



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 26:26–29

Gospel of Matthew

“The Last Passover and
the First Lord’s Supper: Part II”

TRANSCRIPT

The passage for the Scripture reading today is a very brief one, four verses of the 26th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. It is the second in our series of “The Last Passover and the First Lord’s Supper.” So will you turn to Matthew chapter 26 and verse 26 and listen as I read verse 26 through verse 29? Matthew, the publican writes:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new covenant or testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

May the Lord, who through the Spirit inspired the Word, bless the reading of it to our understanding.

This is the second of our series of two messages on the title of “The Last Passover and the First Lord’s Supper.” Atonement is probably the most important word in Christian theology. You know, I am sure that it is derived from the English preposition, at, plus an Old Middle English word, one-ment, which we seldom use but which means “union.” So atonement refers to the work of God by which man is brought into union with him. It’s that which Jesus Christ did in his death when he restored the shattered relationship between sinners and the holy God. And the Scriptures make very evident that the price of his death was the ransom price for the sinners.

Liberal Christianity has always resented the doctrine of the atonement as taught in the New Testament. They have sought to keep the word, Christianity. They have sought to keep the word redemptive but eliminate the historic Christian conviction that Jesus Christ the Son of God in his sacrificial death on the cross wrought a reconciliation of men with God. For faith in a crucified Redeemer, they have substituted a Christ-like attitude, or a religious feeling, or even membership in the redemptive community.

Now it has been said that liberal Christianity lacks the power to originate a church and can only exist as a parasite growing up on some sturdier stock. I do think that is true. I do think that if we had never had Christianity we would never have liberal Christianity. We certainly would not have it persisting through the years as it has persisted. They love the term Christianity, but they dislike and are resentful of the doctrine of the atonement as taught in the Bible. They love the term, Son of God for Jesus Christ, but do not give it the biblical content of a full deity.

They love other things about Christianity. They even sing our songs. They sing our songs in which the grace of God is magnified and the blood of Christ is extolled, but they never themselves preach that kind of doctrine. So it is a parasitical growth on the stock of true Christianity. B. B. Warfield who may have been the greatest theologian of the twentieth century said there is indeed no alternative, “The redeemed in the blood of Christ after all is said are a people apart. Call them Christians or call them what you please; they are of a specifically different religion who know not no such experience.”

It is true that when you put by the side of one another a person who has come to understand the saving work of the Lord Jesus in the light of his own guilt and sin, and who has trusted in the atonement by pleading the atonement for his salvation before God, and then put by his side a person who thinks he is justified by his Christian attitude or by his membership in some—quote—“redemptive community”—unquote—or who has some kind of feeling (and you do have two people who have an entirely different experience) and it is the former who have relied upon the saving work of the Lord Jesus who are biblical Christians.

There are a number of passages in the New Testament that give us Jesus Christ’s teaching concerning his death. For example, in John chapter 10 and verse 11, the Lord Jesus says, “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” That tells us a great deal about what he thought about his death. And then we read in Matthew chapter 20 verse 28 a few months back, the Lord Jesus saying, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.” He said he came to give his life a ransom for many.

In my opinion, none are clearer than the passage that is found right here. In that passage in chapter 20 verse 28 the Lord Jesus taught that his death was a voluntary sacrifice. The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. He did not have to die. The Roman soldiers did not force him to die. The Jewish leaders did not force him to his death. He voluntarily gave his life a ransom for many. It was not only a voluntary death, but it was a propitiatory ransom. That is it was a sacrifice that satisfied the holy claims of God against us or the claims of the Holy God against us, and those claims of the Holy God of—against us, really mean in the final analysis, our life, for we owe our life in death. We are guilty. We are not only sinners but we stand under the guilt and condemnation of sin and if there is no redemption, we shall spend our eternities, according to the Bible, the Word of God, in the lake of fire. It is as plain and as down to earth as that.

Now the Lord Jesus taught that his death was a propitiatory ransom. That is, he offered the sacrifice and on the basis of that sacrifice, God satisfied is free to bestow eternal life upon those for whom Christ died.

Now also it is taught in that passage that he gave himself a ransom in a substitutionary way. He gave himself a ransom for us in our place is the point. So he paid for our sins vicariously as our substitute. We were culprits under judgment, and he bore our judgment for us. We have actually already experienced our eternal judgment in the person of our substitute, and because we have already experienced our judgment in the person of our substitute, we are free.

