



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Joel 3:13-21

“The Day of the Lord in Verdict Valley”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for another opportunity to study the Scriptures again. We thank Thee for the word of God and especially the passages that we are looking at tonight. We thank Thee for the Prophet Joel and we thank Thee for the burden that Thou didst place upon his heart. And we rejoice Lord in the assurance of the faithfulness of our great God to his promises. For we know that ultimately faithfulness to the promises of the word of God is the basis upon which we, in this present age, stand. And we thank Thee that because Thou art faithful to the promises made to Abraham and to his seed that Thou will be faithful to the promises made to us in Christ who has come. Now we ask Lord that this hour may be a fruitful hour for each of us. Enable us to understand the Word and profit from it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the last of our series of studies in the prophecy of Joel. It is the fifth of our studies and we're turning to Joel chapter 3 and looking at verse 13 through verse 21. And our subject is, “The Day of the Lord in Verdict Valley.”

Now of course you will not find the expression “verdict valley” in most of the translations of the Book of Joel. You will find the expression “The Valley of Jehoshaphat,” and then you will find the expression in verse 14, “the valley of decision.”

But the expression, “the valley of decision,” is really an expression that means simply verdict valley or the valley of the verdict.

Now that is another name for the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat means simply the Lord will judge and this valley we do not know where it was really, or even if it existed, but it is the same as the verdict valley. So we’re going to look now at the subject, “The Day of the Lord in Verdict Valley,” or the “valley of decision.” Joel, we have said in one of our first studies and then repeated it later is the prophet of the day of the Lord. And this is the end of his message. So you can see that as we read these last verses that the day of the Lord is something that is very important to him. There are two great themes that come before us, especially here, and the first is the theme of divine judgement. Listen, for example, to verses 13 and 14.

“Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, tread; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (And then in verse 19), Egypt will become a waste, and Edom will become a desolate wilderness, because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, in whose land they have shed innocent blood. (And verse 21), And Thou will avenge their blood which I have not avenged: for the LORD dwells in Zion.”

We read in the New Testament passages like “Vengeance is mine. I will repay,” saith the Lord. We read in the Epistle of the Hebrews, “Our God is a consuming fire.” And that is the same type of truth that Joel stresses here in these verses. And this judgement that he speaks about is an eternal judgement too. It is not simply a temporal judgement; it is one that is lasting.

Now this brings up the question, of course, of Universalism, something to which we have also referred a number of times because it is one of the popular doctrines in

contemporary theology today. We used to think of Universalists as members of the Unitarian or Universalist church. But Universalism now is a doctrine that has permeated most of the well known denominational Christian groups. So that Universalism is a very common doctrine. It is taught in almost all of the Protestant theological seminaries in this country. It is that popular, Universalism.

Now, of course, it would be a nice doctrine and you would think that a church that would have such a nice doctrine as that would have multitudes, multitudes of members, to use Joel's expression. But the facts are that that is not so. They have very few members. There is an old saying, I think I've cited it in one of the messages that I have given to you in time passed, “Nobody is quite a Universalist in moments of indignation.” In moments of indignation we really speak the language that we truly believe and it is, I think, a fundamental belief of men that there is such a place as hell. And even in their language in moments of indignation it manifests itself in the language that they use. There is a statement about hell – I think I referred to this the other day – that only one Minnesota man in twenty-five believes that he or she deserves to go to hell. But five times as many are convinced that they know someone else who is sure to go to hell. [Laughter] So hell is one of those fundamental doctrines that the very nature, fabric of human nature, tells us is so. Someone once said, “I think that there may be a heaven, but there must be a hell because hell is more essential and necessary according to our own human reasoning than heaven itself.”

There was, as most of you know, yesterday in Spain a tremendous tragedy. It must have been one of the most frightening things that has happened in a longtime in which one hundred eighty-eight campers according to the morning paper – I think there are a few less in the later reports – were engulfed by flames when a runaway truck loaded with industrial gas exploded. And that triggered various other explosions in the people who were camping out. And in one of the reports that I heard it was possible for a person to be within two feet of someone who was burned to death and not touched.

One of the reporters was looking over the campsite today and noticed that right in the midst of it there was an individual who had a new white mercedes together with his camper totally untouched in the midst of all of that devastation and destruction, which may mean that we all should buy mercedes. [Laughter] And if so, I'm afraid most of us are unable to do what we ought to do. But one of the policeman said, “This scene resembles hell, or what we think hell is like.”

