



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 7:13–29

Gospel of Matthew

“Two Ways, Two Trees, Two Houses”

TRANSCRIPT

We are concluding our study on the Sermon on the Mount in our study this morning, and so I want you to turn with me, if you will, to Matthew chapter 7, and I want to read verses 13 through 29, which is the remainder of chapter 7.

The subject for this morning and the message that follows later is “Two Ways, Two Trees, and Two Houses.” And I’m sure, as we read this passage from the Word of God, you will recognize the relationship of the title to the contents. Beginning with verse 13:

“Enter in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in that way: Because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye

“Two Ways, Two Trees, Two Houses” by S. Lewis Johnson
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shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and the fall of it was great. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

May God bless this reading from his inspired Word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood, we praise Thee for the revelation of the redemption that is found through the sufferings of our Savior. We thank Thee that these sufferings reflect the love of the Triune God, and we praise Thee that through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity, we have been brought to know him, who to know is to possess eternal life.

And we thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast been glorified through the sufferings of Christ, for we have not only seen the love of our great God but also the justice of our great God. And we praise

Thee that Thou art a God who does not overlook sin. We thank Thee for the righteousness that is one of the attributes of Thy being, and we praise Thee that Thou hast manifested not only love but justice in the death of Christ.

And we praise Thee that in spite of our wickedness and sin, Thou hast, through that amazing work, been able to bring sinners to the knowledge of a holy God, and so we worship Thee for the Son who paid our debts, and for the love of the Father who gave the Son, and for the ministry of the Spirit who has made it ours in realization and appropriation.

And Father, we pray that if there are some in this audience who have not yet the knowledge of Thee that is a true and saving knowledge, that today through the ministry of Thy Word, the Holy Spirit may bring them to knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

We pray for the saints who are here, for the believers, and we pray that Thou wilt encourage them in their trials, that Thou wilt strengthen them in their difficulties and problems, that Thou wilt give them wisdom and guidance in the decisions of life. And as the perplexities of decisions face us, we pray that Thou wilt inculcate within us the habit of turning to Thee, and seeking the answers from our great God.

We commit, particularly, the many young people who are here, Lord, and pray that Thou wilt, in these formative years of their lives, relate them to the Lord Jesus in such a way that there will be an indelible impression of redemption upon them and all that they do. And may their minds and their hearts and their souls be thrilled through the knowledge of Christ, and the knowledge of the divine work of redemption, and may that thrill never wear off.

We pray that Thou wilt give the elders and deacons guidance as the affairs of the assembly are handled and guided under Thee.

We pray for our country and for our president, and ask that Thou wilt give him wisdom and guidance. And we pray for those who are associated with him in government. We ask for our national government, but also for our state and local governments as well. And we are grateful to Thee for the ways in which Thou has arranged this life that we have to live upon the earth. We thank

Thee for civil governments. We recognize the truthfulness of the Word of God which so plainly says the servants of the government are the ministers of God, and do not bear the sword in vain.

Enable us, O God, to be conformed to all that we find in Scripture. We thank Thee for this privilege of being here together, today, and we pray that through this meeting, Jesus Christ and his salvation may be lifted up and exalted.

For we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] As we near the end of our study of the Sermon on the Mount, it’s not surprising that the note of exhortation becomes more prominent. In the intensity of ideas and the massive force of the argumentation, there is a compelling call which emerges from this sermon for decision, but it is not the outward call for a show of hands, such as we find in a great deal of modern evangelism. It’s not the signing of a decision card, which we also find in a great deal of modern evangelism. It is not the prostration at the mourner’s bench, as it’s still found in some of the practices of modern evangelism.

“Have we made it all too cheap?” Guy King has asked. Have we, some of us, been inclined to stand and heed our audiences into a hasty, hectic, almost hilarious decision on the grounds that it’s such a jolly thing to be a Christian? The master never hesitated to present the inquiry with the stark realities of the case. This is a hard thing, but this is the right thing. Therefore, do it.

In all truthfulness, I must say to you, that in my opinion, we have often made the solemn and sober call of the gospel of Jesus Christ a cheapened message with our garish and gaudy embellishments of it. In this age of bumper-sticker theology [laughter] and what D. James Kennedy of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church has called, “soda-fizz theology,” we must not abandon the call for decision itself.