Now this doctrine as you can see overthrows all moral influence theories of the atonement to the effect that Jesus Christ came and gave us an unusual instance of the love of God which is intended to so move our hearts that we want to please him by our activities but at the same time deny that he died under the penalty of sin. All of those moral influence theories of the atonement which are so popular in evangelical—well evangelically named churches—so popular in our standard Christian churches, not every one but in so many of them, all of those theories are contrary to the theory of the atonement taught in Holy Scripture. I think also that if we will remember that if Jesus Christ died as a substitute that establishes the principle of particularism in the Word of God. If it is true that our Lord Jesus died and died under the judgment of God as a substitute, then those for whom he substituted shall go free.

Now if he died as a substitute for all, then all shall go free and we are therefore then required to preach a universalism that everybody shall ultimately be saved. But we know the facts of Holy Scripture teach that not everybody shall be saved. We know that there is, according to Holy Scripture, a place called the lake of fire, and it is so expounded in Holy Scripture that it is evident that a great company of people shall spend their eternity in it. We therefore cannot hold to universalism.

Now if we believe that he died as a substitute, then, for individuals, we must hold to some form of particularism. That is, that he came to die for his own. He came to give his life for his people, as is taught in the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for

he shall save his people from their sins. And Toplady is right when he says, “Payment God cannot twice demand first from my bleeding surety’s hand and then again at mine.” If it is taught that Jesus Christ died simply to make all men savable, then Christ has died for the sins of all, and those who refuse shall also die for them, too, and that of course is contrary to the justice of God. Payment God cannot twice demand, first from my bleeding surety’s hand and then again at mine. So the doctrine of the atonement taught by the Lord Jesus demands a particularism: a definite atonement, a particular redemption.

Now the institution of the Lord’s Supper took place at the time of the last Passover. The last Passover was the last authorized Passover. After our Lord Jesus and the apostles celebrated that Passover, there was no Passover in the years that follow; that was a valid Passover. When the Jews today observe a Passover, they do not observe a valid Passover. The last Passover has already been carried out by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. It was at this last Passover that he instituted the Lord’s Supper, and it is so beautifully woven in, that we pass from the Last Supper to the First Lord’s Supper almost imperceptibly.

There were four parts in the Passover meal: an opening course and a glass of wine—a word of praise and thanksgiving. Then the main dish was brought out, and one of the little children turned to the father and said, “Explain to us what this service means.” And then the *pater familias* or the head of the family—it always ought to be the father who does the spiritual explaining. Mr. Prier, who’s not able to be with us today because of illness, often says, “The best Bible teacher that anyone will ever has is his own father.” How true that is. That means really that ideally it is the father that teaches the children. I challenge you men to live up to your responsibility.

The little child turned to the *pater familias* and asks, “What meaneth this service?” And then there was unfolded the significance of the Passover and how Israel had been brought out of the land of Egypt by means of a blood sacrifice that was substitutionary for them and a penal sacrifice. It was a ransom price. I would love to have heard our Lord explain the significance of the Passover. I think I could have learned a thing or two. Then the meal, the real meal, was eaten and just before that the

bread was broken, and it probably was at that time, taking half of the *aphikomen*, that the Lord Jesus instituted the part of the Lord’s Supper that had to do with the bread.

And then after they had eaten, there was a third cup that they partook of, and it’s evident at this third when this time came the Lord Jesus raised that cup and instituted the ceremony of the wine with the use of the cup. Incidentally that is called, in the Jewish literature, the Cup of Blessing, and you’ll remember that in First Corinthians chapter 10 Paul calls the cup at the Lord’s Supper, the Cup of Blessing.

The service concluded with the singing of the remainder of the *hallel*, and a word of praise and it was in the midst of this that our Lord instituted the first Lord’s Supper.

The background of this then is the Passover lamb. No one ever ate the Passover lamb like our Lord Jesus Christ. Those first Israelites in Egypt who ate that lamb recognized that it was the blood of that lamb that was protecting the firstborn. And so they thought of that animal as the animal from which the blood had been taken to be splattered on the lintels and the door posts of the door, so that God would hover over the door seeing the blood and prevent the destroying angel from entering in to destroy the firstborn.