Now it was a terrible scene, but it does not resemble hell. Hell is much worse than that. For hell is everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, eternal separation from God, conscious separation from God. Joel speaks about divine judgement here. And he also speaks of the other side of the coin. He speaks about divine grace, covenantal grace. And he says that covenantal grace never fails. When I was reading this passage and thinking about what I was going to say to you there was a text in the prophecy of Isaiah that came to my mind and frankly I thought it was in Jeremiah. And after I could not find it I took down my concordance. This is the first time you understand in 25 years I haven't been able to find a text. [Laughter] But I took down my concordance and looked it up. It's Isaiah chapter 49 and verse 15. And I read verse 14. “But Zion said, The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.” And then the prophet says, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.” So if a woman can forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb, still God will not forget those who are his by virtue of the covenant promises that he has made to them. And that is what we find in verses 16, 17 and 18. For we read in those verses,

“And the LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth tremble: but the LORD is a refuge for his people, and a stronghold to the sons of

Israel. Then you will know that I am Yahweh, your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: so Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more. (And verse 20), But Judah will be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem for all generations.”

The last section that we studied last week closed with an ironic battle summons. That is God, through the prophet, had a battle summons issued to the nations of the earth and they were told, “Prepare a war.” Verse 9,

“Rouse the mighty men; let all the soldiers draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am a mighty man. Hasten and come all you surrounding nations and gather yourselves there. (Notice verse 12), Let the nations be aroused, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat.”

And so the prophet has issued a call to the nations or has asked that one be issued in which all of the nations of the earth are told to gather in the Valley of Jehoshaphat in order to wage a holy war against their enemies. And so the word goes out among the nations of the earth. And they say, “I’m a mighty man.” Others “beat their pruninghooks into spears, and their plowshares into swords,” and they all get ready for this great conquest that they’re going to make of their enemies. But the nations of the earth, the wicked nations of the earth, discover that when they finally get to the Valley of Jehoshaphat that the call to come for this holy war is for a war in which they are going to fight Jehovah and it is not going to be a war of victory for them, but a war of defeat. It is a beautifully ironic prophecy in which you can see the nations of the earth girding to war against Jehovah. Imagine it. But that’s the thing that we have in the Book of Revelation, when the beast wars against the lamb. To think that a beast would have to even bother with a lamb. A wild beast, it would seem, could kill a lamb with just one blow.

But in the Book of Revelation we learn it is the lamb that overcomes the beast. And so ironically they all gather to overthrow the enemies that they themselves have, but they discover that it is they who are really to be overthrown. It's a beautiful illustration of the sovereign providence of God and how even throughout all of history he determines the things that are going to happen. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of waters and he turns it whither so ever he wills. And so Mr. Brezhnev, he may talk big. He may push Mr. Carter around. And we all are disgusted about it, of course. [Laughter] But nevertheless it is the Lord God who, in the final analysis, is in control of the affairs of men. And so even if he does push him around, even if he does embarrass us, as believers, we know that we are ultimately on the winning side being related to the Lord God.

Well let's look now at our passage. And the first thing we notice in verses 13 and 14 is that there is a new summons to battle. And we read that the prophet says, “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, tread, for the winepress is full.”

Now I confess I have a little difficulty understanding sentences like this because I didn't grow up in a rural area.

Now anyone, however, who grew up in a rural area or on a farm would understand that this is the language of agriculture or of the vintage. “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.” And so the picture is of the nations of the earth as a field of wheat that is gold and ready to be harvested. And the word goes, “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.” And God and the forces of Yahweh are to cut down the nations of the earth just like the sickle cuts down the fields of wheat. “Come, tread, for the winepress is full.” In fact, the winepress where the grapes were placed in order to be trampled upon, trodden upon, in order for the juice to flow out from which the wine would be made, there are so many grapes in the winepress that we read in verse 13, “The vats overflow.”

In other words, the very weight of the amount of the grapes that are there is doing some of the pressing of the grapes. So the picture is of a world that is ripe for judgement

and a vast mighty multitude of people all over the world, all of the nations of the earth that are ready for destruction from the Lord. Verse 14, “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!” Those words really mean something like we would say, “Crowds, crowds in the valley of decision! for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” So the nations then are mustered by the commands of the Lord for battle, but a new summons goes forth and it is the nations that are going to lose the battle. Yahweh’s army is to attack.

