



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 1:1-6

"A Call to Repentance"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Matthew chapter 16, verses 1 through 3, then we'll turn back to the Book of Zechariah and read the first six verses of that great prophecy. Matthew chapter 16, verses 1 through 3.

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and overcast. (Now, I did not translate that overcast because I could not pronounce that other word. The text that I have has "overcast" in it. However, I must confess I'm a little doubtful about that word. And I'm kind of glad that I'm reading this edition, it means overcast.) O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

Now let's turn back to the Old Testament to the next to the last book, the Book of Zechariah, and let's read the first six verses of this prophecy. Zechariah chapter 1, verses

1 through 6, the next to the last book of the Old Testament, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Now, the first verse,

"In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, (By the way, that word "the prophet" does not go with Iddo, but with Zechariah.) The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? (That is, did they not take hold of them to execute the judgment upon them that them that the word had said would come to pass?) And they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us."

May God bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, as we begin the study of one of the great prophecies of the Old Testament, we pray, O God, for two things. For the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit for each one us, as we read and ponder the things that Thou hast said through this great man to his generation and to ours, we pray, Lord, that it may have its ministry in our hearts. And secondly Lord, we pray that our hearts may be prepared for the reception of the word. We know that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him. Neither can he

know them for they are spiritually discerned. So Lord, if there should be some in our midst who have not yet been born again, have not yet become Christians, have not yet believed in Jesus Christ, we pray, Lord, that the Holy Spirit may prepare them by the new birth for the teaching ministry which the Spirit gives to believers. And for those, Lord, who may have been born again, who may have become Christians, but who may not be open to the teaching of the Scriptures because of carnality, we pray, O God, that Thou will bring confession and restoration, and responsiveness to the word that we hear.

We pray, O God, that as we open up the inspired word, the holy Scriptures, that we may remember that it is just that, the word of the living God to creatures who are responsible to him. And then Lord, we also pray that the wonderful grace that Thou hast shown us through the Lord Jesus Christ may be perceived and understood and that gratitude may come as a result of it. We pray, O God, for each one of us, that we may leave this place, Sunday after Sunday as we study Zechariah, with a sense of the greatness of our God and the wonders of his amazing love for us. Can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Lord, we thank Thee for the privilege that is ours today. We thank you for this country. We pray again for its leadership. We pray for wisdom in these critical days. We pray for the nations of the earth, and for the ministry of the gospel among them. We pray particularly for those who may be in the troubled lands of the Middle East who know our Lord Jesus Christ and are seeking to serve him. May, O God, Thy hand uphold them, and give them in these days wonderful opportunities to make him known. We thank Thee for the church, the body of Christ, the true believers. Will Thou, Lord, encourage the church, increase the church, and use the body for the glorification of the Lord Jesus. May Thy blessing be with us in this meeting. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Today we are beginning a series of studies in the Prophecy of Zechariah, with the general theme "The Prophecy of Zechariah in the Light of Current

Events." And the subject for today in this introductory section is "A Call to Repentance." Recent events have turned us again to the prophetic word and to the signs of the times. And Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior, does not rebuke our interest in the signs of the times. In the little portion that I read before the section in Zechariah, the Lord Jesus speaking to the hypocritical Pharisees, with the Sadducees, spoke to them about their ability to discern the seasons, which were about them, and the evidence of the coming bad weather, but rebuked them for their failure to discern the signs of the times.

There is an old proverb which sailors have often used, which is in harmony with the words which the Lord Jesus uttered. It is simply this, "Red at night, means sailors delight. Red in the morning is the sailor's warning." We have learned to discern from simple things such as this, the kind of weather that we can expect. Now, we don't say that anymore. We say, "Red at night means seventy percent, or twenty percent, or ten percent." [Laughter] I've been amazed at how the weather prognosticators have gotten themselves into the position now that they cannot possibly be wrong no matter what they prophesy. If they say a ten percent chance of rain, if it rains they are remarkable. If it doesn't rain, well that's what you expect, it's in the ninety percent. If they say ten percent chance of rain, and it rains. Well, then of course it's in the ten percent, and so they have us. And we can no longer criticize them. Of course, they are no longer prophesying either.