Ever since that time all of the Israelites looked at that lamb, and if they had spiritual eyes would reflect in the—unto the fact that it was by virtue of the blood that was shed that they were protected from the judgment that fell upon Egypt. But our Lord looks at the lamb in an entirely different way. He is the only Israelite who always obeyed—never disobeyed—and yet as he looked at the lamb, it was something that condemned him to death because of course it signified to him that this is his place, and in just a few hours, having looked at that lamb and having eaten of that lamb which signified his death, he must carry it out. So it was a lamb which condemned him to death to his face from the divine standpoint.

Two lines we have said, meet in the guest chamber, and the switch is thrown over, and we move proleptically from the old covenant to the new covenant. In the Old Testament altars were the characteristic pieces of furniture. It was by the altars that the animals were slain. In the New

Testament, it is a table, not the altars, for the sacrifice is no more. In the Old Testament they looked forward to the coming of the true Lamb of God when they partook of the Passover lamb. Now, in the new covenant days, as we partake of the bread and the wine, we look back to the reality of a finished sacrifice. We do not eat lamb, for there is no sacrifice now. “The sacrifice is o’er,” as the hymn writer has put it.

Now the text, I think, is very significant in that it stresses very, very definitely the initiative that belongs to God in it. Will you look at the 26th verse in which Matthew describes the ceremony of the bread? And as they were eating, Jesus took bread.

Incidentally, he took bread because bread referred to his body, and the body was a necessary means to the incarnation, and so he begins with the incarnation but our Lord took the bread and he blessed it and he broke it. Bread was ordinarily broken, and so it beautifully symbolized not only the incarnation but also the fact of his death. So Jesus took the bread.

Incidentally, when he says this bread is my body, he means this broken bread is my body. We do not feed on a Christ who has not been sacrificed. We feed upon a Christ who has been sacrificed in our Lord’s Supper. And when we take the bread, we do not think simply of the fact that he became a man we think also of broken bread. He is food for us only insofar as he has been sacrificed for us. There is no real spiritual food derived from just feeding on an incarnate Savior who did not die. He only becomes food for us because he dies and delivers us from judgment. So Jesus took bread and he broke it and he gave it to the disciples.

Now whenever we talk about theology, we must start at the right place. It’s like surveying. I don’t know anything about surveying, but I know this is true: that a surveyor must put his transit compass at the precise point, and he must be very accurate in it, because if he doesn’t put his compass at the right point, every lot in the whole subdivision will be wrong. So he must begin at the right place. He must put his transit compass right on the spot.

Now if we’re going to understand theology, one of the first things that we must understand is the fact that in salvation, the work is the sovereign work of God. The sovereign initiative of the

triune God in salvation is our starting point. It is here that we put our transit compass of salvation. We must recognize that it begins with God. It does not begin with us. That’s why we read, Jesus took bread. Jesus blessed it. Jesus broke it. Jesus gave it—all the initiative rests with the Lord and not with the men.

Now that is, I think, extremely important and is something we should never forget. Even H. G. Wells, who as far as I know was not noted for his fundamentalist doctrine, said, “Until man finds God and is found of God he begins at no beginning and comes to no ending.” In the Bible theology begins with God, and comes to its proper ending only in the recognition of the initiative of the Lord Jesus in our salvation. We are not saved because we want God, but we are saved because he wants us and comes to us by the Lord and by the Spirit.

Now he took that bread and he said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Now a great deal of theological blood as been spilled over the meaning of the expression, this is my body. As you know, no doubt, there is a large religious organization that teaches when Jesus said this is my body, that that bread was transformed into the body of Christ. And when he said this blood is the blood of the new covenant, he transformed the wine into the blood of Christ. That doctrine is called the doctrine of transubstantiation. That organization has expressed in it’s doctrinal statements it’s viewpoint that if you do not believe that or if you are in a church that does not believe that, then anathema or a curse rests upon you.

Now there have been different viewpoints and that’s not the only one. The Lutherans for example have taught the doctrine of consubstantiation. The Reformers have taught two doctrines. Some of the Reformers have taught the doctrine of the personal presence of Jesus Christ in the elements, and then one of the Reformers particularly taught that the Lord’s Supper is simply a memorial.