When we speak about decision, and the endeavor to avoid that which is gaudy and cheap, we must not retreat into no decision at all, for when we do this, we retreat from the Word of God. Moses, the great leader of the children of Israel, after he had set for the details of the Palestinian covenant, called them forth to decision by saying, “I have called heaven and earth to record this day

against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life that thou and thy seed may live.”

And evidently this made a great impression upon Moses’ servant Joshua, because in the last days of his life, when he was giving some final encouragement and a final review to the children of Israel, he, too, called them to decision. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

So in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 13, the Lord calls for a decision of faith in the king and in his purposes that will ultimately lead to entrance into the Messianic kingdom. Two ways are set before them, two houses and two trees, and these combinations of two inevitably lead to the conviction that there are two kinds of people in the world: there are believers and there are unbelievers. There are those who have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and have rejected it. There are those who have, by the grace of God, responded. There are those who might be called the sons of the new birth, and there are those who are the sons of one birth. There are the disciples of two births; the disciples of one birth. And every one of us in this room falls into one of these categories.

I think it’s very fitting that the Lord Jesus should begin by setting forth the two ways, but he does it suddenly—almost violently. One thing you learn from reading Classical Greek, and New Testament Greek, though it’s a little less pronounced than New Testament Greek, is that the Greeks loved connectives. They did not like to write sentences without little connectives connecting them together, and so they used the *{de}*s, and the *{un}*s and the *{gar}*s and the *{ara}*s, and other forms of connection. When I was first studying Classical Greek, this was one of the first things my teacher told me: watch for the connectives. The Greeks loved them.

Occasionally, a connective will be absent, and generally absent because there is a desire on the part of the author to enter so intimately into what he is saying, so definite, that he abandons the normal desire to connect the words. In other words, there is a kind of personal involvement, and

kind of personal emphasis that is not ordinarily found in the writing of Greek. There is no connective in the 13th verse.

The Lord Jesus, almost violently, gives the bold appeal, “enter,” and then speaks about two ways. One of them is a broad way. The other is a narrow way. The figure of the way is a very familiar thing. Throughout the Old Testament, you will find the figure of the way. For example, in the first of the Psalms, we have the figure of the way: “For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly will perish.”

In one of the most striking occurrences of the term, way, the Proverbs and its writer say, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.”

The Lord Jesus has given us one of the most familiar expressions of it when he said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” You’ll notice he does not say, I am *a* way, but I am *the* way, the truth, the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.

Three things characterize the broad way. First, it has a very wide gate. It’s very easy to enter. As a matter of fact, we all have entered that way, by the fact that we have been born. Every single individual has entered the wide gate, and is already upon the broad road that leads to destruction. If you have before you the *Believers Bible Study*, there is a quotation from the apostle Paul in which the apostle says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but to us that are saved, it is the power of God.” The apostle puts these words, perish and saved, in the present tense, for the preaching of the cross to them that are perishing is foolishness. We are already on the way. We are on the way to destruction.

And by virtue of the fact that we have been born, we have partaken of that characteristic. The road is described as a broad, roomy, many-laned expressway. Now I’ve added a few words there, but I think that it’s evident from reading this that this is the kind of thing that it is in harmony with Scripture. I am sure that if our Lord were called upon to describe in a figurative way this broad way that leads to destruction, he probably would say the scenery is lovely, and the accommodations are beautiful.

And there is one third characteristic of it, many travelers are traveling that way. The only difficulty with this way is that it has such a devilish destination. McLaren says, “The main thing about a road, after all, is where it leads us, and the broad way, according to Jesus, leads us to destruction.” The reason for this is that, as I say, we are born traveling this way, and we are born because of Adam’s sin in a state of sin. We are guilty. We are under condemnation, and we are on our way to that destruction.

This means that all of the great saints of the Word of God were born that way. All of them had to come to know, experientially, the great experience of redemption. Someone has said, about David, his heart was more often out of tune than his harp. Well that expresses, I think, characteristics of human nature. And it is true, morality and Christianity differ specifically. The moralist works from nature, a little refined by education, but the Christian, from nature, is thoroughly renewed by the Holy Spirit. That is the distinctive feature of Christianity that it offers men, who are on the way to destruction an escape by virtue of a new birth.

The broad way is the way that leadeth to destruction. If we were called upon today to describe the broad way and its characteristics, we would probably say, in the light of Christianity, the broad way is a way characterized by religion. It may seem shocking to some of you to say something like that, because the average man who walks the streets of the city of Dallas thinks “getting religion” and becoming a Christian are synonymous terms, but they are not.