Do you remember last week in the midst of the commands that Joel told the nations to issue to their people? There was a little prayer that Joel prayed. At the end of verse 11, “Bring down, oh Lord, Thy mighty ones.” So Joel, even as he was giving the word of God, was so involved in this message that he was giving that he offers a prayer to God in the midst of the prophetic message and says, “Bring down, oh Lord, Thy mighty ones.” He has an idea of what this is all about. And so he prays. Well, that’s what we see here in verse 13 and verse 14. Yahweh’s mighty ones are going to attack the nations of the earth.

You know you will learn a great lesson here and a very practical kind of lesson too. And that is that you cannot flaunt your own will against the will of God. Thomas Adams, one of the well known Puritans, says, “That which a man spits against heaven shall fall back on his own face.” There are lots of proverbs of that type. One of them that I thought was pretty good is, “He that sows thorns, let him not walk barefoot.”

[Laughter]

Now I understand that one. I didn’t have to grow up in the country to understand that one. But it is true that we cannot expect to fight against the Lord. Why are these nations here? Well, he says, “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.” And he says, “Come, tread, for the winepress is full.” But it’s in the last clause of verse 13 that he turns the reasoned into a moral explanation. And he says, “The vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.” So what he traces the destruction of the nations to is their own

moral depravity. That is why the nations shall undergo the judgement of God. It is their moral depravity. They are responsible before God because of their moral depravity.

Now we know, of course, that men who are blessed are blessed because they are the elect of God. But men are not lost because they are non-elect. Men are lost because of their moral depravity; because of their sin. And that is what Joel believes. I think he would have been in perfect harmony with those statements. Verse 14 is a kind of commentary. It's an exegesis of the scene by Joel. “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!” That's his explanation of what this really is. “Crowds, crowds in verdict valley! for the day of the Lord is near in verdict valley.” This is no doubt one of the most decisive battles ever fought.

There have been a number of books written on the great battles of history. There is one entitled *The Decisive Battles of the World*. And in it you will find expositions and descriptions of such great battles as the Battle of Waterloo, the Battle of Philippi. And this one is undoubtedly the greatest of all. It is the battle at which the nations of the earth are destroyed by Jehovah himself. In the Book of Revelation, you may recognize some of these expressions, but in the Book of Revelation, particularly in chapter 14. Many of these expressions that Joel uses here are the basis of that chapter. And sometime, if you are interested, read the 14th chapter of the Book of Revelation in the light of the Book of Joel and you will see that the author of that book was given his message in language taken from the Book of Joel. One of the saddest things in our Evangelical church today is the fact that we do not study the Old Testament. We are inclined to think – and there are some groups that believe this as a type of doctrine – that the Old Testament is no longer a valid book for us to study. It has been fulfilled. I know one large denomination that causes a lot of difficulty among Evangelical Christians that says simply that. The Old Testament has been fulfilled. And so we don't study the Old Testament.

Now you can tell that they are not very good students of the New Testament because when you read through the New Testament and think of the language, if you are

familiar enough with the Old Testament, you will see that a great part of the New Testament is written in the language of the Old Testament. Not only are texts cited over and over and over again. Texts are eluded to even chance expressions and then they are expounded in the New Testament. In fact, we would not understand the New Testament at all if we did not have the Old Testament. It would be a totally unintelligible book without the Old Testament. That's one of the reasons we don't really appreciate the New Testament as we should. We don't study the Old Testament sufficiently. So I challenge you to read and reread and reread the Old Testament. If you want to skip those passages and chronicles, [Laughter] and a few other passages in the Old Testament. You don't have my permission to skip them, but go ahead and skip them if you'll read the rest. But you really ought to because you will find it will illuminate the New Testament for you. You cannot understand the Book of Revelation as well as you should if you have not read the Book of Joel and studied it a little bit. Well in verses 15 through 17, the prophet speaks of cosmic disturbances and Judah's preservation.

Now the preceding section, verse 13 and 14, had to do with conditions before the day of the Lord. But now he speaks of conditions during the day of the Lord. This is the moment of truth for the gentile nations of the earth. This is incidently the moment of truth for say England. It's the moment of truth for say Spain. It's the moment of truth for Egypt. It's the moment of truth for Iran. It's the moment of truth for China. It's the moment of truth for the United States of America. It is the moment of truth for the nations. And listen as the prophet describes first the disturbances. “The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. And the Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth tremble.”

Now here we have something that is new in Joel. It's the reference to Zion. The source of the disaster that is to fall upon the earth is traced to Zion. He says, “The Lord roars from Zion.”