Now I do think the Bible makes it plain that when we take the bread and when we take the wine it is a memorial. He does say this do in remembrance of me. There may be also more significance in it. It is not within our purview this morning to go into all of the details. I want to

simply say it seems to me quite plain that one thing he did not mean was that that bread was the body of Christ. This organization, in an effort to get away from the obvious objections has said it is the substance of the bread that is changed and not the appearance of it. The substance is changed in the wine, the substance is changed in the bread, but the appearances or the accidents, to use the technical term, remain the same. That is, it looks like bread, it tastes like bread, it smells like bread, it feels like bread, but it’s not bread. And we are to not follow our senses, but we are to believe the doctrines of the church.

When I was a just a brand new Christian someone put a book in my hands—I don’t think he ever should have done it, really—but it profited me. It was called, *Forty Years in the Church of Rome*. It was a volume written by a priest by the name of Father Chinaqui. I’ll never forget it. I read every line in it. It was a lengthy book with little tiny print, but it was an absorbing volume. It explained the things that went on in Father Chinaqui’s mind and which ultimately led him to part company with that organization in which he had grown up.

He later wrote a book called *Fifty Years in the Church of Christ*, which means that he was ten years in the Church of Rome while he was a true believer in Jesus Christ and trusting in the grace of God. He said one of the things that made him question the doctrine of transubstantiation was the fact that in his own church which was a cathedral in the middle west, as I remember, that occasionally as he was in the process of carrying out the ritual of the Mass and Eucharist, he would put the bread on the altar with the wine and in going through his liturgy, he would be required to go through certain liturgy and as the bread and wine was there occasionally a little mouse would steal out from behind the curtains and nibble on the bread while he was transforming it into the body of Christ.

And he said that posed a theological problem for him, and he wondered whether if the mouse ate—I did say mouse in the service this morning at 8:30. I have some real technical listeners there. I said a mice this morning, and I heard about it later [laughter]. I want you to know I’m saying

a mouse—when a mouse feeds upon the bread that has been transformed into the body of Christ, really feed on the body of Christ?

Well now, Thomas Aquinas pronounces on that, so evidently it was a problem that had faced a number of Roman theologians because they did minister in cathedrals which were not always of the cleanest, and Aquinas says, yes that’s a question that should be discussed, and he was very consistent. He said, if a mouse feeds upon the bread that has been transformed into the body of Christ the mouse does feed on the body of Christ.

What does it mean when it says, this is my body? Why it means the same thing that the Lord means in chapter 13 when he says in the midst of one of his parables, the field is the world. He means that the field represents the world. The word, is, in the Bible, the verb to be, often is the is of symbolic representation. In the book of Revelation, we frequently have it in that sense: chapter 1. It means is in the sense of represents. After all, if the Lord Jesus took the bread and gave it to them saying, this is my body, how could it possibly be his body when his body is here with blood flowing through it and he is handing them the bread? It means this represents my body.

Now Luke tells us—it is not given us in Matthew—that he said, “This do in remembrance of me.” By the way, this shows us, of course, that the atonement is no afterthought with the Lord Jesus. He planned it all. But think of this for a moment now. Here is a man, a Jewish man. Let’s assume he’s only a man as our liberal friends like to think of him; as only a man but perhaps a superior man. Here is a Jewish man who has been told as all Jewish men have, because it’s in the Word of God in Exodus chapter 12, that the Passover service is to be remembered continually. It is the celebration of the birth night of the nation in Egypt. And every—at a certain time they are to carry it out. In fact, God said in the Old Testament, it’s a night much to be observed among you.

Now here is a simple Jewish man by the name of Jesus observing the Passover with eleven of his friends, and he stands up in the midst of this gathering and says, I’m doing away with the God-appointed service of the Passover and I want you, not to remember Moses, not to remember what happened in Egypt—I want you to do this constantly in remembrance of me.

Now that is either arrogant audacity, or it is the word of the living God. And true believers do not have any doubt about the answer to that question. This do in remembrance of me. What was he saying? He’s saying, I’m the true paschal lamb. I am in my death the true sacrifice, and in the shedding of my blood there is true safety. That’s what he’s saying just as plain as day. And to say he never taught a doctrine of the atonement, is to be so blind and unfeeling with spiritual things that when you look at this, you see nothing even though there is the revelation of the greatness of the work of the Son in it.