To have religion is not necessarily to have Jesus Christ. Religion was the characteristic of Adam and Eve before the Fall, and the characteristic of Adam and Eve after the Fall. They had religion, and they still have religion. Men have religion; even those who say that they do not have religion—that is their religion. We all have our ultimate, and our ultimate is our religion.

Judas, the betrayer of the Lord Jesus, who never knew the experience of grace, even at the very moment at which he was betraying the Lord Jesus sat down at the Passover supper, entered into a religious ritual—for it was part of his “religion”—and he was a religious man to the end of his betrayal of the Lord Jesus.

This way would also be characterized by good works; good works that are not done for the glory of God and out of the experience of faith in Jesus Christ, but good works that are done for the assuaging of the conscience for the glorification of man or for some particular purpose.

And then, this great road is characterized by culture and education, which many have mistaken for the true relationship of Jesus Christ. The narrow way is also referred to by the Lord Jesus. It is narrow because it is founded upon the work of redemption, and it is entered only by the new birth. “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” the Lord Jesus told a great religious leader in his day.

He says in another place, in the Gospel of John, “I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.” The only way onto the narrow road which leads to life is through the experience of new birth based upon the redemption which Jesus Christ has accomplished.

But what a glorious company of people are traveling that road. It may not seem too beautiful before we attempt to walk along that way, but it is a road that is characterized by men such as Enoch, who walked with God. It is characterized by Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Abraham, who believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him as righteousness. David, who has walked this road; David, who shouted, “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” And down through the centuries, men who have come to Jesus Christ through the grace of God have found themselves upon the road.

Now there are not too many of them if we judge all of humanity in the light of the Lord’s statement. I know that there are some people who say, well, it would seem to me that this is a rather cynical kind of view of a God in heaven that he would save only a few. And in fact, some have attempted to slander the Christian doctrine with little pieces of doggerel, such as, “We are God’s chosen few, all others will be damned; there’s no room in heaven for you, we can’t have heaven crammed” [laughter]. But I remind you of the fact that it is the Lord Jesus who has said, “And few there be that find it.”

It is not that that door is not open, but it is true that few there be that find it. And the authority for this is the Lord Jesus himself. In the Old Testament we read, over and over again, of the fact that God had set his love upon Israel, but even in Israel, not everyone who was an Israelite belonged to Israel. As Paul explains in the New Testament—the Old Testament also sets it forth—it is the Israelite who is a true believer in the Messiah to come who is a true Israelite and the recipient of the promises of God. They are addressed to the people of faith, and if you have any question that you belong in this company, you can settle that question right now by coming to Jesus Christ and receiving from him the free gift of everlasting life. And that settles the question.

But this way is a narrow way, according to the Lord Jesus. Now we must not fail to mention the fact that while it is true that the Lord Jesus says, “Few there are that find it,” in the future we are told in the Word of God that the whole of the world shall come to faith in Jesus. We are told in the book of Revelation during the time of great tribulation upon the earth, that there is a great multitude that shall come out of the Great Tribulation, a great multitude which no man can number, out of every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation. So, we’re heading on into a glorious future in which there will be countless millions brought to the knowledge to the Lord Jesus. But the way today is a way that is narrow and is characterized by few that find it.

I know that one of the attitudes that we all have had at one time or another is, “Well, Dr. Johnson, are you suggesting that the great religions of the earth are wrong and that Christianity is right?” Well now, lest there should be any misunderstanding: yes, I am. [Laughter] And I don’t want to say that out of a sense of pride and conceit, but I want to say that in the light of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This truth that we find in the Word of God is greater than animism. There are many, many people that still worship the gods of animism. This great truth that we find in the New Testament and the Old Testament is a greater truth than Hinduism, the religion of caste, has ever had. Hinduism began as the worship of 330 million gods, and finally developed into a sophisticated pantheistic, philosophical system. All is God, only the world’s soul is real, and part of it dwells in us.

The rest of the world is not really real at all. It is an illusion; it does not exist. The hope of the Hindu is to, by a number of reincarnations, is to achieve nirvana, the extension of life. Not surprising that Hinduism tends to pessimism.