Now if you've been here over the past six or eight months you probably read through that without thinking that it was anything new because you may have remembered it either wittingly or unwittingly from the Book of Amos, for Amos used the same expression. “The Lord roars from Zion.” But it's something that is unique to Joel here. That is, it is new in Joel at this point. He traces this disaster that is going to take place on the earth to Zion. He says the difficulty is going to arise out of Zion for the nations.

Now I want you to turn back to chapter 2, verse 11 because this 3rd chapter is the ultimate fulfillment of what was illustrated by the locust invasion of the preceding chapters. There we read, in verse 11, “And the Lord utters his voice before his army; surely his camp is very great; for strong is he who carries out his word; the day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome.” And you'll remember that when we were talking about the day of the Lord and also the locust invasion, I made the comment that the locust invasion was probably a local locust invasion in Judah and that that was used as an illustration of the day of the Lord that would follow.

Now you can see he has taken even the same kind of language, “The Lord utters his voice.” And he was speaking about the local locust invasion previously, but now using that same language, but adding a definite place reference, he says, “It is the Lord that roars from Zion.”

By the way, have you noticed that since we have begun speaking on the Book of Joel we have had an invasion of locusts in east Dallas? Locusts are everywhere in my yard. They are rebelling against the things that we have been saying here [Laughter] about locusts. But they're dying now and I'm rejoicing in that. [Laughter] I'm going to invoke Joel against the rest of them. “The Lord roars from Zion.”

So the disaster is traced to Jerusalem itself. Joel doesn't say anything about the carnage that is taking place. He, as some commentator has said, has drawn a veil of reticence over the carnage. But it must be a terrible kind of carnage because notice, we

read in verse 16, “And the heavens and the earth tremble.” So if the stable elements of this universe in which we live, the earth and the heaven, are convulsed at the day of the Lord by the presence of Jehovah, then mere mortals have no chance whatsoever of escaping. It’s Joel’s way of saying that the day of the Lord is a tremendous day of judgement upon men who are in the nations of the earth. But fortunately for the people of God there is preservation. And so in the middle of verse 16 we read, “But the LORD (That’s Yahweh, the covenant keeping God. Notice the capital letters.) But the LORD is a refuge for his people, and a stronghold to the sons of Israel.”

Now there are a couple of things I want you to notice. I’ve always already made reference to the fact that this is Yahweh. This is the covenant keeping God. This is the God who made the promises to Abraham. This is the God who led the children of Israel out of Egypt and brought them into the land. This is the God who gave them the Davidic covenant. This is the God who gave them the new covenant. And we know as the Bible unfolds that this God is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is the second person of the Trinity. For it is he who has dealings with men, as Yahweh in the Old Testament did. There is Yahweh, the father. There is Yahweh, the Son. There is Yahweh, the Spirit. But this is primarily Yahweh the Son because of the things which he does. So refuge rests in this God who has made promises to Israel.

Now that is important. That’s important for us and we should not fail to make the practical application. You see the refuge that a Christian has against eternal judgement is this same Yahweh covenant keeping God who has made certain promises to us which he has brought home to us, revealing to us our sin, bringing us to the place where we have fled to the cross for salvation and forgiveness of sins. He has brought us to himself. He has become our God and we have become his people and his promises are our sure refuge. And it’s not simply his promises, but it is he himself. That’s the second thing I want you to notice. He says, “It is the LORD who is the refuge of his people.” It is the person who is the refuge, not simply the promises. But the promises tell us of a person

upon whom we ultimately hang for our eternal salvation. Have you had that kind of relationship to him? Is your relationship to him a personal relationship? That's very important. It's not enough simply to believe that there is refuge for men. It's not enough to simply believe there is refuge for me. But that refuge must be something that has become mine through a personal relationship to this God. What is he? Well, he is the hope of his people. He is also the happiness of his people. He's the source of all of our happiness even amid the trials of life. And he is the holiness of his people. Notice the 17th verse in which he has revealed as such. “Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: so Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more.”