Then he takes the cup. The background is Exodus chapter 24, and the ratification of the old covenant which was a conditional covenant, for the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the people and on the book. They had obligations and God had obligations, but in the case of this new covenant, the sole ground of the new covenant is the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus; it is absolutely unconditional. It is important that we remember that. The new covenant is unconditional. We do not of our own selves do anything. When we exercise faith and receive the blessing, it is God who gives us that faith. The salvation is the work of the Lord that is taught is so plainly here.

Now he says, Matthew does, he took the cup and he gave it to them saying, drink ye all of it. I grew up in a Presbyterian Church. I can still remember the ministers getting up on the first Sunday of the quarter, and dispensing the elements to the congregation. I can still remember them saying, drink ye all of it. And it took that to mean that you were to drink all of the cup, and so I was careful to drain every drop of it. I can remember still holding it up like this when I was a little child to be sure I got every drop, because Jesus had said, drink ye all of it. Then I opened up the Greek testament years later, and discovered that the all was not in the objective case, but in the nominative case, and it was, drink ye all of it. If he’d just said in the Authorized Version, drink ya’ll of it, [laughter] I would have understood. But it’s not like that so I had to learn the hard way. Drink all of you of it.

Now when he says that, then he adds, for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This may be the most important statement for the

atonement in the New Testament. What is meant by the blood? There are people who say, why blood means simply death. But no, it means more than that. Our Lord Jesus if he had died of a heart attack would not have been our redemption. If he had gotten sick and died he would not have been our Redeemer. No, in the Bible when you read about blood, you do not think simply of death, you think of violent death, violent death—death under the curse of God as a sacrifice. That’s what meant—what’s meant when it says this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for the remission of sins for many.

So we should never say that blood means simply death. It means violent death. If you’ll look at passages like Numbers chapter 35 and verse 33 and then the context of it through the Old Testament you’ll see that our Lord was speaking here in sacrificial language. This is my blood, so he means this represents the violent death by sacrifice which I shall die. In fact, the bread and the wine are a kind of two-fold parable. In the case of the bread, it is broken, suggesting death and also suggesting violent death. And then in the case of the wine, which is red like blood—remember in the Old Testament even wine is called the blood of grapes. It was God’s way of trying to teach Israel ahead of time what was going to happen. So the bread, the broken body, the wine, the outpoured blood of sacrifice, animal sacrifice, was the figure, but here is the reality. So what he is saying then simply is this blood is that by which a new covenant is ratified. It is based on this new blood sacrifice that I will accomplish, and it is made with the true seed of Abraham. It is for many.

Now I think that, for many, is a term that—it’s not specific here we have to read the whole of the Bible to understand its full meaning—but it refers to all of the seed of Abraham. It refers to those true Israelites who were believers in the Old Testament; it also refers to all of those Gentiles who shall be brought to faith and who form part of the seed of Abraham, as the apostle tells us in the Epistle to the Galatians. So when he says it is shed for many, he means it is shed for his redeemed. All those that make up the figure that the apostle uses in the 11th chapter of Romans of the olive tree, inclusive of the root and fatness of the covenant made with Abraham, the branches of

Israel true in faith and those branches of Gentiles grafted in who partake of the root of the fatness of the olive tree for the redeemed community.

I am not suggesting that Israel and the church are the same. I am simply suggesting that Israel and the church have their salvation by virtue of a common relationship to our Lord Jesus Christ’s blood sacrifice, and notice it is unconditional. Unconditional. It is our Lord who takes the bread; it is our Lord who takes the cup. It is he who says, “Take and eat.” It is he who says, “Drink all of it.” It is unconditional. There is no probably about it. There is no perhaps about it. There is no could be about it. No maybe about it. For when he died he did accomplish the salvation of those for whom he came to die. That’s why we preach a sovereign God.

Notice that blood is shed—not spilled—shed as a sacrifice. Not one drop was wasted either. And when our Lord Jesus came and shed that precious blood it accomplished exactly what the Father intended that it should accomplish. Not one drop is wasted, because he was accomplishing his purposes.