Jesus understood, and we understand, that it is possible for us to look at the weather and to have some inkling of what is going to happen. The remarkable thing is that so far as the spiritual weather is concerned, so many of us look at things that are obvious signs or indications of the things that God is doing, and yet we are not able to discern these. Now, I think in that passage to which I referred in Matthew chapter 16, the Lord Jesus was referring to the first coming, and the signs of that first coming in his ministry. The principle, however, holds, and it holds particularly with regard to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus to the earth for which there are many signs in the word.

Now, we are, of course, living in days in which the church of Jesus Christ is here upon the earth. And we look for our Lord Jesus Christ to return at any moment. There are no real signs for the coming of Jesus Christ in the air.

Now, of course, we have signs for the Second Advent. If we see these things coming to pass, then of course, we can be reasonably certain that the rapture of the church, which precedes that Second Advent, is that much nearer for us. So while at the same time we decry the setting of dates. And it is a very grave mistake to set dates, nevertheless we look at the signs and we are responsible to interpret the things that are happening about us today. We do not know dates, but we ought to know the signs of the times. In the New Testament the Second Advent is looked at under the figure of pregnancy, of which we know a general time period, but not a precise time of the appearance of a child. And this is the figure that we should think about in connection with the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. We know a great deal about that event, the precise dates we do not know.

Zechariah's prophecies are most appropriate for the crucial and turbulent days in which we live. Of all of the Old Testament prophecies, Zechariah contains the most concentrated Messianic prophecy. Even if we were to think of the great prophecy of Isaiah, undoubtedly the greatest of the prophets, we still would have to say that this little book of 14 chapters contains more concentrated Messianic prophecy than Isaiah. As a matter of fact, someone has said, "It contains more about Jesus Christ than all of the other Minor Prophets put together." I've never checked that, so I do not know whether it is true or not. But I am sure that it may be true.

Furthermore, it is one of the most complete pictures of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah writes of the first coming. He writes of the second coming. He writes of details of the first coming. He speaks of the sufferings of the Messiah. He speaks of great detail in connection with the second coming of Jesus Christ. He speaks about the regathering of the nations. He speaks about the Great Tribulation.

He speaks about the Second Advent to the earth, in which our Lord Jesus shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. He also speaks about the kingdom, which shall follow. And so we have a remarkably complete picture of the person and word of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I know this book is difficult, and with some trepidation I decided to study it with you in the morning service, because I think if I judge correctly, there are some of you who come into the Sunday morning service who are not very deep Bible students, and to turn to an Old Testament book like Zechariah, may be turning to something which is over your spiritual head. I hope it will be a challenge to you. I hope it will be an inducement to you to read this prophecy during the week, so that you can understand some of the things, at least, which are said on Sunday. For some of you who are advanced students in the word, and there are some of you in the auditorium, I will not probably be able to tell you anything new, but together, I think we both can learn a lot from Zechariah. For those who come in the auditorium without any knowledge of our Lord, throughout the time of the ministry of the word, I will try to make plain as I possibly can the gospel of our Lord Jesus. For in this book there is amply opportunity to preach Christ, and perhaps through the preaching of the gospel you may find our Lord, receive the Holy Spirit, and thus be able to understand some of the things that this prophet is speaking of.

Now, when we say that it is difficult, we are not alone in this affirmation. Jewish interpreters have spoken about how difficult it is. We should expect the Jews to find it very difficult to interpret. For you see, this is a prophecy that speaks of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As John the Apostle says in the Book of Revelation, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Now, that means the testimony to Jesus is the essence of the prophetic word. If we do not understand that our Lord Jesus is the Messiah, and if we do not read the Scriptures in the light of that fact, then we shall not understand the Old Testament prophecies. We shall make the mistake that the generation upon the earth at

the time of our Lord Jesus made. They did not understand the signs of the times, because they did not know the Scriptures of the prophets and Moses.