Now if I may make an application. In the Church of Jesus Christ, we have people who profess faith in the Lord Jesus. In this present age, we have a vast number of people who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus. We literally have millions of people who are professing Christians. No doubt we have millions of people who are genuine Christians, but not nearly so many as have made profession of faith. In other words, as our Lord Jesus says, “There is wheat. There are tares in the kingdom of God at the present time.” In the professing church, there are wheat and tares. But the time is coming when the tares will no longer mingle with the wheat. At the end of this age, the tares shall be rooted out, taken away, called away for judgement. That's the kind of thing that is spoken of here with reference to the kingdom age. “So Jerusalem will be holy and strangers will pass through it no more.” No strangers in Israel in those days. No strangers in the kingdom, as the kingdom begins. All who enter into that kingdom are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the time is coming when there's going to be a distinguishing judgement in the midst of the church of God too. For if the church is caught up to meet the Lord Jesus in the air, it is only the wheat that are going up to meet him in the air. The tares who look just exactly like the wheat until the judgement, until the time of the harvest, will be left. I

like that word. “And strangers will pass through it no more.” And you can see that God’s word is behind this distinction that is made between the saved and the lost. It’s not lack of love. But it is the holiness of our great God that is stressed here.

Now he’s not talking about Christians who are having struggles with a Christian life. He’s talking about those who have a true faith. He’s saying that those who are not true believers, they are strangers to the grace of God. He’s not talking about struggling saints. Struggling saints do have great problems. Struggling saints will no doubt have their struggles right up to the time that they die or enter the presence of the Lord.

Thomas Brooks said David’s heart was more often out of tune than his harp. And I think that many of us [Laughter] feel very much like that. We often have our experiences day after day in which we discover that something has occurred that has wrought a problem in our Christian life. It’s perfectly alright to acknowledge it incidently. It’s much better to be humble in the acknowledgement of our sin than conceded in the self deception of thinking that we do not really fail as we really do. The Bible does not say that a failing believer is not going to get to heaven. It says simply that when a man has been truly born again his life will be different. There will be a distinctive difference. And it says also that he will not apostatize from the faith. That’s what’s meant by the perseverance of the saints. The Bible does not teach the holiness of the saints while they’re on the earth. The holiness of the saints is that which we have when we meet our Lord. And we don’t have full holiness until then. So he’s right; Mr. Brooks is right. David’s heart was more often out of tune than his harp.

Now I don’t know his heart. That’s not a scientific statement, but thinking of harps, probably he’s right. The 17th verse speaks of the purpose of all of this. “Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.” By the way, there are people who say that if you believe in a millennium, if you believe in a kingdom of God upon the earth, you believe in a carnal type of kingdom. That is, in which physical things are stressed. Carnal things are stressed. The idea of a kingdom of God upon the earth is a carnal thing.

Now these are our millennial friends who are saying this and are our millennial brethren. Many of them are brethren. But I want you to notice that if this text is a text about the kingdom, it's not a carnal kingdom. Listen to what he says. “Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: so Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers pass through it no more.” No self respecting premillennialist ever believed that the kingdom of God would be a carnal kingdom. The pharisees and some of the Jewish men in the time of our Lord did believe that. But when we talk about the kingdom of God upon the earth, we are talking about a spiritual kingdom in which Jerusalem is holy and in which the saints who are there are holy. That is the kind of kingdom the Old Testament presents. But it says that Jerusalem shall be sacred and aliens will have no access to it.

Now the third stanza of this passage, verses 18 through 21, depicts the situation after the say of the Lord. You can see these three stanzas, 13 and 14, 15 through 17, and 18 through 21 are gathered around the idea of the day of the Lord. Verses 13 and 14 speak of conditions just before that day; 15 through 17, things that will happen in that day of the Lord, and then the things that will happen after the day of the Lord. And by the way, when we say the day of the Lord we mean, of course, those last hours including also the hour of our Lord's second advent. The last hours that preceded of great judgement and the second coming of our Lord Jesus. The day of the Lord gathers around that particular time when he is revealed as the Lord.

Now these last verses then are a description of the situation after the day of the Lord. And it is a picture of fertility and desolation. Fertility in the case of the children of Israel; desolation so far as Egypt and Edom are concerned. Listen to the fertility as it is described in verse 18. “And it will come about in that day (that is the day of the Lord), that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk.” Sweet wine and milk galore. Apparently, there will be rich highland pastures which will produce so much milk that it will be a surfeit of milk. Even the sanctuary itself becomes

the source of fertility. Listen to what he says. “And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the Lord (from the temple itself), to water the valley of acacias.” The term Shittim means acacias.

Now acacia was a plant or a small tree that grew in dry land, not in wet land. Acacia is the kind of plant that we ought to have in Dallas. [Laughter] It would feel right at home with one hundred two degrees from now on until the day of the Lord evidently. [Laughter]

Now when he says here that “The spring will go out from the house of the Lord to water the valley of Shittim (or the valley of the acacias),” he’s simply saying it’s going to be tremendously fertile and there are not going to be those dry places where acacias grow. Then he describes the desolation that has to do with Egypt and Edom. “And Egypt will become a waste, and Edom become a desolate wilderness because of the violence done to the sons of Judah in whose land they have shed innocent blood.” These are the historic foes of Israel.