I know that there are people who teach universal redemption. I taught universal redemption myself for a number of years. I know that there are those who say that the Lord Jesus came to make all men savable. I puzzled about that even when I was teaching it, because my elders taught me that, and I respected them. I still do. But the more I’ve reflected on this over the years, the more I have become convinced, and I don’t think I can be changed. I do believe that when the Lord Jesus died, he did not die to make everyone savable. I cannot tell you all of the reasons why in a short time like this, but I only say this, that universal redemption founders at this point, at the point of a substitutionary sacrifice.

For ultimately, if it does not fail by crashing against the Scylla of universalism, for if he died for all then all would be saved. All would have borne their penalty in the substitute and cannot be called upon again to suffer that penalty which has been borne in our Lord Jesus Christ. Or it sinks in the Charybdis of its doctrine of a frustrated deity, a God who sought to save everybody but who was unable to accomplish his purposes. That makes a mockery of sovereignty. As the poet has said, “The

universe he feign would say but longs for what he cannot have.” We therefore worship, praise and laud a disappointed helpless God.

No we don’t. We don’t worship any disappointed, helpless God. We do not have a frustrated deity who sought to save everybody but failed, but we have a God who has accomplished his precise purpose in the gift of his Son.

Now this stirs up a lot of people. The very idea that God should speak particularly in the Bible makes people angry. Well that’s not necessarily bad. I hope makes them so angry, they’ll say, I’ll see what God does say. Then they’ll become one of us [laughter].

George Whitfield—I greatly admired Mr. Whitfield. One of his characteristic statements he said, “This is one reason among others why I admire the doctrine of election and am convinced that it should have a place in gospel ministrations and should be insisted on with faithfulness and care. It has a natural tendency to rouse the soul out of carnal security.” How true that is.

When we are telling you from the pulpit that there are some who are the objects of our Lord’s saving work, that he has elected in the ages past, there is a man sitting in the audience and he says, God loves everybody and I’m loved by God and God is for everybody in the Son and I’ve been died for and I’m in my carnal security and he says, that fellow is telling me there are some that are going to be saved and there are some that are going to be lost, and it does have a tendency to rouse him out of his carnal security, out of his cozy indifference, out of his, I’m-all-right-Jack-attitude, or his false peace to put it in the sense of the Scriptures.

And then Mr. Whitfield goes on to say, “Whereas universal redemption is a notion sadly adapted to keep the soul in its lethargic, sleepy, condition, and therefore so many natural men admire and applaud it.” Mr. Whitfield was right. That’s why he was a great evangelist; probably the greatest we have ever had in the United States. He was a great evangelist, because he preached the truth of God and was fearless in it, and taught plainly that God does have his own for whom he has sent his Son.

Now if there’s someone in the audience wondering, am I one of the elect, am I one of the non-elect, it’s a very simple matter to settle it. You know, if you have any question about it at all, if you know you’re a sinner, if God has revealed that you are under condemnation, he asks you to trust in the atonement. And you trust in the atonement by pleading the atonement. You turn to the Lord and say, Lord I’m a sinner, Christ died for sinners, you say. I want this salvation; O Lord in Christ I trust Thee for it. You’re one of the elect.

But now you sit in the audience and say, I don’t like this, I don’t want it; I will not trust in the atonement by pleading the atonement. What have you to complain about? You’re getting exactly what you want—that’s exactly what you want. You don’t want him, so you get what you want. May God rouse you out of your carnal security, out of your indifference.

He says this is for the remission of sins. Remission is remitting of merited punishment, and so this is a judicial term. Penal substitution is in view, in my opinion. He says, for many for the remission of sins. That means that when Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy says that the blood of Jesus Christ was of no more avail when it was shed upon the cursed tree than when it was flowing through his veins in daily life, she is proclaiming heresy as Christian Science does proclaim. It is for the remission of sins. What a wonderful thing that is. Isn’t it great to know we have pardon? Isn’t it great to know that we stand before God justified by the grace of God through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus?

Will you pardon me for repeating an illustration? The man who led me to the Lord was Donald Gray Barnhouse as many of you know, and many years ago he was preaching in the church in Philadelphia, the Tenth Presbyterian Church, in which I had often preached in the past. That church is a very historic church, and it has balconies down the side, and a balcony in the back where the choir sits, and then down the sides the balcony is rather close to the pulpit, maybe fifteen feet—fifteen or twenty feet. It’s been some years now since I’ve been there.