Jerome, a professing Christian interpreter, also found this prophecy very difficult. And so not only have the Jews found it difficult, but the Gentiles as well. We, of course, today have a great help in the understanding of the word. Jesus said when he was here upon the earth, that he was going to leave and when he left the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost was going to come and dwell in our hearts. And because we now have the Holy Spirit within our hearts, we have someone who is able to teach us. He is called the Spirit of Truth, and it is said that he will guide us into all truth. And as a matter of fact in that same text, in John 16, verse 13, in which that statement is made, the words are added, "And he will show you things to come."

Now, those things were prophetic from the time our Lord spoke the words in the Upper Room discourse. They included the epistles of the New Testament. They also included the apocalypse of the New Testament. They include all of the things that have to do with the future from that time. And so, the Holy Spirit has been given to us to understand the word. He illumines the word, and we respond and understand. And so, as we sit and listen to the prophet, I hope that we realize that the teacher is the Holy Spirit. And I am just a very weak and fallible mouthpiece for him as we study along together.

Now, the preface of our prophecy is interesting and important. The text says, "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, Zechariah the prophet, and saying." Now, these first six verses which we have read this morning introduce the entire Book of Zechariah. They set the mood. They strike the keynote, and the keynote is this, the enjoyment of the blessings of God is dependent upon a biblical repentance. In other words, here are people who are, it might seem to the prophet, out of fellowship with God, because of their past and because of their present. Now, some of them have

responded to Haggai's ministry. He began just a few months before Zechariah, and they have begun to rebuild the temple. But Zechariah is interested in a deeper ministry in their hearts, and he wants to be sure that all of them have genuinely turned to the Lord. So the prophecy opens with a rebuke which is designed to lead to repentance, which in turn will lead to revelation. That is the visions and the prophecies which follow in the book, for which they will be prepared by the transformation of their condition of heart.

Now, this is New Testament truth. I referred in my prayer this morning to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Paul says there are four kinds of people. There are natural men. They are non-Christians. They have never been born again. The Bible to them is just so much nonsense. If the Bible is nonsense to you, it might be that you have not been born again. Then Paul speaks about carnal believers. Some of them are carnal weak, because they are little babies. We don't expect little babies to please us in everything, do we? Do we? No we don't. We know that little children please us in many things, but there are many things that they do not please us in. But Paul also speaks about a third class, carnal willful. That is believers who have been believers for a long time but have never progressed because they have not responded to the truth that has come to them.

I have referred at times to Mr. Tidbottom's spectacles. You remember that the man who wrote about Mr. Tidbottom's spectacles said that they had a remarkable power, that when you put on Mr. Tidbottom's spectacles you could see people as they really were. For example, if I were able to put on Mr. Tidbottom's spectacles and look at you, I might see as I looked at you, a golf ball. That's what you really are. That's what you're all bound up in, the golf course and your golf game. Now, I wouldn't be particularly disappointed in that myself. I love golf, too. But from God's standpoint, he wants even that to be in its proper place. I may look at someone else and see a dollar bill, now there is a man whose whole life is bound up in making money. I may look at some woman and see her children, everything centers around the children. The children are important,



but they are second. I started to say second to husbands, I kind of think that's true. I don't want to think about that a little moment. [Laughter] At least they're second to God. So no matter what it is, it's secondary to the Lord.

Now, there are many believers who are carnal believers for the simple reasons that they have been born again but other things take precedence over the interests of the Lord in their lives. Finally, Paul talks about the spiritual Christian. Now, the spiritual Christian is not the Christian who attends church on Sunday, attends the Lord's Supper on Sunday night, attends the prayer meeting during the week, and generally puts on a pious look throughout the days of the week, and speaks about the Bible and such as that, but the spiritual Christian is one who is rightly related to the Holy Spirit. Now, some of these other things may result from that, but they do not determine spirituality. They are products of it.