I think the reference is to certain experiences in the historic past, but we don’t have time to refer to those events. One of them evidently has to do with the way Edom reacted to the nation in 587 BC. The other probably has reference to Pharaoh Neco’s murder of Josiah. But these are the ancient foes of Israel and we read, “Egypt will become a waste, and Edom will become a desolate wilderness.”

And finally, in verse 20 and 21 we read of everlasting blessing and vengeance. Listen, “But Judah will be inhabited for ever (this is the vindication of Judah at the time of the kingdom) Judah will be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem for all generations. And I will avenge their blood, which I have not avenged.” What does that mean? That statement in verse 21 which begins that verse? Probably it means this. Hither to Israel had been regarded as guilty by others since God had not avenged their blood. But now by retributive action, he will vindicate the things that have happened to Israel and he will vindicate his righteousness by judging the nations who have been the means by which

God disciplined his own people. “I will avenge their blood, which I have not avenged: for the Lord dwells in Zion.”

Isn't it striking the way that in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we have this distinguishing grace of God? In the New Testament we read about the church of Jesus Christ elected by God in ages past. In the Old Testament we read about Zion and Jerusalem and Judah and Israel elected by God in ages past. And he says, “The Lord dwells in Zion.”

Now we shouldn't fight against this distinguishing grace of God, for it's offered to all people. Why should we rebel against God? Why should we struggle under this great doctrine? Why should we think that in our own human reason that this is a doctrine that cannot be palatable to us? Why not run in our sin and in our iniquity and in our need that such a gracious God who offers us this glorious salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is hard for me to understand how an individual can resist the pleadings of the God who gave the Lord Jesus Christ on the grounds of it's not fair. The very fact that you do indicates perhaps that you do not belong to that company of the faithful.

But the doors are open and you have no excuse whatsoever if you do not come. If you should come and say I did not have a chance, the answer would be simply you did not respond. You did not want to. You are getting exactly what you have decided that you wished. The doors are open. If you find it difficult to understand the distinguishing grace of God, why he should want to dwell in Zion and not in Nineveh or Babylon, well then come and receive him and then learn from Scripture. And even then if you do not fully understand, at least respond to him. Come to know him. Come to know the forgiveness of sins. And when you get to heaven there will be Mr. Spurgeon and John Calvin and Apostle Paul and Isaiah and Moses and some of those others, and they will give you some better instruction. [Laughter] Isn't that a great way to end a book? “For the Lord dwells in Zion.”

May I conclude with some words by the Puritan Thomas Adams on judgement because you can see this is a great passage on the judgement on the nations?

Now this is a Puritan and you have to listen carefully. You might miss it. They weren't noted for conciseness and succinctness. They didn't really think that was good because they didn't have to spend most of their day before the TV [Laughter] as we do. I heard one man the other day who said the TV is a great educational instrument. He said, “I sit down in front of it and thirty seconds I decide I must go off and read a good book.” [Laughter] Well that's about the way I feel often. But listen to Thomas Adams. He says, “Both in thy private sessions and the universal assizes, thou shall be sure of the same judge. (Isn't that interesting? The same judge judges me at the great white throne, judgement if I'm lost as judges me now in my heart: the same judge, the same jury, the same witnesses, the same verdict. How certain thou art to die. Thou knowest. How soon to die, thou knowest not. Measure not thy life with the longest that were to piece it out with flattery. Thou canst name no living man, not the sickest, which thou art sure shall die before Thee. The same God who judges all of those thoughts of yours and all of those actions of yours right now, which you know take place in the secret of your heart is the one before whom you shall stand ultimately personally. May God so terrify you that you come to Jesus Christ and receive the pardon which he freely offers because he shed his blood for sinners. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee for the words of the prophets, these ancient words which must have ministered to the needs of the faithful in Israel have ministered to our needs. Oh God, deliver us from the thoughts that turn us aside from Thee, our great God. Enable us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And enable us to be useful to Thee in the days that Thou doest give us here upon the earth. And, oh Father, if there are some lost persons in this auditorium now, by the Holy

“The Day of the Lord in Verdict Valley” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Spirit, touch them. Move them to Christ who died for sinners. We pray in His name.

Amen.