



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Amos 8

“Fall and Famine”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're coming near the end of our series of expositions of the prophecy of Amos, and actually according to the schedule we have only two more studies outside of the present one. We will devote two of our Sundays to the exposition of the 9th chapter. So you have just a few more opportunities to read through the Book of Amos at least with a little bit of urging from the front. How many of you this past week have been able to finish the Book of Amos? Would you raise your hand. Well, I'm proud of you, but for the rest of you I'm disturbed. [Laughter] Amos is a marvelous book and I believe that you could probably read it in less than thirty minutes. So we'll give you another opportunity next week and one final week as well. In case you wondered whether I finished or not, I did finish. In fact, I finished before one o'clock last night reading through the Hebrew text of the book which I had enjoyed reading again and have profited from listening to Amos as he gave these marvelous messages to the northern kingdom.

Now, we're reading for our Scripture reading this morning the 8th chapter and will you turn then to that chapter and listen as we read the 14 verses of it. “Thus the Lord God showed me.” Now, you may notice that in these past few paragraphs we have had three visions that Amos records. This is the fourth and there will be a fifth in chapter 9.

“Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, there was a basket of summer fruit. He said, ‘What do you see, Amos?’ And I said, ‘A basket of summer fruit.’ Then the Lord said to me, ‘The end has come for My people Israel, I will spare them no longer. The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day,’ declares the Lord God. ‘Many will be the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence.’”

Perhaps it would be of some interest to you to know that this basket of summer fruit that Amos saw suggests that the time of this vision was in the fall. And in Israel the civil year began in the fall. You’ll notice in the papers occasionally mention is made of Rosh Hashanah, which is the beginning of the Jewish year, civil year, not the ecclesiastical year that begins in April with the Passover time, but the civil year and the agricultural year begins in equivalent in our time of say October to November. It was then that they anticipated the rains. And after a dry summer and after things were very dry and the leaves were off the trees, they looked forward to the time of the rains. So the festival of that time of the year was the equivalent of their new year. So by divine providence this a new year’s sermon from Amos chapter 8. And in fact the songs of the palace mentioned in verse 3 may be a reference to the celebrations that took place at that time of the year. Now, the fourth verse.

“Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, saying, ‘When will the new moon be over, so that we may buy grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales, so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals, and that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?’”

The refuse of the wheat was, evidently, the little bit of wheat that was left after the good quality wheat was sold. And so the refuse would be swept up and that would be sold, evidently, as quality wheat.

“The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, ‘Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds. Because of this will not the land quake and everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile and it will be tossed about and subside like the Nile of Egypt. And it will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.’”

Now, as Amos is speaking about that which is going to literally happen probably in his prophetic message he moves on to the end of time in which some of these things will actually take place in literal fashion.

“Then I shall turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins and baldness on every head and I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, and the end of it will be like a bitter day. Behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord God, ‘When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And people will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east.’”

It’s striking, I think, that perhaps Amos has in mind the fact that since he doesn’t mention the south where the southern kingdom was which still was relatively faithful, he pictures people going about everywhere to find the truth but not going to the one place where they might find it. Evidently so desirous of being known as seekers for truth that they would go everywhere but not really seeking because they refuse to go to the place where they might find it. There are lots of people like that today aren’t they. People who

people speak about being individuals who seek truth but the truth is found in Holy Scripture places where the word of God is proclaimed but that’s the one place that they avoid. So Amos maybe referring to that in this prophecy when he omits the south from the people staggering from sea to sea from the north and even to the east. “They will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.

“In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men will faint from thirst.”

Notice that the young people are singled out and I want to say something about that later on.

“As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria.”