Now you see, the prophet is not telling us anything more than the New Testament tells us. If we are going to be ready for the visions of Zechariah, there needs to be transformation in the heart. He calls it turning to the Lord. The New Testament speaks of repentance, and that's a good biblical word. Now, he says in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. Do you know when that is? Do you know when Columbus discovered America? 1492, was that it? Well, when we get through Zechariah you'll understand the date of Zechariah 1:1 as well as you understand 1492. It's 520 BC. Now, you will notice that this prophecy is dated by the heathen. He says, "In the 8th month and the second year of Darius. He does not say in the eighth month in the tenth year of Joshua the high priest, or Zerubbabel the Governor. But he dates this prophecy by the heathen, by Darius. That, of course, is an indication of the fact that at the time that this prophecy is written Israel still abides under the hands of the heathen kingdom of Persia.

Now, let me stop for just a moment and very quickly review some historical facts. Now, this is important, and I'm going to say it several times until we get them in our minds. And I think it's very important for understanding this book, and that's why I'm

doing it. And I'm going to do it whether you want to hear it or not. Here they are, so that we can kind of feel exactly where we are in the history of Israel. Now, you'll remember that after the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, they obtained a king for themselves contrary to the best wishes of God. He never intended for them to have a king. He did not want any man to be over them. He wanted them to be under the Lord God, but he allowed them because they wanted a king like the heathen to have a heathen king.

Now, the high water mark of the history of Israel in the Old Testament was reached in the kingdom of David and in the kingdom of Solomon that followed. Those were the years of 1010 to 930 BC. When Solomon died, disruption followed. The northern kingdom was separated from the southern kingdom. In the northern kingdom there was constant decline. And finally, in 721 BC the northern kingdom fell to Sargon the Second and the Assyrians, and a dispossession of the land took place. And members of the northern kingdom were scattered throughout the empires of the east. The southern kingdom, after alternate apostasy and then reformation, there are wonderful lessons in that period, too, finally fell to the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. That was the time of the era when Israel was seduced by the Egyptians so constantly.

Nebuchadnezzar, remember, had defeated Pharaoh Necho in 605 BC at the battle of Carchemish. And that had been the assumption on the part of Nebuchadnezzar of world dominion for the Babylonians. Now, of course, since Judah, the southern kingdom, had been a vassal of the Egyptian state, you can imagine what happened at Carchemish when Nebuchadnezzar won the battle, chased the Egyptians all the way to the door of Egypt, something that has been done again just recently. And then, Nebuchadnezzar received word that Nabopolassar had died, and so he made haste to make a quick trip home. But the army was left to return as they saw fit.

Now, they returned by Carchemish, but you can imagine exactly what they did on the way back. Since Judah had been in league with Egypt, they stopped by on the way

back. And there Daniel and three of the Hebrews were taken into captivity in 605 BC. Well, Israel or Judah could not get over this love for the Egyptians. And that's quite different from today, isn't it? And so again, in 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar had gone down to Egypt, had suffered a reverse, and since he had suffered a reverse, those in control in Judah said, "Well, we won't have to pay the old tribute now, and so they stopped it." Nebuchadnezzar responded, however, with "What gives with you down in Judah?" And he went down and chastised the southern kingdom, and this time he took three thousand captive. And among them was the Prophet Ezekiel. He also took a great deal of the treasure out of the temple, and took it back to the temple of Marduk, the god of the Babylonians.

Well, about ten years later, Judah again could not defend themselves against the seduction of the Egyptians, and so finally when Nebuchadnezzar heard that he said, "I've had it." So when he came against Jerusalem he besieged the city, and finally after overcoming them, he burned the buildings, tore down the walls of the city, and took captive after executing many of the leaders in Judah, took captive a great number who went into the Babylonian captivity. That captivity lasted for seventy years. It was prophesied by the Prophet Jeremiah who kept warning them not to make any allowances with Egypt, but he was not believed. He was not patriotic in his day, because he told the people of Judah exactly where they stood with God, and that of course is what any man must do with a Christian in 1967. He must speak to the United States, and he must speak to the United States the truth. And Jeremiah spoke the truth and they were not happy about it.

Well, things rocked along until finally the Persian, Cyrus the Great, became the world emperor. He managed to make a league with some with whom they had fought for a long time, and finally in 539, October the 12th, he overcame Babylonian and became undisputed world emperor. He had managed to conquer the Medes, and Cyrus was a great man. And also, he was a great friend of the peoples of the lands that he conquered.