Buddhism. Buddha was, himself, a psychologist, concerned about people's emotions, basically about desire. Buddhism is not really a religion at all, though people in the Western world think of it that way. Shielded from the world as a prince for 29 years, he knew nothing about the sufferings of the world. Finally, he found enlightenment, meditating under the Bodhi Tree. People suffer because they desire things they cannot have. So, what is the solution? Why, cease desiring, and then you won't have suffering, and he offered people a quicker way to reach nirvana.

There is no need to mention the rest of the religions of the world. Confucianism. He was a wise man, he taught the chain of authority. He was a man who preached philippiety. He denied the knowledge of life after death. He was an agnostic, so far as God was concerned. Shintoism, the worship of the emperor, that largely came to an end in 1945. Mohammedanism—the Koran is simply a distortion of much that we find in the Old Testament.

And Judaism, a great system of truth set forth in the Old Testament, true in its essentials, but developed into what might be called a truncated religious system because of its denial of its head, Jesus Christ.

There are three great difference between the Lord Jesus and every great founder of every other religion, and they are symbolized in the three great feasts of Christianity, if we may call them that just for purposes of illustration.

First of all, there is Christmas. What does Christmas signify, for the Christian? It signifies that we have, in the Lord Jesus, an incarnate deity. That is, that God took to himself an additional nature at a point in time, and came as the second person of the Trinity to dwell in our midst and ultimately accomplish a redemption for sinners. Confucius would have abhorred the idea of the incarnate deity. Mohammed would have screamed blasphemy if anybody had said he was God.

Good Friday, which signifies the death of our Lord Jesus. No other founder of religion ever did this. When 80 years of age, Confucius said, “The mountains crumble, the great beam is broken and the flower falls to the ground,” and he lay down and died. Buddha died of food poisoning. Unfortunately, he ate a meal with a greasy spoon.

The third is Easter. Easter signifies the resurrection. Confucius died and was buried. Lutz wandered off and died with his buffalo. Buddha rotted from food poisoning. Jesus Christ arose from the dead.

Now if you put these three things together—Christmas, Good Friday and Easter—you have the things that distinguish Christianity from every other religion of man. They do not stand the test of the religion that is set forth in the religion of God.

Now the Lord Jesus, having spoken about the two ways, speaks about the two trees, because someone might reply to me, as a Hindu once said to me when I pointed out to him (or tried to point out to him) that the resurrection distinguishes Christ from every other religious leader who ever lived, “How can we know? Because, after all, there are many religions who claim to be the religion.”

I am sure that the Lord Jesus felt that it was necessary to warn his listeners about those who would contest the claims that he was making. What makes the way difficult to find is that there were numerous false teachers who cry, this is the way, walk ye in it. So it’s not surprising, then, that we read in the 15th verse, he introduces the section on the two trees, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly, they are ravening wolves.” This admonition is most significant.

Now he states that these false teachers come in sheep’s clothing. They do not really come honestly before us as they really are. They come to us as courteous, kindly, considerate, affectionate, helpful, distinguished, learned, and the other things that make up the sheep’s clothing. We are surfeited today in Christianity—and I narrow, now, my attention to Christianity itself—with many, many types of theology. We have process theology. We have revolutionary theology. We have crisis

theology. We, of course, have evangelical theology. And we have six or eight other kinds of theology, going all the way to [indistinct] cosmic evolutionism. We are surfeited with all kinds of theology.

And so, this warning, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly, they are ravening wolves,” is a warning that we need. And it suggests the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 13 through verse 15, in which he warns the Corinthians that, “Do not be surprised that false prophets should abound, and do not be surprised that they should come to you transforming themselves into the ministers of righteousness, because their great leader, Satan himself, transformed himself into an angel of light.” And therefore do not be surprised if the ministers of Christianity who are false come to you as ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their works.

Many of you know that I came to know Jesus Christ through the ministry of Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, the pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, some years ago. Dr. Barnhouse loved to refer to this text in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and he used to introduce it by saying he would like to give a new translation of that text some day, and if he ever did give his translation, it would be something like this: “When you’re looking for the devil, be sure and look in the pulpit.” And he went on to say that the man who stands behind the desk is the man who is most likely to be the influential, persuasive minister of righteousness who really, underneath, is one of the false prophets and ravening wolves that the Lord Jesus refers to.

Well, how shall we distinguish these false prophets who look like the true prophets so far as the outward is concerned? Well, the Lord Jesus says, you can know them by their fruit. And he states it twice, in the sixteenth verse he says, “Ye shall know them by their fruit.” And in the 20th verse he concludes his discussion of the two kinds of trees by saying, “Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.” In other words, a perverted morality will inevitably issue from perverted theology. This is the characteristic of perversion in theology: it leads to perverted morality.