Now, that expression is at any rate regardless of how we understand, it a reference to the god the false god that those in the northern kingdom had begun to worship. It’s possible that the name of the god is mentioned here. In other words, we could render this as for those who swear by Ashima of Samaria for that was the name of the God, Esheima, but the Hebrew word ‘asham is the word that means guilt. So the two are very close together ‘asham - Ashima. It’s possible that we ought to render this for those who swear by Ashima. That is, the goddess, the false goddess of Samaria. But at any rate, if we should render it by the guilt of Samaria, the reason for the guilt of Samaria is the worship of Ashima. So the false goddess is referred to regardless of how we may, from the philological standpoint, translate that clause. “Who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan.’” And this, of course, is one of the false representations of God set up by the northern kingdom. “As your god lives, O Dan.” Now, notice what Amos is saying, “As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, “Who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan,’ and ‘as the way of Beersheba lives.” Beersheba was deep in the south and so religious people made

pilgrimages to Beersheba like people make pilgrimages today for religious reasons. And so he says as for those who say as the way Beersheba lives these false pilgrimages they will fail and not rise again. It is a chapter of divine judgment. And Amos is the prophet of judgment and may the Lord enable us by his grace to hear what Amos has to say to us.

Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours. We thank Thee for the ministry of the word of God to us by the Holy Spirit and through the apostles and prophets who have faithfully been the intermediaries by which the truth has come to us. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the revelation contained in Scripture concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And how marvelous it is to know we have a savior who saves from sin to the uttermost. And we thank Thee for those passages of the word of God that point out our sin, our rebellion. How we have turned away from Thee and we thank Thee for the marvelous way in which the Scriptures reveal that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the eternal trinity through effectual grace turns us back into the way to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the shepherd of the people of God. And we worship Thee today through him.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the revelation of our natures and our condition and for the revelation of his saving power. We thank Thee for this assembly of believers, for our elders, and for our deacons and we pray for them and for the members and the visitors and friends who are here today, Lord, minister to each of us and draw us closer to Thee through the word of God. We pray for our country. We pray for our president. We especially remember those, Lord, who have requested our prayers and we bring them before Thee those mentioned in our calendar of concern. May the earnest desires of their hearts find solution in the ministry of our great savior God. We commit our service to Thee, the singing of the hymns, the special number, and the ministry of the word.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, I know, I speak for the elders and the members, a word of appreciation to you, Hank, for being willing to share your marvelous voice with us this morning. I would think from listening to what he said that that was pretty good Pauline doctrine that he was preaching because it was very touching. Hank is the son of Charles and Jean Hammit. And someone went to Charles this morning, whose been one of our deacons and well known by most of the people who attend the chapel, and asked him how it happened that Hank managed to emerge from Charles and Jean. And he said, “I’ll never know I cannot even whistle.” [Laughter] Well we’re very grateful Hank, and we appreciate it. And we wish God’s blessing upon you as you teach in California, University of California at Santa Barbara. We envy your location, but we wish God’s blessing upon you as you seek to teach there.

Now, we are studying the Book of Amos, and we’re in chapter 8. And the subject for this morning is “Fall and Famine.” The maturing of nature involves the stages of spring and summer and then autumn. And in the Bible this often represents the ripening of human conduct and character of good or evil. That becomes something of the focus of Amos’ next section involving this vision of the basket of summer fruit. I’ve a little book written by a Dutch expositor and he entitles the chapter that we are studying this morning the still-life because most of us when we think about a basket of summer fruit, there flashes through our minds at least that common picture of still-life that artists often draw. Now there is something very appropriate because still life is a picture of fruit that is ripe for eating but at the same time there is another kind of ripeness that we associate with ripeness that is true of summer fruit or at least the time when summer fruit is placed on the table. In the case of the still life, of course, the ripeness is ripeness for eating but of course, corruption is not far behind. In the case of Amos, when he looks at the basket of summer fruit it’s evident that the ripeness that we associate with a basket of summer fruit is ripeness for judgment. In fact, a still life or a basket of summer fruit suggests that

everything is lovely and beautiful but deep down within there is something else as Amos will seek to show in the eighth chapter.