He knew that the best way to gain friends was to do something for them. Men have thought that Cyrus was a Christian. It's very difficult to say. Cyrus was a politician, but whether he was a Christian or not is another matter. We do know this, that from the standpoint of the word of God, God laid his hand upon Cyrus. He speaks of him years before he came, and he also performed a ministry to the people through him. And Cyrus, if you'll remember, issued the decree whereby the Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem. That was issued in 538 BC. Forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty Jews, plus some others, returned to the city of Jerusalem. They built the altar. They began the second temple. That's the second temple, they began that temple, but soon after opposition developed they stopped.

Now, they stopped not only because of opposition. They stopped also because of indifference. They stopped because of apathy, for though they had returned to the land, their hearts were still not right with God. And God raised up two prophets who came back with the, one Haggai apparently an old man, and the other Zechariah apparently a young man. If the passage in chapter 2, verse 4 when you read the prophecy this week notice that verse if that passage refers to Zechariah, a young man. And so Haggai rose up, and he said to the children of Israel who were now in Judah. He said, "How is it that you are building yourself such lovely pads as you are?" Well, look at them. They are full of paneled rooms. Everything is lovely in them, but then look at the Lord's house. Look at the temple, and it's in desolation.

Now, the message that Haggai gave them was a simple message, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But they were happy to have lovely home, and the interests of God were secondary. Now, I'm not going to make any application to the building of Believers Chapel. I don't know that there is such an application. I think rather the primary application of a passage like that is to our own personal lives. But at any rate, Haggai so stirred up the people that they began to construct the temple again in 520, about fifteen years after they had come

back to the land. And so they began to rebuild. As a matter of fact, they built for four years and finished the temple in 516 BC. It was dedicated then. So our prophecy then is set in the year 520, the prophets now are attempting to stir up the people to get on with the job of doing that which they had come to Jerusalem to do in the first place, to rebuild the temple of the Lord and to establish again the worship of Jehovah in the place in which it should be established.

Now, our text says in verse 1, "The word of the Lord came unto Zechariah." Do you know what Zechariah means? Zechariah means "whom the Lord zekares." Now, zekare is a Hebrew word that means "to remember" and so Zechariah's name means "whom the Lord remembered." Now, he was not chosen by accident for this task, and his name was not chosen by accident, for it is whom the Lord remembers who is given the word of Jehovah whereby Jehovah remembers Israel and gives them these wonderful promises of blessing contained in the book. So the name of the prophet is an epitome of the message of the book, which is the Lord remembered Israel with spiritual blessings.

Now then, let's move on to the command to repentance. The Lord has been sorely displeased with your fathers. Now, remember God had given Israel and unconditional covenant. That covenant had guaranteed them a land, the land of Palestine. A land, by the way, that takes in almost all of the Arab territory today. It belongs to Israel ultimately, and they shall have it. We may be seeing the birth pangs of the possession of this land. But up to this point, what has happened is surely not of God's direct work, but he has permitted. They have been given a land, they have been promised of a seed, a nation, and they have also been given a promise that through them blessing would go to the uttermost parts of the earth spiritually.

And so Israel has a great calling. They have a calling to a land as a nation to be a witness for Jehovah in the earth. And through their witness there is to come worldwide blessing. That's what the Bible is all about, and it centers in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Jew, the Jew who is the seed of Abraham, who does the work of dying

for men on the cross at Calvary, and makes it possible for this covenant to be fulfilled unconditionally by God, by God, not by man, but by God. And when you sit in this audience this morning, and you are the recipient of spiritual blessing. You sing, you sang that song about how God had found you out, that means, you see, that you are giving testimony to the fact that he had, through the word, brought you into touch with him and with the seed of our Lord Jesus.