Now we are not talking specifically and only about the things that we may read about concerning our congressmen and Senators in Washington, or our president, even, but we are talking

about morality from the biblical standpoint. And remember that that action is acceptable to God which is done for the glory of God out of a heart of faith. So that even an action which men may pronounce as good—philanthropic—may be an action that falls short of the divine standard. But it is true that inevitably, a perverted theology leads to perverted morality. Martin Luther said, it is not good works which make a good man, but a good man who does good works. And the way in which we are to distinguish the false from the true is to observe the products of their lives, the Lord Jesus says.

Characteristic of the men who have followed the faith is the life of holiness and the desire to see the truth of God prevail. Arthur Pink has written something which I think forms a good summary to this. He speaks about those who create an easy way into heaven and regard the exhortations and imperatives of the Christian life lightly, “There is nothing in their preaching which searches the conscience and renders the professor uneasy, nothing which humbles and causes their hearers to mourn before God, but rather that which puffs up, makes them pleased with themselves, and to rest content in a false assurance.” Characteristic of the true preaching of the Word of God is that it does render the empty professor uneasy, and further, it humbles and causes hearers to mourn before God. True preaching of the Word of God should lead to humility, and a consciousness of sin, and a desire to confess that sin before God.

Now one might ask, well, is that the only danger that we need to look for—the danger of the false professor—and is the clue simply to observe the products of their lives? No, the Lord Jesus said it’s possible for us to be self-deceived, and so he goes on to speak in verses 21–23 about false teachers and also about self-deception. And self-deception, as we all know, is one of the easiest ways to miss the way. “Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Do you know that it is possible for you to attend Believers Chapel, to attend the meetings, to attend the ministry of the Word service—attend two of them in the morning—attend the Lord’s Supper on Sunday night, attend the prayer meeting during the week, the Bible Study; it’s possible for

you to speak the language of the saints, to know the words justification, sanctification, and glorification, even Calvinism and the doctrines of grace; it's possible for you to know and pronounce these things and be engaged in Christian activity and still not have vital touch with Jesus Christ.

That's what he's saying.

“Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven...Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works?’” And the Lord Jesus will reply, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” It is very possible for us to be very, very close to the saints of God and to miss the connection that means eternal life.

I think that a great deal of this must be addressed to our children, our young people, who have grown up in Christian homes, who have sat at tables in which the father read the Word of God and offered a word of prayer, day after day; who've attended the church, who've attended the Sunday School in the earliest grades and have passed through the entire Sunday school, but have largely been unmoved by the word of the gospel concerning the Lord Jesus. These are words that are very solemn. They are very, very strong words, and they should bring every one of us to the question, do we really have a vital relationship to the Lord Jesus that means everlasting life? After all, as he says, it's “he that doeth the will of my father” who shall find his way to heaven.

What is the doing of the will? Is it the good works by which a person is saved? Now, that would violate everything that Jesus ever said. Doing the will of God is the believing in the sin sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and then life of trust that follows thereafter, enabled by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the will of God so that at the end, we do not say to God, well, Lord, we have pleased Thee by what we have done, but we acknowledge then that everything that has been done for his glory has been the result of the work of the Holy Spirit within us who are vile and wicked sinners in ourselves.

Well that brings him to the two houses. False guides, such as the false prophets, and a false following of the will of God without that vital touch with Jesus Christ, underscores the need of doing

the will of God. And so by the use of one of the most beautiful of the metaphors, the Lord Jesus pictures for us the house of the wise man, and the house of the foolish man. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, he is the wise man. He is the man who hears in faith and responds in work.

That man is like a man who builds his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not because it was founded upon a rock. Now, the meaning of this parable is very clear it would seem. Later in chapter 16 of the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord Jesus at Caesarea Philippi calls upon Peter and others to answer the question, “Who do others say that I, the Son of Man, am?” And Peter replies, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And the Lord Jesus answers, “Peter, blessed art thou. My Father in heaven has revealed it to you. Flesh and blood has not. And I say unto, thou art *petros*”—that Greek word is a word that means, a little pebble—“thou art *petros*, (thou art Peter) but upon this *petra*” (slightly different Greek word which was ordinarily used to represent a great mass of rock, like a cliff). Thou art *petros*, but upon this *petra*—what? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiahship and the sonship of the Lord Jesus—upon the messiahship and sonship, the Son of God, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The man who builds his house upon the rock is the man who builds his house upon our Lord Jesus and the redemptive work that he has accomplished. Peter and Paul, in their epistles, both confirmed this interpretation, pointing out that he is the true foundation.