Now, of course, God gave him this and so when we say Amos will seek to show this we are simply say that this is God’s picture of the northern kingdom. They’re like a basket of summer fruit but they are ripe for judgment and in fact it’s sure to come. The corruption is within. Outwardly everything was lovely and beautiful. Just as in our evangelical churches we look out and so often everything seems to be lovely and beautiful, but corruption is often at work. So we must be prepared for a maturing that leaves us with nothing but death. And we must by God’s grace relying upon the Holy Spirit seek to avoid the inevitably issue of neglect and indifference to the things of the Lord because inevitably that will lead to divine judgment. If we neglect proper care of our garden then, of course, in the fall there will be nothing there as every citizen of the city of Dallas knows.

So we turn now to the vision of summer fruit. This is the fourth vision of the series, and it constitutes an announcement that the covenant relationship the Lord and Israel and specifically this generation has been broken. As we will see when turn to chapter 9 in verse 11 and following this does not mean that the ancient promises that were given are not going to be fulfilled, but so far as this generation is concerned they have broken the covenant relationship and they shall not enjoy the benefits of the great promises. This vision as we said is received at the end of a long hot summer. The feast of booths was the occasion of tokens of offerings of the prosperity that the Lord had given; a happy time amidst the festivals of the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem here in the northern kingdom where everything was a counterfeit of that in the southern kingdom. No doubt there was a great deal of celebration, a great deal of outward thanksgiving to the Lord God, but inwardly everything, it’s obvious from Amos’s chapter, was corruption. So you can imagine the people walking the streets of the city of Samaria with the happiness of material prosperity on their faces, and here is the prophet in the midst of the

anticipation of the rain that would mean another fruitful year walking up and down the Samaria saying this is the end. This is the end. Judgment is sure to come. A very unpopular fellow in the midst of happiness and the hope of prosperity.

And, in fact, the Lord gave him such a message that he saw to it that the very wording by which it was given would attract attention. For the word for summer fruit in Hebrew is the word *qayits*, whereas, the term for the end is *qatsab*. So as Amos gives his prophecy and the basket *qayits* his message is *qatsab*, the end. The end is come for the northern kingdom. So the very wording is designed to impress upon those who heard Amos’s message that the end has come. It was a pun on the Hebrew *qayits* and *qatsab*. And the fall of the year is the time of the vision, and the fall of the year is the fall of Israel; ripe fruit the still-life but ripe for judgment. There is no renewal of the falls life renewing rains this time and so, consequently, they face only judgment. In fact, in verse 3 when he mentions the songs of the palace, the chances are that the references to the background and songs that were characteristic of that festival time.

But notice the things that are stated in verse 3 and notice the order in which the clauses follow one another. “The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day declares the Lord God. Many will be the corpses. In every place they will cast them forth in silence.” And so we have wailing and then corpses and then silence, a very stunning and very memorable picture of divine judgment, the death rattle of a dying kingdom. The northern kingdom is set forth here by Amos the prophet.

Now, let’s turn to verse 4 through verse 14 for this is the significance that Amos wishes to bring home to the people of his day and I don’t even have to make any applications. It’s obvious that when we state the problems that the northern kingdom had and that the individuals were guilty of then the application is very obvious. The theme of sudden coming of disaster set forth in verse 3 is followed up in the verses that follow. The songs become wailing. The solid land trembles. The sun sets at noon. The feasts are turned to mourning because God’s judgment is set forth here. But notice the call to

the guilty. “Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, saying, “When will the new moon be over, so that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, to make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, and to cheat with dishonest scales.”

Now, these fellows didn’t say that. Amos is reading their minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is the way they were in the sight of God, but in the sight of men they looked lovely. They looked like you. They were enjoying the festivals. They were enjoying the celebrations. They were having a good time. They were dressed for the occasion and no one had festivals and liturgy. And the kinds of things that would impress the eye like Israel, why the Northern Kingdom they sought to counterfeit the Southern Kingdom and carried out elaborate ritual. Anyone who reads the Old Testament and becomes acquainted with the Torah and reflects upon the way in which the worship of Israel was carried out cannot fail to be impressed by the remarkable impressive ceremonies that God gave Israel to impress upon them the truth of the ministry of the redeemer who would come. All of those offerings all of those special feast days, they were to be means by which pedagogically Israel was prepared for the coming of the Messiah himself.