And so he says, "The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers," because you see, the possession of these things depended upon their obedience. Just as if I were to say to my daughter, "Grace, I've just bought a Lincoln Continental, here are the keys. It's all in your name, but Grace, since you're a minor," she's no longer a minor, but "since you're a minor, I want you to know that the enjoyment of this is dependent upon your obedience to me. Now, if you go out and get a lot of speeding tickets, I'm going to take away the car from you. It's your car, but I'm going to ground you." And so God said with reference to the promises to Israel, here is the land, here is the seed, here is the worldwide blessing. The land is yours, but if you disobey I'm going to scatter you.

As a matter of fact, he has dispossessed them three times. They are now in the last and final dispossession to the uttermost parts of the earth, because of disobedience. And so you see the key to all of this international situation in which we are is the response of the nation Israel to the God who brought them into existence. The Lord hath been sorely displeased with your fathers, and if any message had the props to make is plain to them, this one did. All that they had to do was to look at themselves. The loss of sovereignty, the captivity, the shattered walls of the city of Jerusalem, the raised temple that was about them, all of these things, the devastated land, the droughts that they had had all bore a witness to the fact that God was displeased with them.

"Therefore," Zechariah, "Say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts." In other words, the condition for the reception of the blessing that belongs to you

because you are Israelites depends upon your turning to the Lord. Now turning is the Old Testament way of saying repent. The words *shuwb* is the equivalent of the Greek word *metanoe* . And *metanoe* means "to change the mind." It means to have an after thought, really, and since usually an after thought is a different thought, *metanoe* comes to mean "to change the mind." *Shuwb* in the Old Testament means to turn, that is to turn from that way to this way, turn from the Lord. And so this is a call to repentance on the part of the people.

They are to turn their minds. Now notice, it is minds. In other words, our Lord apparently relates all of the trouble to a mental attitude on the part of the Israelite. Now, this is a mental attitude that has its results and actions, as the following words show. But what he's trying to get over to them is this, that basic to all of the work of God is a right relationship in the mind, and I think we can say in the heart, to the Lord. What use is it to witness for our Lord Jesus Christ if your heart is not right. What use is it to come to church if your heart is not right? You're even limited in the understanding of holy Scripture. What use is it to get down on your knees and pray if your heart is not in it? That seems ridiculous to think that a man could get down on his knees and pray if his heart is not in it, but I know from experience that it's possible. What use is it to come to church? What use is it to stand at the door and usher if our hearts are not right with God? What use is it to teach the Sunday School class? If the heart is not right with God, then forget all of these things. If you are not right down here, then forget the whole thing, that's the thing that's really troubling you. And so the thing that the Lord was interested in, through the prophet, was their attitude to him. "Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts."

Now, this is not a kind of legalistic righteousness, it kind of seems that way at first, doesn't it? If you do your part, I'll do my part. That isn't the way that God means this at all. But he does mean this, that there is no way for us to enter into fellowship with him if we do not respond to him. There is human responsibility to the word of God, but

remember, it is God who takes the initiative always. Who is speaking to them, why it is the man of God, Zechariah. It is Haggai the Prophet, who has been sent from God. "He is," as Haggai says, "he was the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message." So this is God who is initiating action toward the Israelites. He is saying to them, "I the great God, I am so concerned about you. I am so interested in you coming into fellowship with me, that I, through my prophet, am saying to you to turn to me." Now, that is God taking the initiative and laying down the conditions whereby we enter into fellowship with him. "Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts."

And now finally, the admonition from history, Henry Ford said, "History was all bunk." But Henry Ford's historical pronouncement was proved wrong in just a few years when we entered the great depression and we discovered that history was not all bunk and that I think as one historian has said, "Those who pay no attention to history are destined to fulfill it again." We discovered that the mechanical man did not have the answer, and we entered into the Great Depression, which some of old timers, some of us gray heads, remember very well. History is not all bunk. And one of the reasons Britain faired so well in World War II with the limited capacity and resources which they had, and they are gone now. Britain will never win another war, in my opinion. By the way, that's not a pronouncement from the Lord. [Laughter] One of the reasons they faired so well was because they had a man who was at least something of a historian at the head, and who understood people. History is not all bunk, and God is one who often appeals to history, and he appealed to history here.

"Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings." You see, evil ways, evil thinking leads to evil doings, "but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD." That's a kind of resume of the former prophets turned. Now, I have a number of passages in my notes here, which I wanted to turn to, but we don't have time to do it. I suggest that you turn to some of the passages of the



Old Testament and notice how over and over and over again the prophets from Hosea, Joel, Amos, on down to Jeremiah, the central message of a personal nature, which they gave to Israel was this one, of turn unto me O Israel. In fact, that's the message of the Old Testament, that they did not turn.

This past week Mary and I were sitting down at the breakfast table with a young girl who has just had some difficult marriage problems, and she was very much disturbed and upset and still is. And we were trying to comfort her and encourage her, and of course, most of all to bring her into a right spiritual relationship to the Lord. She's a graduate of the University of Texas and a very, very intelligent young lady. We began to talk about the gospel, and about spiritual things and particularly about the historical facts about the ministry of the Lord Jesus, because she's had difficulty believing them. And finally, she turned to me and said, "There is one difficulty though that I do not have the answer for." We said, "what was it?" She said, "Why is it that Jews did not believe these facts that you have been talking to me about?" If they were true, and true historically, why were they not believed?"

Well, it's obvious if we read the Bible. They did not believe them, because they did not want to believe them. As a matter of fact, they never have believed them, except in a remnant. The message of the prophets throughout the whole of the Old Testament is that the nation has gone away from him. And that it is only the remnant which has been left. And even today it is still true. Why do we not believe the plain facts of the word of God supported by history, supported by logic, supported by reason, supported by the experiences of believers down through the years? Why? Because we do not want to, we do not want to turn. "How often have I desired, O Jerusalem, to gather you under my wings as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and ye would not," our Lord said.

He said they did not hear or hearken unto me. Those two Hebrew words are very interesting. They mean something like this. They didn't pay any attention, much less any particular thing that I was saying. Now, I look out over the audience this morning, and I

notice two people are sleeping. That is a fulfillment of prophecy. I'm always amazed at the things that I see in an audience like this. Sometimes as I look out and see something I almost forget what I'm saying, I'm so interested, why everything is done in a church auditorium. Notes are passed by the young people. Many talk. Many sleep, not so many here. I'm really kidding here. I really only noticed one, even some smooching. The church auditorium is not the place to make out.

We used to have a couple that came in here, they were seminary students, and I cannot help but mention this. We called them the lovers. We were so happy that they got married. I think the only time that they were together was in the church auditorium; at least it looked that way. And when they came in and set down, the whole auditorium looked at them. They settled down into one chair, it seemed. [Laughter] You know, we laugh at the prophecies, and we laugh at the prophets, but the same thing happens today. "Your fathers," Zechariah says, "where are they? and the prophets," these great men of God, "do they live for ever?" Oh no, the time comes when you die and the time comes when the messenger of God dies. The time comes when you will not have an opportunity to hear, and let me say it very, very solemnly. The time comes when you in Believers Chapel will not be able to hear. The time comes when God will write his big veto over all of your life. And it will be over. You will no longer have the opportunity to hear the glorious good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"But my words and my statutes," Zechariah says, "which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." In other words, men are passing frail, but the word of God is inescapable. You cannot escape it. It will track you down and overtake you, lay hold of you. It is eternal. It is something with which we shall always have to do. And it is unanswerable, and even the fathers, some of them, Daniel, Jeremiah, even they had the courage to say, just as God has said in the word, so has it come to pass. The time comes

when there is no longer opportunity, but at that same time there shall come an acknowledgement of the fact that what God has said is true. It has come to pass.

Many speak about death, only one man has ever been able to speak to death and overcome it, our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are in this audience this morning, and you have not yet believed in him, there is no hope except through the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that cometh unto me, shall never see death." The word of God continues forever. Are you in right relationship to it? Have you believed in our Lord Jesus? Have you believed in the one who died for you? May God help you to put your trust in him. Lean upon him and listen to his word. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, who gave the Son, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, be in abide with all who know him in sincerity. For Jesus' sake. Amen.