Now, there is a foolish man. “Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and the fall of it was great.” And the listeners are left with the crashing ruins of the house in the midst of the storm.

You’ll notice, as you look at these houses, they are distinguished by only one difference: the foundation. Both of them must have been beautiful homes. Both of them, outwardly, must have impressed the viewer. The only thing that distinguished them was the fact that the rains and the storm came, and then the true foundation was discovered. And in the storms and trials of life, ultimately at the time of the judgment, then the foundation of our house shall be revealed.

The man who has built upon the Lord Jesus sings, “On Christ the solid rock I stand / all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.” But the man who builds his house upon the sand discovers that his house is just as different from the house of the believer as Venice is from New York City. Venice is a city that is sinking slowly into the sea because its foundations are weak. New York is a city that is built upon the rock. And because it is built upon the rock, it shall likely stand.

Now this morning, I must confess, I said it shall surely stand. And one of the young men who is a theologian—we’re training some theologians in this audience, believe it or not—this man is just graduating and entering college, and I don’t want to be an unbelieving professor in his classes, because he’s going to ask a lot of embarrassing questions, I know. He came to me and he said, “Dr. Johnson, I don’t understand it. You’re a Southerner, from south of the Mason-Dixon line, and you have admitted this morning that New York was going to stand. It seems to me that that’s heretical.” [Laughter] And I promised him I would correct that, so I said it would probably stand.

Now may I close with just a few comments? It’s evident that this sermon made a great impression upon the listeners. I doubt that there is anyone who ever created a more arrogant impression in the minds of the unbelievers than the Lord Jesus, because it was not long after this that they crucified him, hanging him upon a tree. But his teaching impressed them. And in spite of themselves, they had to admit that his teaching was not the kind of teaching that they were usually exposed to. He did not say, Rabbi Hillel said such-and-such; Rabbi Shammai said so-and-so. But rather, he spoke in his own name, and in his own bare word he commanded, he prohibited, he

repealed, he promised. And it is no wonder that when he finished his message the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

I've often heard of people, particularly in connection with the Sermon on the Mount, who've said, "Give me the Sermon on the Mount; I don't care about the dogmas of Christianity, give me that sermon in its sublime reality, and that's Christianity enough for me." Now I would almost be disposed to accept that, provided you took all of the Sermon on the Mount, and further, that you took all that is implied by the Sermon on the Mount. I'm sure that if you take all of the Sermon on the Mount, and weigh its words carefully and deeply, you will discover that what we have here is a theology that is in harmony with the theology of John the theologian and in harmony with the apostle Paul's great truths found in his epistles.

For example, will you notice these things about this sermon? The sermon claims for Jesus Christ a supremacy above all former revelation and revealers. Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; for I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. And then, in a moment, he will say, it has been said to them of old, but I say unto you such-and-such. He claims an absolute superiority over the revelation that has been given. Not that it is wrong, for it is right, and he attests its rightness, but he goes on to interpret it as it has never been interpreted up to this time.

He claimed that his life was the embodiment of the law of Moses. He said, I have come to fulfill the law, and 19 centuries of careful examination of the life of Christ has never revealed one demonstrable flaw in his character. He has fulfilled it. And he embraces all of this with the affirmation, "I am come." He does not say, I was born. That's what you and I say. I was born in Texas or I was born in Missouri or I was born in New York. He says, I have come. And if he doesn't say, "I have come," he says, "I have been sent." His characteristic word is: I have come, or I have been sent. Only once does he ever say he was born, and he said that to a pagan, to Pilate (and after he said it, he quickly went on to say that he had been sent or had come). So, in the affirmation of this truth, he claims a pre-existence.

In addition, he claimed to be the reality of the hope of the godly throughout all the centuries. He came to fulfill the prophets. All those rapturous forecastings, all those dim anticipations, all those triumphant promises are realized in the Lord Jesus. I’ve come to fulfill the prophets. He claimed a unique relation to their Father—have you noticed his language, he speaks about “My Father who is in heaven.” He speaks about your Father who is in heaven, but he never says “our Father” except once, and that was when he was telling you how to pray. You say, “Our Father.” He never says, now let’s have a little prayer meeting, and let’s address our Father.

