We may read on Saturday morning, for example, “Longhorns gore—how can we describe the Aggies [laughter] symbolically?” What was that? We may read, for example, “Crimson Tide drowns Pikers” on Sunday morning. I hope we do. Those are simply symbolical, figurative ways of expressing the victory of certain football teams over others. But they were literal, historical events which took place.

Now when we read here of a white horse coming out of heaven, and we read of armies coming with him, we are not to think of this of such a symbolically represented event that it’s not a real event. We have a literal, historical event set forth in symbolical language. We are not saying, here, that our Lord is some Bellerophon who comes out riding on a mighty Pegasus. We are saying that our Lord is coming in his Second Advent. This horse that he’s riding upon could not be entered in the Kentucky Derby [laughter]. This is figurative language, but it’s real in the sense that it refers to a real event.

So what we have, then, is a picture of a royal commander who comes with a dazzling retinue of followers to execute judgment upon the enemies of himself and the Father in heaven.

Now, the Battle of Armageddon that follows is the first business of our Lord when he comes to the earth. The first thing that he does is to destroy the Beast and the False Prophet. And the announcement by the angel that there’s going to be a great supper is a vivid, ironic statement which is designed to remind us of the Supper of the Lamb which precedes this great supper of God. For you see, the Supper of the Lamb is the time when the saints are gathered together at the marriage to celebrate the fact that they are forever with the Lord.

Now here is a great supper, but it is a different kind of supper. It is catastrophe for unbelievers. The first business, then, is to settle those questions and clean up affairs on the earth. And what he does is take the Beast and the False Prophet and these two men become the third and the fourth of a line of unusual individuals.

Enoch didn’t die. Elijah didn’t die. And the Beast and the False Prophet didn’t die. So they become the third and the fourth who do not die but are cast alive into the Lake of Fire. It’s almost as if he didn’t bother to do anything more than when he comes back to take them and to cast them into the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth, and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

I said as we began that prophetic study is vital, valid and it also should be a vitalizing influence in our lives. Mr. Scofield, whose Bible many of you have before you – I have before me. His notes I think are extremely valuable. I still think that of all the books to put in the hands of a new Christian, this one is the book that I would want to put in the hands of a new Christian. Tell them to read the text and to read the notes. It’s a course in theology that is suitable for any ordinary reader. Mr. Scofield was a very unusual man. He was an alcoholic and a lawyer, and he was converted, and you can sense what he was by what he was able to do. He has the ability to put in succinct words Biblical doctrine.

Did you know that Mr. Scofield did not really appreciate the prophetic word when he was first converted and began to study the word of God? And he himself gives testimony to the fact that when he discovered the truths of prophetic Scripture, he realized that he had been refusing the most intimate fellowship with the Lord, and that it was through the prophetic word that he came to understand the most intimate fellowship that a person may have with the Lord Jesus.

In the early days of Dallas Seminary, there was a very close relationship between the seminary and the First Presbyterian Church of the city of Dallas. Their relationship of course, no longer exists. The pastor of the church was a man by the name of Dr. William M. Anderson. He was highly regarded in this city, thought of very well by the leaders in this city. A very godly man, he preached the gospel in that church, which had been in his family. If you go down to that church, if they have not changed (I was a member of that church at one time), if you’ll go down to that church,

you’ll find pictures of William M. Anderson in it, and also pictures of his father who was a pastor before him.

William Anderson was a man who preached the gospel, but he didn’t know anything about the prophetic word. But he loved the Scriptures, and he loved the truth, and by the providence of God there came a man to preach in his church by the name of George Gill. And George Gill was a man who also came to Dallas Theological Seminary and lectured there for a number of years in the earliest days of the seminary. Incidentally, after this, William Anderson became Vice-President of Dallas Seminary, but these were before those days.

And Dr. Gill came, and he was holding some meetings in the church, and while he was there, at one point he turned to Dr. Anderson and said, “Dr. Anderson, do you love the Lord’s appearing?”

And Will Anderson said, “I do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I do believe in his second coming.”

And Dr. Gill looked him and said, “Will, I didn’t say, did you believe in the second coming. I said, did you love his appearing?” And he said he didn’t answer that.

But that night he went home, and he began to open up his Bible. And he began to study the doctrines of the second coming. Now he had come to his church as a man who didn’t believe in the pre-millennial coming of the Lord. But as he began to study the word of God, he came to a conviction that the Lord Jesus was going to return and set up his kingdom upon the earth.

He was a very honorable man, and since he had come with other doctrine, he felt that he must in all honesty call the elders together and tell them what had happened to his views. For in the elder’s meeting, the session of the church, they were all there and Will Anderson brought up the question of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. He said, “I want you to know, I came to this church. I did not believe in the pre-millennial return of Jesus Christ. But as a result of the study of the Scriptures, I have come to believe in the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus, and I feel that I must offer my resignation as pastor of this church, because my doctrine has changed.”

One of the elders spoke up. I’ve heard two versions of this. One of the versions is that one of elders spoke up and said, “Will, is it in the Bible?” And he said, it’s in the Bible. He said, “Well Will, we don’t want anything that isn’t in the Bible. We of course want you and beg you to stay.” And then the other version that I heard, from one of the elders, was that when he said that, one of the elders said, “Praise the Lord! That’s what we’ve been praying about for months, [laughter] that you would change your doctrine about the Second Advent.” I like that version better than the other [sustained laughter], but I’m not so sure it’s the true version.

But at any rate, that church was transformed and became a very powerful testimony for Jesus Christ in this whole area for a number of years, and Dallas Seminary is in Dallas Texas because Will Anderson, who persuaded Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, when heard that Dr. Chafer was going to start a seminary to have the seminary here in Dallas, Texas. And Dr. Chafer used to preach in the church very frequently for a number of years after that until Dr. Anderson died.

The doctrine of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, the pre-millennial second coming, is one of the great doctrines of the word of God, and it is one of the most valid, vitalizing doctrines that a Christian can hold.

Time’s up. I must stop. We close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the Lord Jesus, and we are thankful to Thee for the blessed hope that we have, the hope of his coming in the air, and the hope of his coming to earth, and the kingdom that shall follow. Truly great things are before us. Help us to live, Lord, in the power of them.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.