And they carried out these elaborate rituals. They didn’t give them out. They carried them out. And in the Northern Kingdom with their counterfeit ritual, they no doubt were very, very impressive. And so when the times of the festivals came, they were into those things. But what lay back of those things in the minds of those people was something quite different. And Amos can see this. He knows this even as simply a prophet, he knows it by the evidences of the lives of the individuals who belonged to that kingdom. Why when they sat in their meetings, they weren’t thinking about the spiritual significance of the ceremonies that they were part of. They were thinking about such things as when will the new moon be over so that we may buy grain.

And further on the Sabbath they were thinking not the Sabbath reminds us of the glorious rest that the Messiah will bring us at his coming, all of the other significances of the Sabbath set out in the Scriptures, but they were thinking as their faces were in meetings reflecting the religious aura of the time, they were thinking when’s the Sabbath going to be over so we can open up the wheat market and we can make the bushels smaller and the shekels bigger. In other words, we’ll sell a bushel, but by our scales the bushel won’t really be a bushel. Like when you go down to buy a cord of wood, your cord of wood may not really be a cord of wood because if the bushel or the cord is made smaller you pay for a cord you don’t get a cord.

But listen, these fellows beat the others out two ways; they not only gave them a smaller bushel but when they came to pay for it, they had a little scale. So they had an official shekel, by which the coins were weighed, and they would put the official shekel on one side of the scales and on the other side you would put your money. And so you would put your coins up and if the payment was to be one shekel and you’d put your coins there, since the shekel they had made larger you’d have to pay more than a shekel. So they’d give you less than a bushel when you wanted a bushel, and when they required a shekel of you it was really more than a shekel. They had you both coming and going, both ways. And further, they did it with dishonest scales. So they not only were guilty of what we might call the unprofessional conduct. It was deceit. In fact, the Hebrew word means precisely that. It’s to cheat with dishonest scales. They were deceitful. That’s what they were thinking about on Sunday while it was really their Sabbath.

Now, that’s what they were thinking about just like some of you or sometimes I. We think about things that were going to happen during the week while we’re looking very pious and reverent. In fact, it’s entirely possible some of you even in spite of what I am saying you’re thinking about what you’re going to do tomorrow. As for the worship of God, well the worship of God really takes second place in our lives. Amos by virtue of

the direction of the Holy Spirit and by looking at the evidences of the lives of the northern kingdom citizens knew that they were headed for divine judgment.

Further, not only did they do all of these things but they bought the helpless for money and the needy. They paid a big price for the needy to get some slaves that paid a pair of sandals, a pair of shoes and, furthermore, that we may sell the refuse of the wheat. So it’s obvious that Sabbath hating and swindling go together. Going to church and swindling go together. These kinds of policies, of course, lead to the extinction of the poor price gouging, poor products.

I never have been greatly impressed by Ralph Nader, but I imagine he would have had quite a bit to do in those days with the price gouging, the poor products and think of the loan companies and the interest that might have been derived from the poor even though in Israel one was never supposed to lend money for interest. It was like in Israel like you belong to the company store. About twenty-five years ago wasn’t it, Tennessee Ernie Ford sang that great song, “Sixteen Tons,” and spoke about the bondage of being a part of a mining company. And since I grew up in Alabama where the coal mines were I can understand this having been out for many times in the insurance business to check on mining properties as insurance risks. And to think about how they worked for the mines. They had to buy at the company store. They were in debt to the company and paid by the company insufficiently. This was the same kind of thing that was happening in the Northern Kingdom. I can just imagine now a businessman coming up to Amos and saying look Amos we got to make a living. You preachers, you always talk about the way in which things ought to be but you’re not out there where the real world is and we’ve got to make a living. And so, consequently, Amos I want to pose a theological to you. Is it a sin to be a successful businessman?