Never, in all of his revelation, there is always a distinction made between the sonship of Jesus Christ and the sonship of the sons. He is always the Son of God. We are sons of God, but he is the Son of God. There is always a difference. It may be as fine as a hair, but it is always as hard as a diamond.

He claimed authority over the destinies of men. He said at the time of the judgment, he will say to those who have professed his name but who have not done his will, he will say, “I never knew you, depart from me ye that worked iniquity.” He assumed the judgeship of the whole of the world, and specifically states that in other passages, that which is implied here. He’s the final judge. He may command absolute obedience. It’s “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine *and* doeth them.” And if we build upon him, we build upon the rock. If not, we build upon the sand.

And if the judge, he must have a knowledge of men that goes beyond the outward. If he is to truly judge men, he cannot just look on the outward, he must have the capacity to look within. He must be able to pierce the surface of profession. He must also have the character to be undazzled by the so-called miracles performed by men, as we read just above. He must be able to look behind the words of the preacher, and the wonderful works of the so-called Christian philanthropists who have denied Jesus Christ and his uniqueness, and see their hidden rottenness that they never saw. And tearing down the veil will reveal men at last to themselves as they really are.

These are not all of the things that make Christ unique. If we had to speak of the uniqueness of Christ, we’d have to announce a week of Bible studies to give you an introduction to the subject.

He never withdrew or modified a single statement that he ever made. This morning, in the message, I made a mistake. I said something, had to go back and correct it. In the desire to express a truth, my tongue did not obey my mind (that is if I have one). And I must, of course, withdraw it; I did withdraw it. I modified it. Jesus Christ never modified a single statement.

He lacked the trait, said to be of a great man, of the strength to apologize. He never apologized. Why? He was never wrong. He never sought advice from anyone. Yet, he was not well-educated in the ordinary sense like Confucius, or like Buddha, sitting under a Bodhi tree. Unlike Mohammed, who could neither read nor write, he was never ignorant in his person. In his humanity, he of course had to learn the things that you and I have to learn.

Moses sought seventy advisors, and even Solomon, the wisest man of the Old Testament, obtained advice. Jesus never asked for advice. He never said, Peter, James and John, I'd like for you to come aside with me; I'd like to ask your opinion about an action I'm going to take. [Laughter] How ridiculous. The very idea makes us laugh, just as you are laughing. And I think that deep down in the hearts of the unbelieving man who knows anything about Jesus Christ, he recognizes there is something foolish about that, for the Holy Spirit, you see, brings on the hearts of men that he is truly the sinless, righteous Son of God, even in our rejection of him.

He never once bothered to justify his ambiguous behavior. It is announced that Lazarus is sick; Jesus stays right where he is for four days. Not a very good pastor is he? One might say that. He didn't stop to explain. He did the will of God. In the storm on the sea, when they came to him, “Master, Master, carest thou not that we perish?” he never apologized for being asleep—“I'm sorry I was asleep; it was a very, very difficult day, I had to preach all day long”—I can understand that as an excuse for a man. But he never apologized and said, “I'm sorry. Now where is the bucket so I can start bailing?” [Laughter]

He never asked for prayer for himself. And he allowed people to fall down on their faces and worship him, which would be idolatry and blasphemy were it not true. Even the angels know

that one should worship God, and yet he allowed men to fall down on their faces and worship him.

Why? Because he was the Son of God.

I must stop. Time has gone. It may be that you are here this morning and you have never known the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. You have never known him who offered an atonement sufficient for the sins of sinners. Perhaps you have never realized that in your sin you have offended a holy God, and you stand in sin and under divine condemnation.

The gate's open. The way is there, and it leads to life. May God the Holy Spirit work in your heart, and may you come to a personal trust to the Lord Jesus. I'll not belabor you with long invitations. The invitation is obvious. The call is clear. The need for the decision is obvious. There are two trees, there're two houses, and there's two kinds of people. May God bring you to Christ, for Jesus Christ's sake. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered the atonement that saves, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit who applies the redemption to the hearts of men, the love of God the Father who gave the Son and the Spirit be and abide with all who know him in truth.

And O Father, again we ask, if it should please Thee, if there are some here who do not know Jesus Christ, give them no rest nor peace until they rest in him.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.