He was preaching one morning on forgiveness. He had a little statement he used to like to say whenever he preached. He said it constantly, but this morning he was talking on forgiveness.

There was a little boy, twelve years old, sitting in the balcony looking intently at him just like some boys do, they get like this and just look. And he was paying attention, and finally Dr. Barnhouse said, “That morning, I summed it all up in a sentence. Our sins are forgiven, forgotten, cleansed, pardoned, atoned for, remitted, covered. They’ve been cast into the depths of the sea, blotted out as thick cloud, removed as far as the East is from the West, remembered against us no more forever, cast behind God’s back.”

And with that, pronounced the benediction and went out front, and later as he was standing there, a little boy came up about twelve years of age. Dr. Barnhouse was a real tall man. He came up, and he took Dr. Barnhouse by the elbow and pulled on it like this, and when Dr. Barnhouse looked down at him, he said, “Great sermon, Doc.” [Laughter] And then, Dr. Barnhouse smiled, he said, “Gee, we’re sure sittin’ purty, aren’t we?” [More laughter] That’s true. That exactly what we are. We are sure sitting pretty.

Our Lord has made a covenant with us. He has confirmed it in that he has brought us to faith in the Lord Jesus. We have the remission of sins. Everything is optimism for the Christian throughout all the ages that are to come.

Well I got a little too excited this morning. In the 29th verse, he talks about the great supper. He converts the memorial into a prophesy: the new covenant leads on to a new day. It implies that our Lord shall be exalted. I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of this vine until that day when you drink it when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. It implies that there will be a consummating kingdom in which we do sit down and enjoy the things that we have here. Incidentally, if our Lord Jesus was not telling us the truth, the Lord’s Supper which we celebrate would be every Sunday a memory of the mistaken estimate that he put on his own ministry, for he said, “Never forget, never forget what we are doing today.” But if he had not been exalted, if this is not coming true, then every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we celebrate his ignorance and mistakes. We know better.

And finally he says, he is going to drink it new with you in the kingdom of God. The cross and the communion lead on to the second coming just like Good Friday via Easter leads on to epiphany. So written unmistakably then on the Lord’s Supper is his desire that his death, not his miracles, not his life, not his ethics, but his death be remembered, and this one aspect is the important point. He is the true Passover lamb under whose blood there exists safety for his people for whom he died.

What is our duty? Why our duty is the same duty that the children of Israel had at the first Passover, except in symbolic fashion. What was their duty? Why it was to take of the blood of the Passover lamb and sprinkle it on the door posts of that door, and so our duty is to take of—to take our fingers, put our fingers in the blood of the once and for all sacrifice which the Lord Jesus accomplished, and sprinkle that upon the door posts of our hearts by pleading the atonement.

This teaching, incidentally was given to believers, men who had found virtue in his blood to be shed and full atonement to be made. They like you had responded to the unconditional offer in faith, and they had come to admire him for his justice and to love him for his love. They had come to realize that God’s law must be honored in the sacrifice for sinners. They had come to realize that God’s law was so honored by God himself that he gave his only Son that his law, his justice might be honored. And they revered him as the lawgiver.

But more than that, they saw that in his desire to uphold his law, he had given his own Son to uphold his own law, and by that sacrifice he had won their love, and they had responded with we love him because he has first loved us. May God speak to your heart in that way. If you are here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you this salvation is for you, for sinners. So vast a number of the redeemed shall be saved that John says you cannot even number them. Do not think for one moment that salvation is a limited salvation. It is a vast salvation of a multitude which no man can number. If you’re here and you’ve never believed, we invite you, if you know you’re a sinner to plead the atonement by trusting in the atonement. May God help you to do it. Let’s stand for the benediction.

“The Last Passover and the First Lord’s Supper: Part II” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Prayer] Father we thank Thee and praise Thee for all that lies back of the observation of the last Passover and the first Lord’s Supper. How wonderful it is to look back and contemplate the redemptive work that Christ has accomplished and rejoice in the remission of sins that is ours.

O God if there is someone in this auditorium who has not yet come to him, Lord we pray that Thou glorify Thy name, enlarge the company of the saints. Give us the joy, Lord of seeing men brought to Christ. May grace mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.