Now, I imagine that Amos had some very proper words in answer to that. He said, “No it’s not a sin to be a successful businessman. I would hope that you would be a successful business man, but I would just like to remind you the priorities that are set out

in Holy Scripture. It’s God first and me after God.” God first and if in order to be a successful businessman it requires that I neglect the things of the Lord then to be that kind of successful businessman is something that’s not for my or your eternal good.

And if furthermore you add to that the fact in order to be a businessman a successful businessman you have to cut corners and you have to cheat and you have to deceive then, of course, that’s wrong. And that is not only wrong; it will lead to divine discipline and judgment. It’s not wrong to be a successful businessman. I would hope that all of you in Believers Chapel are successful businessmen, but I believe this with all my heart that the individual who follows the word of God and works hard will be a successful businessman. And, furthermore, you’ll have peace of mind and peace of heart in being a successful businessman. And he will discover that by God’s grace and God’s working remarkably good things happen to him for which he doesn’t have a real good answer except that God has been gracious to him. So Amos I don’t know exactly what your answer was to that question but I think it would be along those lines.

Now Amos goes on to speak about the physical judgment that is to follow in verses 7 through 10. These verses, evidently, like so many of the prophetic sections of the Old Testament not only speak to the present but they also look on to the end of the times. “The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, ‘Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds’”; the irony of swearing by the pride of Jacob. It’s as if other oaths were too uncertain since they took no notice of others. Because you will remember in other parts of the book Amos gives words from God as if he swore by other things. For example, back in chapter 4 in verse 2, if you who’ve been reading Amos you may remember this the Lord God has sworn by his holiness. And then in chapter 6 in verse 8, the Lord God has sworn by himself.

But now, it’s almost as if the other oaths are a bit uncertain for the people out there. And so he says here’s one thing that’s really evident, the pride of Jacob. So the Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob. “Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.”

He will never forget. He will never forgive. That’s a terror to the mind to think of a people godforsaken. We use that term godforsaken very lightly. We say, for example, Fort Worth is a godforsaken place. [Laughter] Well, we don’t really say that, but we say that with a smile on the faces and I’m sure the people from Fort Worth who may be listening to me have another term that they insert instead of Fort Worth. But we use the term very lightly. But let me assure you, the Scriptures say that to be godforsaken is biblical truth, and the northern kingdom is a godforsaken kingdom.

In other words, the doctrine of divine retribution is a biblical doctrine and not only do the prophets speak of it, the law speaks of it, the Lord Jesus speaks of it, John the Apostle speaks of it, Paul the Apostle speaks of it. It’s universally taught in the Bible the doctrine of divine retribution. He is like this. It’s hard for us to realize this, but he is like this. He does judge eternally. “He’s sworn by the pride of Jacob, ‘Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds. Because of this, will not the land quake and everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile and it will be tossed about and subside like the Nile of Egypt. It will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord God, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.’”

The prophetic day of the Lord, of course, sets forth the ultimate time when man is out of step with God and then nature gets out of step with men. We see some of those tendencies today perhaps in our society because our western world is now so far out of step with God. We’re seeing in our Western world by the environmental crisis that we face in so many places that the environment itself is reflective of divine discipline to which often we do not pay sufficient attention. The doctrine of world conservation might be derived from some of these prophecies because the things that happen in our physical world are often the direct result of the things that are happening in the spiritual world of the human heart.

And finally in verse 11 through 14, the prophet speaks of the spiritual famine that comes to those who do not respond to the truth of God. “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, ‘When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord.’” Here we’re talking about the moral force. Talks about the future not for curiosity but in order that they might be prepared for it. It will be a famine, a famine of the word of God “And men will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.”

As I mentioned, there’s no mention of the south. We’re not sure that Amos did it purposefully but he might have. It’s almost as if he were to say in the south is where you might find the truth in Judah, but they avoid the place where they might find the truth. They want to be known as people who seek the truth, but knowing the truth is in the south they avoid that because they really don’t want the truth. They want to be seekers of the truth like so many people today who will say, “I’m seeking the truth. I want to know but when it comes to the word of God and to an assembly of believers where the word of God is proclaimed, we don’t want to go there. We don’t want to have anything to do with them. We just want to seek truth but seek it in a way by which we may avoid the confrontation with the revelation of God found in Holy Scripture.”

And Amos says but they will not find it. Men seek the word but God remains silent. That’s the end of prophecy; the end of covenant blessing, the hardness of impenitence has come upon the people’s heart. They have belated concern. They talk about how they’re speaking truth but it’s too late. The Bible, one of the commentators has said so properly, I think, is not an alienable possession. The Bible is something we can lose even though we have it in our hands. There are many people who carry the Bible who don’t understand the Bible. They read it and ponder it but their eyes are blind just as Hank was singing. Our eyes were blind. We didn’t really realize why he came. He came to save us but we didn’t know it. But in divine retribution that kind of attitude

is an eternal attitude, belated concern, repentance with no effect, the Bible in their hands but we don’t understand it.

And I want you to notice a very significant thing, “In that day the beautiful virgins and the young men grow faint from thirst.” There are some rather significant things about that statement, I think. It suggests that youth suffers most. When individuals do not respond to the word of God, when mother and father become hardened to the truth of God, do not respond to the divine revelation, the ones who suffer the most are the children who come up without even the understanding the parents have. And, consequently, in those who are seeking for truth, who are staggering from sea to sea trying to find truth, there often is a predominance of young people.

Now, Amos is talking about the cults. Oh he doesn’t use the term cults but that’s what he’s talking about. All of those people who are out seeking truth but are not going to the word of God, they’re the cults. We have them today. In fact, our society is filled with the cults. There are the Jehovah witnesses. There are Mormons. There are the Christian scientists, the Unitarians, the New Age movement, the Unification church, the Hare Krishna church, and after the message this morning someone reminded me I left off one.

Well, as matter of fact, I left off about twenty-five or thirty-five, but one mentioned Scientology. You can just go on down the list of all of the cults and have you ever noticed this about them, they’re largely filled with young people not old people young people. Young people who in the generations back of them you probably could find their parents, their grandparents neglected the word of God or rebelled against the word of God, did not teach them holy Scripture, or else taught the holy Scripture but did not live Holy Scripture. And the result is they’re out looking for truth when the truth is staring them right in the face wandering about as lost individuals young people, “The beautiful virgins, the young men who faint from thirst.” Thirst not physical thirst thirst for the word of God. And Amos says, “As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria by Ashima, the

false goddess, or who says, “Your god lives, O Dan” or as the Beersheba lives, they will fall and they will not rise again.

What was the nature of Israel’s sin, they love game or gold more than God. They loved game more than honesty. They were willing to cheat in order to survive financially. They sold less than they ought for more than they ought, and the Lord God hates inhumanity. He hates cheating. He hates the kinds of things that Amos is talking about here, and he also hates those who practice them and then attend our religious meetings and sit there as if their pious and reverent and believe the things of the word of God. Amos has already told us that. He hates those festivals in which unrighteous, ungodly people with a veneer of religion come and sit as if they really are responsive to the truth of God. What a warning. The truth my dear friends and fellow Christians is to be held, to be guarded, to be loved, to be nourished, to be nurtured, and if by God’s grace he has opened your eyes to see the truth concerning Christ, love the god who has given his son. Love the Holy Spirit who has illumined you. Love the word of God. Read the word of God. Ponder the word of God. Search for Holy Scripture. Live in accordance with its precepts. And you know what; you’ll find God blessing you. He’ll bless you. He’ll bless your family. He’ll supply your needs. He may put you through a few tests. He put the Lord Jesus through some tests, but you will discover the hand of a loving and merciful and you’ll come to know him whom to know is life eternal.

The Lord Jesus had some words to say about those who are rushing about, who are guilty of the facade of truth but are not paying attention to the word of God itself. He said with reference to such, “In vain do they worship me.” Teaching his doctrines the precepts of men, the Scriptures give the precepts of God. When we worship him as set forth in Holy Scripture, we worship in spirit and in truth. And in the worship of God neither sincerity nor antiquity is sufficient. There are people who like to appeal to the fact that we belong to the church that goes all the way back to the beginning of the church. That won’t help. Every Israelite could have said that. Or on there hand we are

so sincere in our worship, we are not careful to follow the word of God but we are sincerely religious. That won’t help either. There was a great commentator who made reference to this and he spoke something like this, he said with reference to the question of the truth of the word of God in worship, “Any zeal for religion however preposterous is thought to be sufficient but they do not realize that true religion ought to be conformed to God’s will as to a universal rule that no religion is genuine unless it be joined with truth.” And if by God’s grace we test what we hear by the word of God, we’ll be delivered from a lot of error.

Last night I was reading. And this wasn’t really part of my message, but I was reading after I had already prepared the message for today and an author of a book on the cults, and that’s what we really have here the cults, spoke about an individual by the name of Swami Satchidananda, who is head of the integral yoga institute. He was addressing a capacity crowd at the messianic auditorium in San Francisco. “Blessed are the pure in heart,” the Swami said, “Jesus said for they shall see God.” And moments later he explained these words something like this. “Yes, blessed are those who purify their consciousness, for they shall see themselves as god.” Unfortunately, most people today are not so acquainted with the word of God that they can even see the blasphemy of a statement like that.

The Mormon missionary begins with James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom let it he ask for wisdom from God,” and soon he’s teaching that both God, the Father, and Jesus, the Son, have glorified physical bodies. Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy says, “The opening lines of the Lord’s Prayer means not Our Father who art in heaven but Our Father, mother, God all harmonious. Jehovah’s witnesses referred to John 1:1, “And the word was with God, and the word was God,” and by twisting the text and making it say what it does not say, as all reputable Greek grammarian would agree, say that it teaches Jesus is neither co-equal or co-eternal with the Father. And literally millions are following the false cults.

May God help us to set his Scripture, to love it, to love the God of Scripture. And may the Lord deliver us from the kind of indifference and lethargy that leads to discipline and, finally, to divine retribution, ultimately. If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ let me remind you who he is. The second person of the eternal trinity at a point in time took to himself an additional nature, a human nature. Became what Christians call the god-man, divine person with two natures, divine and human. Those two natures were two natures by which and in which the Lord Jesus might atone for the sins of sinners; human and thus one of us apart from sin that he might actually substitute for us, but at the same time the divine son giving the sacrifice that he offered an infinite value.

And so God found himself in this man and was with men and men may find themselves in this god-man and be with God. He’s the mediator between God and men. And there on the cross at Calvary, God meted out upon him, caused to mete upon him the iniquity of us all. And by virtue of that sacrifice has made it possible for sinners to be forgiven having paid the penalty for sinner’s sins. And God in his marvelous grace offers, universally, forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ. For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It’s the gift of God not of works, “Lest anyone should boast,” our salvation is the gift of God, the gift of a living merciful God who desires to deliver us from the inevitable judgment that comes from the fall and continued rebellion against him. And as you sit in this audience at this very moment you may pass from death to life as you bow your head before the Lord God acknowledge your sin and your guilt and your condemnation as Scripture says and then receive as a free gift. It’s as simple as saying thank you, Lord, for sending Christ to die for my sins for I have them and I’m guilty. And the Bible speaks of me and I receive the thankfulness of gratitude the free gift of eternal life.

May God help you to come to Christ and believe in him. Trust in him. Stop trusting in your good works in the church, your education, your culture, or whatever it

may be which you are trusting even your religion and trust in Christ and be saved. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee that Thou hast in Thy word given us loving warnings and admonitions. Lord, help us to love Thee, truly to love Thy word, to give ourselves to it that our children as well as we ourselves may be delivered from our sins and from the inevitable judgment that awaits men who do not turn to Thee. Lord, if there are some in this audience who have not yet come to Christ may at this very moment by Thy grace they turn to him.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.